Talking about careers:
personal and professional constructions
of career by careers advisers

LYN BARHAM

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of the West of England, Bristol for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Education

Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries and Education
University of the West of England, Bristol

Director of Studies: Penelope Harnett

March 2013

ABSTRACT

Talking about careers: personal and professional constructions of career by careers advisers.

This study arose from an 'intellectual puzzle' (Mason, 2003) that careers advisers, when faced with personal career dilemmas, found little apparent attraction in seeking career guidance for themselves. This puzzle resonated with the concern, often mentioned in the literatures on career and career guidance, that practitioners continue to espouse outdated, positivist methods of working with their clients. The research set out to explore how careers advisers think about 'career' in their personal and their professional lives.

The study was conducted from a social constructionist metaperspective, which took worldviews and ways of knowing to be individually shaped by relationships and social experience. Data collection was through a storied approach to explore participants' retrospective accounts of their own careers to date, putting considerable effort into hearing stories rather than engaging in professional discourse. A second stage of each interview sought accounts of their ways of working with specific, recent clients.

Analysis focused on attending to unique personal voices, and particularly the possibility that people may construe a single idea in different ways in different arenas of their life, exploring ideas of 'conceptual dispersion' (Linder and Marshall, 2003), contrapuntal voices (Gilligan et al., 2003) and 'I-positions' (Hermans et al., 1992).

Differences emerged in the implicit concepts of career underlying personal career stories, both amongst the sample group of careers advisers, and intrapersonally when comparing personal career stories with discussions of their work with clients. Careership theory proved a powerful explanatory tool, but has not given adequate attention to the subjective nature of turning points alongside their visible manifestations in changes of status or occupation. The findings include identification of aspects of careers advisers' ways of working which are inadequately recognised and

celebrated. They also include an emergent understanding, framed within Careership theory and Bourdieu's work, of how careers advisers could better conceptualise their ways of relating with clients. The Listening Guide, a central tool in analysis of the data, was indentified as having potential in this conceptual development.

Preparatory work for the study discovered that a remarkable lack of attention has been paid to the careers of careers advisers themselves. The study makes a contribution to this neglected field, as well as offering a firmly qualitative contribution to a research field noted by Stead et al. (2011) to be strongly biased towards work in quantitative and positivist approaches.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND ITS CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

Very few studies have explored the ways in which careers advisers think about their own careers, or how their experiences and implicit beliefs impact on their work as careers advisers. The limited literature that considers the careers of careers advisers falls into a number of groups:

1. Consideration of the characteristics needed for recruitment to, and subsequent training for and performance in, the professional work of career guidance. A Cedefop report (2009) debates whether all competences are learnable, following Sultana's (2009: 26) question as to 'whether there are specific competences that some individuals will never be able to master, or whether all competences required by C(areer) G(uidance) practitioners can be taught or learnt'.

2. Studies that take as their starting point clients' views of the career guidance they have received. Developing from this, enquiries address what characteristics made the guidance 'useful' (Bimrose, 2006, 2010) or 'valued' (Bosley et al., 2007)

3. The impact on professional staff of the changing nature of their work and workplace (Colley et al., 2010; Mulvey, 2006)

4. One limited study in the US asking career counsellors what theories they use (C. Brown, 2002), but failing to distinguish between theories of career itself and theories of guidance practice.

The second and fourth groups, notably Bimrose (2006, 2010) and C. Brown (2002), draw attention to the prevalence of practice and theory based on older, matching models of guidance practice, based upon differential psychology. The issue of loyalty to outmoded methods extends to reported research into career development; Stead et al. (2011) find that less than 10% of articles published in the last two decades in the most relevant peer-reviewed journals (more than 3,000 articles) adopt a qualitative methodology. Savickas (2001b: 287) states that the 'reliance on quantitative methods … seems to have contributed to narrowing research topics and overlooking complexity'. The research reported here used qualitative methods and made an attempt to grapple with complexity.

1.2 Scene-setting

This thesis seeks to explore an issue of current comment by career theorists: if career theory now largely espouses a personalised and social constructionist view of career, how does it occur that a significant proportion of career guidance activity still follows a positivist matching paradigm?

This opening question draws upon the academic literature on career development and career guidance (Bimrose, 2006; Law 2003; Reid and West, 2010; Savickas, 2004). It resonates with an intellectual puzzle that had troubled me since the mid-1990s. My attention was caught at that time by an apparent paradox in the behaviour of careers advisers. At a time when many of them faced the policy changes which challenged, firstly their identity as public servants working for a public good, and later as 'career' specialists rather than 'personal advisers' for young people, many found themselves with career dilemmas of their own. It seemed however that few of them responded to these career dilemmas by using career guidance. Ostensibly, those who actively promoted career guidance as necessary support for others in facing career dilemmas did not see such support as applicable to themselves. The physician seemed to have a problem with healing herself.

1.3 Personal context

Each one of us approaches tasks with our personal worldview (Lyddon, 1989; Patton and McMahon, 2006b) and from a personal values base. From my social constructionist perspective, I understand my worldview and values to have been shaped by and to have shaped my career and learning choices. In qualitative research, the researcher herself is a significant formative element in the research activity, and needs to be acknowledged from the start. I therefore offer a fairly detailed personal history.

The career guidance profession has occupied my entire working life. My first post was as an information and placement assistant in the careers service in Brent, a position I used in order to fulfil the requirement for work experience before being eligible to obtain a salaried, government grant supported, trainee post. I obtained such a post a year later, in Hertfordshire, and was seconded for full-time training before undertaking my probationary year in the county. Over the next twenty years I maintained a client caseload almost continually, as I moved through a variety of more senior roles: team management, staff trainer, quality manager, database development, amongst others.

Alongside my employment duties, I participated actively at a national level in my professional body, the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG). I was invited to join the standing committee which organised continuing professional development and over many years I variously organised and ran courses, and later chaired the committee. This brought a widening of horizons beyond a single workplace (which was Wiltshire Careers Service for the twenty years from 1974 to 1994), and increasing involvement with policy, both as a member of the management team in Wiltshire, as a Council Member of ICG, and through the organisation for ICG of its annual senior managers' course – a 'must attend' event for heads of careers services.

The year 1994 brought a career watershed for me. The careers service in Wiltshire had been a stimulating and supportive place to work. Ideas and experimentation were valued, and actively supported. My national work was seen as adding a valuable extension to my main employment, and I enjoyed considerable flexibility over management of time between the two roles. In 1994, during the Conservative government's process of privatisation of the careers service, until then a local education authority duty, Wiltshire Careers Service failed in its bid to manage its own service privately. Added pressure arose from the fact that no competing bidder was judged to have submitted a satisfactory bid, and the tender process was deferred, to be run again in the next annual round.

This was one example within a troubled national picture. Peck (2004: 73) gives a taste of the times:

> … preparations for the next round of bidding were confused. 'Listening to the market' consisted of 'holding discussions with' and 'taking soundings from' a range of potential providers but, as many of these meetings were private (often as part of dinners or lunches), the impression given was of a hidden agenda. The actual agenda was probably simply to increase interest from the private sector in the wake of a limited response to the first round but the effect was to heighten tension and encourage mistrust.

At the time, I reflected on the career guidance I had myself received. The careers adviser I had seen at university had suggested a number of ways of approaching the task of identifying careers that would interest me. The approach I chose to use with his support was one based on personal values; this quickly removed all private sector options from my realm of exploration, and led, through consideration of the various settings in which one could undertake (non-medical) work of direct benefit to individuals, to identifying the careers service as an attractive and feasible proposition.

A similar value base was common amongst my colleagues, who in the 1990s shared with me threats to their ways of working with clients, and to their conditions of employment. Superannuation schemes had never been so interesting! A knee-jerk reaction by senior managers in Wiltshire to their failure to secure the contract was to espouse, often in ways I thought unacceptable, the mantra of 'new public management' (NPM) (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2008; Palermo et al, 2010). On NPM's terms, the scope for ideas and experimentation which I had enjoyed in Wiltshire were not tightly aligned to the quantifiable outcomes now sought, and I freely acknowledge that the strength in innovation was counter-balanced by a weakness in consolidation and systemisation of emergent good practice. Amongst these national and local changes, a profound personal difficulty with a proposed change of line manager coincided with a decision by ICG to seek a part-time contractor to further develop their CPD programme.

During a fraught week in the summer of 1994, I obtained the ICG contract, manoeuvred a redundancy deal with Wiltshire County Council by refusing the proposed 'redeployment' to a post I was substantively fulfilling, and became a self-employed single parent with young teenage children, a mortgage and secure income only from a small, time-limited, part-time contract.

This story is relevant in positioning myself as holding a distinct value base, and pursuing my career in a way that prioritised my values. The individual stories reported later in this thesis will show that I am not alone in that stance. I also remember handling this situation entirely on my own. My work colleagues were implicated in the Wiltshire situation, my ICG colleagues needed to create distance to consider my application within a competitive tendering process, and I had no other adult 'at home'. It seemed much too detailed and complicated to explain to any friend outside the field, and when I tried, they urged caution – think of the salary, the security, the mortgage – which was a message that did not resonate with me. We place a marker here, that I, as a careers adviser, did not think of consulting a careers adviser about this career dilemma.

My early years of self-employment were largely occupied with training contracts. Over time I became more involved with project development (particularly EU-funded projects) and evaluation, and gradually with research projects. For more than ten years, a good proportion of my work has arisen through a national network which positions itself as triangulating the theory-policy-practice aspects of careers work. This provided a setting where I learnt research methods 'on the job' from experienced colleagues (for example Hoffbrand and Barham, 1998). It aroused in me the fascination to understand more and better, which led finally to my engagement in doctoral research.

Within this social research setting, I have made a not untypical move from quantitative to qualitative methods. An early quantitative example would

be a postal survey to explore how schools were using the government's *Better Choices* series of publications on careers education (for DfEE 1997, unpublished). A more recent qualitative example would be work funded by the Ufi Charitable Trust to explore the reasons why older people were making less use of, and were less satisfied with, the telephone and on-line career guidance service (Page et al, 2007; Barham, 2008; Barham and Hawthorn, 2009, 2010). This latter study epitomises the personal reasons for engaging with doctoral level work, which I do on a self-funded basis, and largely for personal satisfaction. The study of career management skills led to a report for Ufi which highlighted that a number of different factors come into play for older people compared with those at earlier stages of their career, particularly identifying a shift in values and a different relationship with time (including 'future time perspective' (Bal et al, 2010; Erikson, 1997)). The report made recommendations to address the issues raised, but the research interviews left me with a number of unresolved underlying questions. How and why is 'time' different for older people? In what way have values changed, and why does this change occur? In this instance, I used my own time to explore these questions in greater depth, and have placed a paper based on my engagement with underlying theoretical possibilities in the public domain (Barham, 2011).

My own increasing age is accompanied by a hunger for 'understanding', which now sits alongside a continuing appetite for 'doing'. Short-term, funded research projects need to work to time and to budget. Funders are looking to increase their information on a particular issue or problem, and are seeking 'answers' or suggestions about future approaches. Questions are often answered 'well enough' or at a 'what works' level. Self-financed doctoral work gave me the chance to explore, without constrained purpose or outcome, other than to 'understand', the question that had niggled me for a decade or more.

1.4 Elaborating the intellectual puzzle

During the mid-1990s, when a proportion of my time was regularly occupied on contracts with the main professional body, the Institute of Career Guidance, careers advisers were subject to considerable policy-driven change, as outlined above. Many members of the (then) careers service in the UK looked to the professional body for support as their professional lives were profoundly affected by changes resulting from government policy. These changes were causing considerable anxiety for many careers advisers, raising questions both about constraints on their methods of working with clients and about their own identity as public sector employees. Careers advisers understandably needed to talk about these issues, and at ICG's office, the Chief Executive and I handled a number of such telephone calls. We both frequently made the suggestion that callers might themselves seek professional help from a careers adviser, a comment which was often met with an apparently sceptical response: why would they do that? The Chief Executive and I had a series of discussions reviewing our shared sense of a mild malaise about the perceived value, to themselves, of the service that careers advisers offered and proposed to be of value to others.

Mason (2002) suggests that qualitative research generally arises from seeking to address some form of intellectual puzzlement. This applies in my case. The seed of puzzlement outlined above remained with me, and did not much move towards resolution. A decade later, as I embarked on research to explore if this was a general condition, and if so why this should arise, the initial puzzlement became situated for me within a range of other elements. Firstly, there is extensive comment in the academic literature that careers advisers continue to espouse out-dated methods of delivering career guidance tasks (Bimrose, 2010; Savickas, 2001b; McMahon and Patton, 2006a; Law, 2003; Reid, 2006). Bowman et al (2005: 90) suggest these out-dated approaches to career guidance may be explained by the 'folk theory of career progression', which they headline as including the following three characteristic beliefs:

> Progression from education to employment is or should be linear, in that successful students who make the right moves can go straight from university into a good job, and 'hit the ground running' …
>
> Progression is a matter of matching the interests, skills and abilities of the graduate (or school leaver) to the needs of a job/employer …
>
> Job entry is competitive, but that competition is inherently meritocratic …

Similar comment arises, in the years from 2004, from specific UK research evidence that careers advisers were continuing, in general, to use older models of career guidance which were no longer supported by current theory (Bimrose et al., 2004, 2005; Bimrose and Barnes, 2006). This empirical evidence emerges from a substantial, government-funded, longitudinal study of career guidance conducted by a university department with support from two other research institutes, and it constitutes significant evidence.

1.5 Refining the research interest

My early approaches to designing this research project were based around the question of whether careers advisers did in fact make use of career guidance, and if not, why not. Proving or disproving the underlying implied hypothesis, that they did not do so, would not have been conducive to a style of exploratory investigation which is more likely to uncover the complexities and variations in how careers advisers actually conceptualise 'career' and discuss it with their clients.

I was strongly drawn to narrative approaches to data collection, a reflection of a distinct 'narrative turn' in the literature on career guidance (Collin, 2007; Grant and Johnston, 2006), as in many other fields of human inquiry (Reid and West, 2011). My struggles to follow this narrative inclination whilst still largely framing the research question as a hypothesis about a specific aspect of behaviour finally led to understanding of a deeper question, which then became the focus for the substantial part of this inquiry. The understanding was developed from

participants' responses during the trialling of a narrative interviewing technique.

In these trial interviews, I asked careers advisers to tell the story of their own career, and explain in some detail the way they resolved dilemmas or transitions. This remains as the first stage of two-stage research interviews, which also seek to collect descriptions of the ways in which careers advisers explain their interview work with clients. However at the development stage, the narrative-based interviews generated descriptions which led to much deeper insight into the issue that concerned me, and to more fundamental questions. In those early interviews, careers advisers recounted personal career stories affected by chance events, happenstance, personal preoccupations and 'one thing leading to another' – exactly the kind of story that current theoretical writing on career would recognise and endorse (Bright and Pryor, 2008; McMahon and Patton, 2006a; Mitchell et al, 1999; Savickas, 2009). But some careers advisers, when referring to their work with clients, framed career differently, broadly as a construct amenable to careful planning, rational choice and decision-making, and predictable progression, close to Bowman et al.'s (2005) 'folk theory' cited above. A clear example of this contrast is articulated by a careers adviser in an early interview.

> But now I'm actually, I think, in a good position to … try to get people not to do the same as what I have been doing. Probably I'm a bit ambivalent about it because I enjoyed the majority of my life quite well. So even though it wasn't a firm decision and meticulously executed, I went with the flow, but the flow always brought me to the right shores. So, I'm trying to get clients coming in here to do it a little bit different, and set out a target – longer-term, medium-term, short-term …

> (interviewee Stefan, July 2007)

1.6 Research questions
From the exploratory stage of the research, a different and deeper set of research questions emerged. The study set out to explore the varying ways in which careers advisers explained career in their own lives, to gather descriptions of their work with clients as a vehicle for exploring the conceptions of career and career guidance implicit in their approaches to

practice, and to initiate a discussion on whether careers advisers can extend their use of the helping strategies that have been helpful to them in their own careers.

Research question one

The first stage for the study was to seek entry to the lifeworld of the careers adviser in order to understand their conceptions of how their own career had evolved:

a) What are the (varied) ways in which careers advisers explain the development of their own career?

b) Who has helped them with career dilemmas, and what help has been most useful?

c) How do these accounts align with current career theory?

Research question two

Having listened attentively to careers advisers' narratives of their own careers, the study then turned to descriptions of examples of their work with clients. Research question two addresses the ways, often implicit, in which careers advisers refer to career and to helping processes as they describe their professional work:

a) What understandings of career are explicit and implicit in careers advisers' description of their professional work?

b) What helping strategies have they deployed?

Research question three

The final stage of the research constituted my consideration of the alignment and contrast between participants' personal career experiences, career guidance methods and current career theory:

a) To what extent are personal experiences and professional concepts of career in alignment?

b) Are there aspects of the help received with personal career progression that could be proposed to inform professional career guidance practice?

Research question 4

A further question was added later. The methodological journey of this research project culminated in the use of specific methods for 'listening to' the spoken and transcribed words of the participants, using the Listening Guide (Gilligan et al., 2003):

a) Could techniques from the Listening Guide be proposed as relevant to the enhancement of career guidance practice?

1.7 The thesis: scope, structure and impact

This thesis reports an empirical study of the ways in which careers advisers conceptualise the notion of career. Careers adviser is not a restricted designation; it is more closely defined for this study as people who have both undertaken a course of university-based professional training at postgraduate level (see Section 5.2), and fulfilled the associated work-based training requirements. To meet the methodological requirements of this study, it was also necessary that participants were still actively involved in the delivery of career guidance to clients.

The next chapter focuses on recent literature on 'career', using the lens of recent concerns for career theory 'convergence' (Savickas and Lent, 1994) or a career metatheory in order to view the different research traditions that have led to a splintered theoretical field. 'Career' attracts widespread attention across a number of academic fields, and is distinctly interdisciplinary in nature, combining aspects from (as examples) psychology, economics, social studies and pedagogy (McCash, 2008). Chapter three develops this theme through examination of how the professional practice of career guidance has developed under the influences, often conflicting, of theoretical developments and policy imperatives.

Chapter four explains the research methodology, and justifies the methods used in conducting the enquiry. The following chapter provides a brief description of the recruitment of research participants and practical aspects of data collection. In chapter six, I provide a pen picture of each individual participant.

Chapters seven to nine discuss the data, focusing first (in Chapter seven) on the career stories of the participants, and then (in Chapter eight) on the ways in which they had been helped with career dilemmas. Analysis of the participants' descriptions of their work with clients occurs in Chapter nine.

Chapter ten concludes the thesis, drawing together findings from the preceding three chapters, stating the claim to knowledge and considering applications of research findings in the professional field.

This study is significant for several reasons.

- Most research in the career field continues to be in a quantitative tradition (Stead et al., 2011) and there is a considerable need to develop and publish qualitative studies conducted and reported with rigour appropriate to the methodology;
- Recent qualitative research has either tested new methods of delivery of career guidance, or sought to develop the evidence base for the value of career guidance provision; little attention has been paid to examining current practice;
- A widespread international internet-based enquiry to the career community, at the point when I was formulating this study, identified no other study that had explored the experience of careers advisers at the point of needing career advice themselves;
- While the 'bad press' received by career guidance is often noted, little has been done to explore why negative comment arises or why such views have relatively common currency;

- At the current time of serious threat to some sectors of career guidance delivery in England (specifically), alongside a strong move to unify professional associations and enhance professional status in other career guidance sectors, research effort needs to be directed at supporting the latter move.

CHAPTER TWO: CAREER THEORY

2.1 Introduction

Career theory as a distinctive body of academic work dates from the early years of the twentieth century (Ogilvie-Gordon, 1908; Parsons, 1909). Throughout the decades of the last century, explorations of the nature of career broadly followed the prevailing paradigms in psychology and the social sciences, and are extensively documented elsewhere. Hopson and Hayes surveyed the field through a compilation of important texts on career theory and guidance practice (Hopson and Hayes, 1968). Watts, Super and Kidd (1981) made a further contribution to theory and practice, and later, Watts et al. (1996) prepared a comprehensive summary of the past, current and future state of career, addressing theory and context, provision, practice, development, and policy.

Elsewhere in the world, authors embarked on overviews of theory development (e.g. Arthur et al., 1989; Niles et al., 2002) and produced comprehensive textbooks (e.g. Zunker, 2002). Many other authors of recent works on career have provided shorter summaries of the ways that conceptualisations of career have evolved, as a setting for the particular contribution that they wish to make to the field (e.g. Bimrose, 2006; Patton and McMahon, 2006a; Savickas et al., 2009). Further thorough reviews of the historical development of career theory occur in a number of doctoral theses (e.g. Hancock, 2006).

Rather than another overview of the historical development of career theory, it meets the needs of this thesis better to use as its primary exploratory lens (in Section 2.4) the current and emergent debates of the most recent three decades, the time during which all of the participants in the study had been trained in career theory and guidance practice, and been employed in this field. This is not to downplay the historical perspective, but instead to place a primary contextual focus for this research on contemporary tensions in the theory-practice arena, including

a perceived need to move towards convergence, integration or a metatheory for career (D. Brown, 2002; Patton and McMahon, 2006a; Savickas and Lent, 1994), a possibility contested by others on the grounds that it is not achievable (Dawis, 1994; Holland, 1994). Contestation arose both from ontological differences, with Dawis (1994) arguing that theories draw on different underlying concepts, and from utility differences, with Holland (1994) maintaining that different theories are required for different purposes within practice. Novice practitioners, like established theorists, will need to make some personal sense of the differing, and often conflicting, viewpoints in the literature.

I see theory and practice as inextricably linked. Throughout my time as a trainer of people engaged, or about to engage, in career guidance, I have framed my work through the personal adage: 'What you believe about career influences what you do in career guidance'. This aligns with my constructionist viewpoint, seeing theory as an aspect of thinking, rather than an objective set of statements to be proved or disproved (Hodkinson, 2008). That stance is at the core of this research project: to seek to uncover explicit and implicit beliefs or 'personal theories' about participants' own careers, and to compare those beliefs with the beliefs implicit in participants' descriptions of their practice. In order to look at the theoretical landscape from which career advisers' theoretical positions may be drawn, I will take a broad survey of 'career' through its historical and semantic development and the way it has been conceptually framed in settings beyond its occupational usage, and then examine the arguments surrounding 'convergence' in career theory within the occupational usage.

2.2 'Career': history and semantics
In one sense, career has existed throughout human history. Arthur et al.'s (1989: 9) assertion that 'everyone who works has a career' emphasises pervasiveness over time and across the life-space, though without clarification of how they conceptualise 'work'. However the focus in this

thesis is on career as it emerges as a social phenomenon at a stage of economic development within a society.

In societies based largely on an agrarian subsistence economy, there is limited division of labour. As distinctions increase through trade activity and increasing wealth, the allocation of roles is 'determined largely by the family, caste or class into which one is born' (Watts, 1998: 36). Industrialisation brings an extension of roles, and a requirement for specific occupational expertise which in turn leads to specialised training provision, and a resulting need for people to choose, or be allocated to, specific occupations. In free market economies, this is generally perceived to include some element of personal and/or family preference; in command economies (and in all countries when there is conscription for military service) systems of allocation to work roles may apply. I will come later to a consideration of the interaction between social circumstance and personal choice in an individual's career.

There can be debate about the extent to which people can opt out of 'career' within developed societies. Does a wealthy and indolent person have a career? Does a person with severe mental impairment whose engagement with society is largely through intermediaries have a 'career' in any meaningful sense? It is perhaps clearer that those who 'opt out' of what they might term 'the rat race' have adopted an alternative form of career, but that the term can still be applicable.

Individual career is thus economically, politically and socially positioned. Careers advisers may treat these different aspects through different understandings of the notion of career. This may be one source of the variance in the conceptualising of career.

The early meaning of 'career' in the sense of a horse race course, or a dash along such a course, is lost from the noun in modern usage, though it is retained in the verb, in the sense of 'careering along'. From the nineteenth century, the term is used for 'a person's course or progress through life (or

a distinct portion of life)' (OED definition). Its early usage in this sense was commonly in contrast to a mere 'job' and had overtones of both status and progression. The general public's use of the term still commonly retains the distinction between the 'careers' of those in occupations requiring extensive training, knowledge and skill, and the 'jobs' of those in manual and lower-skilled occupations (Barley, 1989; Storey, 2000). Around the middle of the twentieth century, the construct of 'career woman' (or less appropriately 'career girl') drew a further distinction between employment and domestic aspects of life, at least for half the population.

The term career is very widely used, with ideas of progression implicit in most usage of the word. A distinction may sometimes be drawn between progression through time, which has a single direction, and progression in terms of advancement or the pursuit of ambition, where direction may vary. Collin and Young (1986), noting the lack of definition of the term 'career development', make clear that the underlying assumption of 'development' is not well-founded.

> … it connotes increasing complexity in progress toward a desirable end state, the phases of the progress being sequential, patterned and normative, but this concept does not derive from the study of career or lifespan. (p.842)

Both 'progress' and 'desirable end state' will be subject to variation over the course of a working life (Erikson, 1997). Savickas (2001a: 300) argues that development needs to include 'losses as well as gains', and that it is therefore not linear but 'comes in fits and starts'. The individual career is subject to both external impacts (for example, redundancy) and personal changes (for example, state of health or disability), but may also be subject to elective sideways moves or downshifting reflecting a shift in 'desirable end state'. The 'desirable end state' perceived by a young person will frequently be adjusted in response to adult life experiences and changing life roles. Success may breed greater ambition for some, while the importance of other life roles, such as parenting, may modify work-related ambition for others (Richardson, 2012). Increasing age will have its own impact (Erikson, 1997); Barham and Hawthorn (2009: 24) note that a

'values shift' is common, though not universal, in later career, with concern shifting away from career advancement and work centrality, and towards other life values (Clark, 2007).

Collin and Young (1986) admit to difficulty in locating an 'accepted corpus of theory' on career, noting that such theory as exists lacks organising principles. It is however notable that where 'career' is adopted for usages other than in the work and learning setting, both the highly personalised aspect and the progressive aspect are typically intrinsic to its meaning. In contrast to Collin and Young's (1986) 'desirable end state', the progression may be in a deteriorating direction, as sometimes in the usage 'illness career' (Pavalko et al., 2007) or more extensively 'criminal career' (Shaw, 1930; Shaw 1931; Blumstein and Cohen, 1979; Kyvsgaard, 2003).

'Career' is used by sociologists in such settings as an organising concept encompassing both subjective and structural perspectives. Hughes (1937), explaining the career concept as used by the Chicago School, describes it as the 'moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions, and the things which happen to him' (p.409-410). Both Hughes (ibid) and Shaw (1930, 1931) understand career to cover both the series of activities in which individuals are engaged and the developmental processes within the person, with such developmental processes being both cumulative, with earlier career events shaping later outcomes, and dual-sided, at the intersection of individuals with society (Pavalko et al., 2007). Becker (1966) similarly emphasises that both careers in the occupational sense and careers in deviancy are shaped by occurrences and influences in the individual's societal setting, with the interaction resulting in changes both to the identity of the person and to their social position – within an occupational career or a career in deviancy. Viewpoint is important: an accomplished criminal may be held in low esteem in the general public view, but have high status within his closer social field. This is reflected in Savickas' (2001a: 300) view that 'development' may be used as an organising principle, but needs to be 'operationally defined by variables

such as identity, self-concept, and coping mechanisms'. I would add social variables to his person-related variables.

This would bridge across to a competing view, which proposes that career is most forcefully shaped by social circumstances (Bates and Riseborough, 1993; Roberts, 1971; Willis, 1977). The impact of social structure on career is considered more fully later, in section 2.4, as an aspect of metatheorising on career.

The UK government has long pursued dual-faced policies relating to these competing views. On the one hand, a range of policies acknowledge social structure as causing disadvantage throughout childhood and beyond, and address this through, for example, Sure Start centres which aim to counteract social background issues so that 'children are equipped for life and ready for school, no matter what their background or family circumstances' (Dept for Education, 2012a). On the other hand, despite continuing limitations to the available support (Careers England, 2012), government policy places responsibility for life choices firmly on the individual, through 'policy assumptions based on choice and free will' (Hodkinson et al., 1996: 38). This is reflected in rhetoric about 'benefit scroungers' and in the expectation that school leavers, regardless of social background, will individually make 'well informed and realistic decisions … about the range of education and training options that are most likely to help (them) achieve their ambitions' (Department for Education, 2012b: 1).

2.3 Conceptual framing of 'career'

From this review, it is possible to identify five aspects of the dual-sided nature of 'career' which are intertwined in theories of career in the occupational sense:

- it is *personal* and highly individualised
- it has a *developmental* or progressive aspect, which is individually cumulative, though 'direction of travel' should not be assumed

- it has an *interpretative* aspect for the individual
- it is *shaped* structurally, but individually
- it is socially *situated* and includes aspects of social status.

This offers an organising framework for one way in which I have interrogated the concept of career in the literature. It positions the word away from the common usage in which it distinguishes between professional status and 'mere' job. My concern in this research was with the use of the concept of career by careers advisers and career theorists, where 'career' would now be used almost exclusively to encapsulate the notions above of an individual career, including varied experiences in employment, training, self-managed and voluntary activities and unemployment. A further distinction is made by Nicholson and West (1989: 181) who advocate 'use of the more neutral term "work histories" to denote sequences of job experiences and reserve the word "career" for the sense people make of them', thus emphasising the personal and interpretative aspects of the term.

Similar distinctions have been offered by Watts (1981) who differentiates between 'the institutional career', 'the objective individual career' and 'the subjective individual career', distinctions which are developed in following decades in the different emphases placed on career within management studies usages (for example, Hall, 2002) and narrative or hermeneutic usages (for example, Collin, 2007). This highlights the idea that 'career' can be viewed as both observing boundaries and crossing them:

- a boundary between working (and learning) life and other aspects of the individual's life-space (including attention to work-life balance);
- a boundary between the individual within the organisation and the organisation's structures and requirements of its workforce;
- the boundary between the subjective (what we feel) and the objective (what we are seen to do).

All these boundaries are porous, meaning that there is no tidy demarcation around 'career' in a person's life: recreational learning can lead to changing employment ambitions; parenthood or caring roles can lead to self-knowledge or self-evaluation which affects career; any life experience can affect 'career' thinking, action and opportunities, as evidenced by Arthur et al. (1999) in multiple case studies of 'the new careers'. However career is always socially situated: 'the conceptual power of 'career' derives from its capacity to link the private world of the individual to the social and economic structure' (Collin and Watts, 1996: 393). In understanding career as socially situated and as suggesting both development and coherence in the individual over time, it is also necessary to remember that unexpected and chance events (whether apprehended as positive or negative) exert significant influence on the careers of very many people (Bright and Pryor, 2005; Mitchell at al., 1999; Patton and McMahon, 2006a).

Arthur et al. (1989) concur that much debate about career theory acknowledges a division, or attempts to bridge the division, between psychological and sociological views of career. They note other possible perspectives, such as a political science view which might be significantly concerned with the accumulation of 'power and influence regardless of an individual's personality disposition' (p.9). There is also an economic dimension to career. Comparatively little attention is paid in the career theory literature to financial reward from work, although this would be a primary preoccupation from an economist's viewpoint. An extreme example is provided by Bennett et al. (1992: 13)

> We assume that, knowing their capacities and other personal characteristics, individuals form an estimate of expected earnings resulting from each education, training and labour market option, and, taking into account their taste for each, choose the stream which offers the greatest net utility.

The economic 'field' is pervasive and powerful in Western-style societies (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 109) but that does not place upon us the requirement to consider it the final determinant of our actions. Indeed, few people would share the extreme assumption above, but it is

nevertheless recognised in career theory that people work for both extrinsic and intrinsic reward, and one of the most obvious extrinsic rewards is financial payment. Where extrinsic reward outweighs other return for hours expended, this may arise from the need to avoid outright poverty or dependence on state support, or in order to 'pay the bills' and thus permit pursuit of interests or pastimes from which it is difficult to earn an adequate wage. However there remains a section of the workforce that has not been well served by career theory, with its habitual focus on maximising the satisfactions to be gained through work (Banks et al., 1992; Bates and Riseborough, 1993; Hodkinson et al., 1996). Roberts (1971: 150) reminds that for some people 'failing to derive satisfaction from their working lives', the problem lies partly 'in the unsatisfying nature of many jobs'. Proponents of the Theory of Work Adjustment (Dawis, 2005; Dawis and Lofquist, 1984) would categorise such person-environment relationships as 'satisfactory' but 'dissatisfying'. Nevertheless, there is evidence that people become socialised into occupations and settings that they did not desire (Bates, 1990; Hodkinson et al., 1996).

2.4 Theories of career – convergence, integration or metatheory?

The abundance of models of career had come to be seen as a problem, and has led in the last two decades to an interest in convergence or integration of career theory, or the development of a metatheory of career (Savickas and Lent, 1994). Others regard the attempt to bring theoretical positions together as doomed to fail. Dawis (1994: 42) considers a unified theory as 'a will-o'-the-wisp', which if achieved would only be temporary, as consensus on, and satisfaction with, unified theory would be subject to normal processes by which theory continually evolves (Kuhn, 1962).

Concern to address the issue of theoretical convergence was fuelled by the recognition, most marked in the USA, of two broad, and somewhat opposing, viewpoints on career theory. These viewpoints both derive from psychological theory, and pay limited regard to sociological theory. The differing viewpoints emerge, broadly, from the fields of differential and developmental psychology, from which arise the different perspectives on

career behaviour which have developed into 'two distinct discourse communities':

> Articles on career development theory and person-environment theory tend to appear in different journals and different graduate training programs emphasize one over the other. Clashes between the two research camps hinder advances in their common goal of researching and developing career
>
> (Savickas (2001a: 303).

This interest in career convergence is not itself uncontentious. In 1990, Osipow had proposed that the question of theory convergence be addressed, following from earlier work in which he organised and explained theories of career development (Osipow, 1968, 1990). This proposal led to a national conference in the USA, and the subsequent development of the papers into a book *Convergence in Theories of Career Development* (Savickas and Lent, 1994), in which Lent and Savickas (1994: 260) comment:

> Reactions among the five major career theorists, in particular, to the goal of seeking theoretical confluence seemed to range from somewhat optimistic (Super), to neutral (Bordin), to cautious (Dawis), to discouraging (Holland, Krumboltz).

The last two argued, respectively, that theory cannot be assembled from differing constructs, and that different theories should be adopted for different purposes. Both Holland (1994) and Bordin (1994) considered that effort would be better expended on seeing career theories as a related group – Bordin uses the family as an analogy – which can be used to further cross-fertilise and illuminate the existing theories. However, it is not clear that this would easily happen, given the 'distinct discourse communities' described by Savickas (2001a, above). Despite these contentious positions, some tangible outcome emerged. The call by Hackett et al. (1991: 28) for the identification of 'the major variables crucial to an overarching theory of career development' met a negative response in that 'the creation of a single, monolithic theoretical approach to career psychology' was not supported, but met some positive response in the papers in that attention was paid to identifying those constructs that

offered some degree of potential for bridging between theories (Savickas and Lent, 1994).

Proponents of different views came from a range of backgrounds, including differential psychology, with roots in positivist scientific methods, and social psychology, including social learning theory, where there has been a shift to an interpretivist approach. The range of reactions somewhat reflected Kuhn's (1962) distinction between knowledge (r)evolution in sciences and the humanities. Kuhn proposes that a new theory in the physical sciences – germ theory replacing miasmatic theory, as a specific example – may take time to become accepted, but the new theory comes to be seen as a better theory. He contrasts this with the situation in the human sciences: 'a student in the humanities has constantly before him a number of competing and incommensurable solutions to these problems, solutions that he must ultimately examine for himself' (Kuhn, 1962). Cohen affirms this view:

> … as a new discourse comes to the fore it does not obliterate what came before, but rather intersects with it in a dynamic struggle for visibility, legitimacy and influence.

Cohen (2006: 199)

Savickas, a key player in the move to seek convergence in career theories (Savickas and Lent, 1994), has argued for a social constructionist approach as the most comprehensive metatheoretical position (Savickas, 2002, 2005; Savickas et al., 2009).

The efforts at convergence in career theory, significantly arising from scholars in North America, pay comparatively limited regard to sociological theories of career. Sonnenfeld and Kotter (1982) identify interest in the impact of social background on career achievement as a first wave of career research from the end of the 19th century onwards, but see it as overtaken by research interests developed within psychology for much of the 20th century. Sociological studies are largely concerned with advancement or prestige in career and how people shift their status in the socioeconomic hierarchy (Johnson and Mortimer, 2002). Gottfredson

(1981, 1996) develops her 'theory of circumscription and compromise' to explore the ways in which career aspiration is limited by the individual him- or herself, but with her main focus on the psychological processes involved. Savickas (2002: 164) notes that the self-concepts of individuals are shaped by the 'cultural scripts about gender, race, ethnicity, and class', but his attention is on moving forward to consider how the self-concept is implemented in career choice.

In the UK, exploration of the impact of social structure has been a more active site of theory development (Bates and Riseborough, 1993; Roberts, 1971, 1995, 2009; Willis, 1977). Sociological studies have found that career status for young adults is most strongly determined by educational attainment at statutory school leaving age (a factor generally affected by social and family background) and geographical area of residence (Banks et al., 1992), and in some cases have disputed the possibility that career guidance can counteract powerful economic and social influences. Roberts (1971: 150) commenting on both 'the unsatisfying nature of many jobs' as well as young people's social contexts concluded that 'some careers officers (sic) pin quite unrealistic hopes upon the potentialities of vocational guidance'.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the academic fields of sociology and psychology had limited interaction over the topic of career in the UK. Careers advisers, largely working within local education authorities, felt able to concentrate on person-centred guidance, albeit with a socially emancipatory intent, within their educational settings, where they were valued by school staff (Peck, 2004). Rising unemployment from the late 1970s onwards added the dimension of supporting young people in their choice of, and progress through, special training schemes where there was often need to battle with the policy constraints surrounding training schemes 'to make them work to the advantage of individual young people' (Peck, 2004: 39).

From the 1990s onwards, the relationship between social structures and personal agency in career choice and development has become an area of increasing attention. Patton and McMahon (1999, 2006a) addressed the question from a theoretical stance in their proposal that systems theory (Bateson, 1979; Capra, 1982) could underpin a Systems Theory Framework of career which offered a metatheoretical umbrella for both the various psychological theories and for social structural influences on career. A contrasting approach, developed from empirical study, led to the theory of Careership proposed by Hodkinson and colleagues (Bowman at al., 2005; Hodkinson et al., 1996; Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). As my study progressed, Careership emerged as the most useful framework for understanding the careers of careers advisers, and as a tool for interpreting their discussions of their professional interactions with clients. Careership theory draws extensively upon the work of Bourdieu, which provides for a more complex examination of the interpenetration of structure and agency, system and actor, collective and individual, based in Bourdieu's affirmation of the 'primacy of relations' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 15), which reflects also my own interest in relationality as an element of social constructionism (Gergen, 2009).

2.5 Worldviews and career theory

At the time of writing, there are three proposals for a metatheory of career. In the context of debate about convergence in career theory in the relevant academic literature, the claim to metatheoretical status is made overtly for two theories: Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2002, 2005), and the Systems Theory Framework (Patton and McMahon, 1999, 2006). The emergence of *Careership* from empirical data is somewhat different:

> Our analysis and interpretation of the data resulted in a new theoretical model of career decision making and career progression, which we call 'careership'. (Hodkinson et al., 1996: 3)

> On the one hand, much research describes long-standing patterns of inequality, influenced by class, ethnicity and gender. On the other hand, much policy making is now driven by assumptions of free choice and individual responsibility. (…) both perspectives

> contain an element of truth, though we would give more credibility
> to the former than the latter.   (Hodkinson et al., 1996: 139)

All three take a social constructionist perspective from within a *contextualist* worldview (Collin and Young, 1986; Lyddon, 1989; Patton and McMahon, 2006b; Pepper, 1942). Lyddon (1989: 446) proposes that 'the primary reason counselors hold different positions regarding the practice and process of counseling is that they are committed to different philosophical frames of reference, or worldviews'. This statement offers insight into the difficulty in reaching a single or converged metatheory of career, and further offers an explanatory base for why some theorists, from their own worldview, see this as possible, while those holding other worldviews judge it impossible or undesirable.

Those developing Lyddon's argument (e.g. Collin and Young, 1986; Patton and McMahon, 2006b) show broad consensus with his delineation of which career theories are associated with which of the four 'world hypotheses' or 'root metaphors' (Pepper, 1942). The analytic classificatory systems of *formism* are related to the categorisation of individual capacities (traits) and occupational requirements (factors) in trait-and-factor matching theories of career. The *mechanistic* hypothesis assumes that cause and effect connections, parallel to action-reaction principles and the 'laws' of physical sciences, apply also in the social and psychological world. This worldview appears in career theory in the conditioning mechanisms implicit in behaviourist approaches to learning and counselling (Hodkinson, 2008). The *organismic* perspective relates to developmental approaches to career, based on normative age and stage processes arising ontogenetically in the individual (Ginzberg et al., 1951; Super, 1953/1968; 1957). Any mismatch in maturational progress in relation to societal life stages is seen as a problem of the individual, to be 'treated' – in the case of career problems – by career guidance.

Worldviews, or world hypotheses (Pepper, 1942), or 'philosophical frames of reference' (Lyddon, 1989: 446), which implicitly organise and frame career thinking (Collin and Young, 1986), constitute an important theme underpinning this study. The personal adage mentioned earlier ('What you believe about career influences what you do in career guidance') assumes underlying worldviews held by each careers adviser; however, this proposition needs to be set in line with Lyddon's (1989: 442) explanation that worldviews are 'all but invisible' as 'one "sees" the domain through the conceptual glasses that make up the worldview but does not see the worldview itself'. I am not excluded from the remit of that statement. I understand worldviews through my own contextualist and social constructionist lens, which takes it that individual worldviews come about through the lived, relational experiences of infant- and childhood, and that they continue to adjust through adult years. 'Understandings of the world are achieved through co-ordinations among people' (Gergen, 2009: 6). That viewpoint would not be shared by people holding other worldviews.

The proposition of personal worldviews is, for me, the key to understanding the troubled history of efforts at theory convergence: interaction foundered where theorists with different worldviews struggled to find common understanding. Lyddon (1989: 446), while following Pepper in asserting that 'no worldview is inherently better than any other', summarises the problem: ' … theory derived from alternative worldviews asks different questions … because the very nature of reality and psychological phenomena are conceived differently'. For example, many people now would see assessment of an individual's traits and their matching to the factors required for an occupation (trait-and-factor theory) as an inadequate basis for career guidance activity. However they would not deny that for most people some jobs are more suited and congenial than others, and, conversely, in some jobs, some people will perform more effectively than others. In both cases, satisfaction (for the employee) and satisfactoriness (of the worker to the employer) is based on a wide range of personal and occupational variables. The inadequacy of the theory is

not that it is inaccurate, but that it is insufficient to explain maturational processes over the life span (for an adherent of career theory based in an organismic worldview) or different and changing social and relational aspects of career (for an adherent of a contextualist worldview).

These three proposals for a metatheory of career therefore have more in common in underlying philosophy than divides them at the level of detail. My intention is not to 'compare and contrast' in order to identify the winning theory, but to seek out what is most valuable in the nuances of each.

Savickas (2002: 154) makes explicit the epistemological and ontological position of Career Construction Theory:

> Career construction theory adheres to the epistemological constructivism that says we construct representations of reality but diverges from the ontological constructionism that says we construct reality itself.

I find this distinction sensible – and helpful – in relation to the 'reality' of the physical world. I remain ambivalent about its applicability to aspects of the social world that become reified in ways that permit them to affect people's behaviours. As example, repeated experience of discriminatory behaviour on the basis of ethnicity or gender constructs a 'reality' of perceived prejudice that contributes to the 'circumscription and compromise' explored by Gottfredson (1981; 2002). Such social realities, arising from class and other social constructs, contribute to the personal 'dispositions' of Bourdieu's theory (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 18). For Bourdieu, 'dispositions' are the many personal perceptions and attitudes arising from lived experiences and relationships that collectively contribute to 'habitus' which is the overall structuring and anticipatory framework of each individual, serving to shape future strategies and action (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). These ideas of 'disposition' and 'habitus' contribute directly to the theory of Careership, which draws extensively on Bourdieu's work.

Careership theory was developed by Hodkinson, with various colleagues, from empirical study seeking to explain what 'actually happened' in career development for a group of young trainees. It has subsequently been developed and adjusted by both its original main authors (Hodkinson et al., 1996) and through a series of other studies (listed in Hodkinson, 2008: 8). These studies now span age ranges from workforce entrants to older workers, and ability levels from early school leavers to masters students.

'The central idea in Careership theory is that career decision-making and progression take place in interactions between the person and the field they inhabit' (Hodkinson, 2008: 4). These are not interactions across a person-structure boundary, but the mutually shaping and re-shaping aspects of both the person and their circumstances: 'social structure interpenetrates the person' (Bowman et al., 2005).

Careership draws on Bourdieu's propositions of *disposition, capital, habitus, position* and *field*, which act together and recursively to exercise strong influences which maintain social structures and inequalities. Dispositions may in part reflect genetic inheritance, but for Bourdieu social structural shaping is by far the greater formative force. However the individual is always an active agent engaging with social circumstances, not a passive sheet on which structural impact is inscribed.

'Capital' refers to personal resources arising from life circumstances, and takes three forms: economic, social and cultural. Economic capital at its simplest denotes the economic resources available, for example through family background. It goes beyond this, in shaping – along with dispositions – attitudes, such as attitude to financial risk. Social capital refers to contacts and networks. The value of contacts depends on their relevance in a 'field', so artists and bankers may have little social capital in each other's fields, except where art is being treated as an investment commodity. It depends also on the capacity (disposition) of the individual to utilise – or exploit – contacts for their own purposes.

Cultural capital is less easy to describe (Bowman et al, 2005). It is best understood as the 'savoir faire' relevant to a field. It encompasses both cognitive and embodied aspects: dress, demeanour, language, behaviour. It is 'how to fit in'.

None of these forms of capital exist in a simple hierarchical form. 'High' social or cultural capital cuts little ice amongst those who pride themselves on common sense capability, in trades such as car or house maintenance, for example. This leads to consideration of how dispositions and capital are deployed in positions and fields. Dispositions, supported by capitals, are encompassed by Bourdieu in the term habitus. Since dispositions are socially formed, habitu*s* is 'the social embodied' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 128) but it also acts as the strategy-forming orientation to operate in a 'field'. Bourdieu uses the metaphors of both market and games pitch to elaborate field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The market metaphor emphasises that people bring purchasing power (capital) to a field. The metaphor of a game gives more attention to the playing field, its boundaries and the rules of the game that govern how players may behave; there are referees, team captains and coaches/managers. Bowman et al. (2005: 78) add a comment that again re-emphasises the interactive nature of Bourdieu's propositions: '… those with most capital have a clear advantage, not just in winning, but also in determining what the rules of the game are – what counts as winning'. It follows that people have a 'position' within a field, being central or marginal, influential or of limited impact.

Careership adds three further constructs specific to its area of concern: *horizons for action, pragmatically rational career decision-making* and *routines and turning points*. Horizons for action arise from the dispositions that make up habitus relative to perception of the field: 'the kinds of things that people like me can do'. It depends partly on personal propensity for agentic action (which must itself be somehow part of disposition) but Bourdieu does not convey habitus as deterministic, although this is a criticism that has been raised, but also strongly refuted (e.g. Reay, 2004). Horizons for action are also multi-directional. People perceive things to be

'below' them as well as 'beyond' them, and may reject an opportunity as being below their self-perceived expectations. Horizons for action may also be highly subject to gender bias.

Hodkinson asserts very strongly that the phrase 'pragmatically rational' describes not 'a' way that career choices are made, but 'the' way; they cannot happen otherwise. This requires a close reading of how he, and colleagues, define pragmatic rationality. Public policy (and much career support delivery) assumes rational decision-making which is cognitive, discursive, and assumes both knowledge and detached assessment of the full range of available options. Hodkinson and colleagues accept that there is always a rational aspect to career choices – people are not 'dupes' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) – but choices are also embodied in both physical and emotional senses. They are – inevitably – based on partial information (and we cannot accurately predict the future) and are constrained by the individual's horizons for action. Trusted people (the 'hot sources' of Ball et al. (2000), or 'valued career helpers' of Bosley et al., (2007)) have greater influence than 'hard' information. Pragmatism also extends to position within the field. Almost all career choices are subject to gatekeepers in the field – admissions tutors and employers – and to field conditions – current economic and labour market conditions, for example. Various capitals are useful in implementing career choices, but this is also dependent on the way they are perceived by each individual amongst such gatekeepers (perhaps whether a tutor brings to his recruitment activity a social justice and equal opportunities agenda, or a conviction that 'people like him' are best suited to his course).

'Routines' and 'turning points' are the way that Hodkinson and colleagues tried to explain how careers unfold over time. My use of the term 'unfold' avoids the premise of beneficial advancement that may be implicit in the term 'development'. Hodkinson draws on Strauss (1962) to propose the interlinked ideas of routines (periods of consolidation and little change of circumstances) and turning points (times of transition or transformation). Hodkinson and colleagues initially categorised routines as of three, and then later five, types, with these ranging from positively settling into a

preferred space through to reluctant 'socialisation' into an available option or further to uncomfortable non-adaption leading to distress or ending in fracture – self-initiated or at the decision of an employer or tutor. Turning points may be self-initiated ('push' or 'pull' desire for change) or arise from circumstance which might be personal (e.g. health, forced change of location) or external (e.g. redundancy arising from labour market conditions).

The linked notion of routine and turning point is the aspect of Careership that has most troubled Hodkinson. Finally (by 2008) he abandoned this distinction and proposed that a better way to understand an unfolding career was as a learning process, using 'learning' in its widest sense to include formal and informal learning from all life experiences. Further discussion of this point follows later in this section.

The exposition of Systems Theory Framework by McMahon and Patton contrasts with the explicatory discourse of Careership, being described as a 'theoretical map or frame of reference' rather than a theory of career development (McMahon and Patton, 2006b: 95). Whilst it is developed from a constructivist standpoint, they claim that it can accommodate other theories, including those from a logical positivist worldview. Figure 1 (next page) is a simplification of McMahon and Patton's (2006a: 208) diagram, which they build up successively through describing that which is internal to the individual, then closely contingent social elements (e.g. family), followed by the wider social environment such as local, national and global institutions. They emphasise the recursive quality of all elements in all levels of the diagram: multi-directional developmental changes that may be simultaneously both ontogenetic and interactive between elements.

Figure 1. Outline of the Systems Theory Framework of career development [Following Patton and McMahon, 1999]
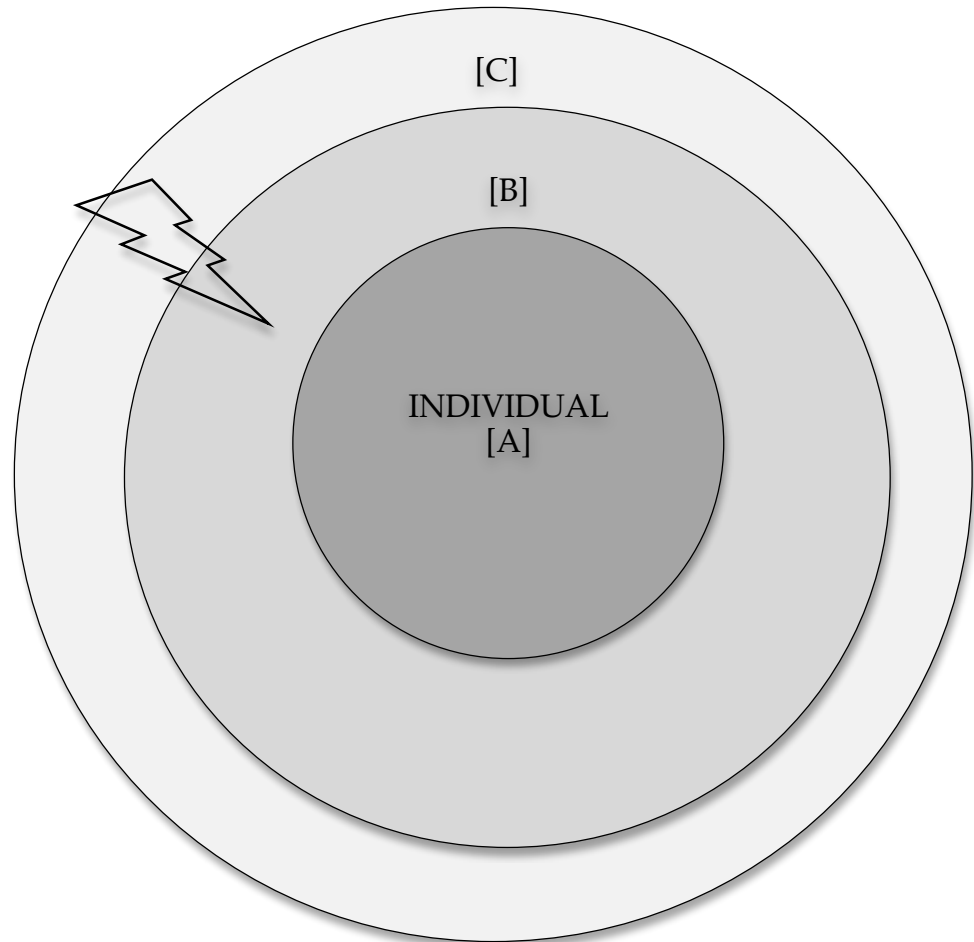
Area A is the individual and their personal qualities, capacities, knowledge and dispositions

Area B indicates their environmental-societal setting, such as family and community, institutions, geographical location, labour market and peer group

Area C is proposed to indicate a past-present-future time boundary

All items within and between all areas are recursive, changing progressively over time, and subject to occasional chance events, indicated by the lightning flash.

The simplification of the Systems Theory Framework in Figure 1 permits a comparison with habitus and field in Bourdieu's theory, which underpins the Careership theory. In the elaboration of each theory, the individual is examined in the context of both proximal and distant social surroundings: home and family, school, wider community setting, and the socioeconomic situation at regional and national level, and beyond. In the Systems Theory Framework, factors such as age, gender and beliefs are included in Area A, while 'the employment market' is generally in Area B. Some factors, such as 'family', straddle the A-B divide and may change over time, both in position (a young person becoming distant from her birth family) and in type (family being re-defined to encompass her own partner and their children).

The inner Circle (A) broadly aligns with Bourdieu's notion of individual dispositions which contribute to habitus, and are operational within an ever-evolving field made up of close and distant influences (Reay, 2004). Field is similar in concept to the outer elements of circle B in Systems Theory Framework. The notion of recursiveness, emphasised by Patton and McMahon (2006) as the ongoing two-way influence between all elements in the Systems Theory Framework, has a broad parallel in habitus which arises from 'the ways in which not only is the body in the social world, but also the ways in which the social world is in the body' (Reay, 2004: 432).

Systems Theory Framework offers a visual schema which can be used directly in discussion with clients. Discussion with each client can include consideration of which elements are relevant to the individual, and where to place them. Such discussions may bring clients to a clearer understanding of factors affecting their current life and possible choices, and are proposed as being helpful in fostering agency in managing (or choosing how to react to) those factors. Careership, following Bourdieu, is largely expounded as an explanatory framework for understanding career development, rather than a practical tool for use with clients (Hodkinson et al., 1996). Indeed, the specialised applications of vocabulary such as

'disposition', 'habitus' and 'field' (pervasively in the writings of Bourdieu and those engaging with his work) and 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson et al., 1996; Hodkinson, 2008) have the potential to be confusing in lay conversation.

Bourdieu himself emphasises that his concepts should be seen as a 'method' by the theorist-researcher in forming modes of inquiry and interpretation, and will therefore be elastic and subject to change through use (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Reay, 2004). In exploring a method that rejects a dichotomy of structure-agent or system-actor, focusing instead on the reflexive relationship between such alternatives, both Bourdieu and a follower such as Hodkinson are dealing with levels of ontological complexity which move much of their work beyond lay use. It rests with the professional to use their work intrinsically in their practice or overtly, through simplified explanation, according to need and circumstance.

One application of McMahon and Patton's (2006) framework that offers additional application in career guidance (Chapter 3) is its potential use as a dual-centred framework for the relationship between careers adviser and client. By placing two separate but adjacent 'individuals' into the framework of systems theory, it is possible to map both their shared and their separate qualities and influences. In identifying that both the 'individual' and the 'counsellor' have personal frameworks of influence, it has been used to address aspects of cultural difference, as each participant in the interview situation can represent within the framework their own system of influences (Arthur and McMahon, 2005).

Both Career Construction Theory and Systems Theory Framework pay considerable attention to the specific social influences that have impacted on the cognitive construction of the individual in the past, and which continue to operate at the point of career choice or career change. Hodkinson and colleagues (Hodkinson, 2008; Hodkinson et al., 1996;

Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997) appear to take a broader sweep, following Bourdieu's views on the development of habitus from a system of 'dispositions' which are not purely cognitive but embodied: 'part of the whole person, including the body' (Hodkinson et al., 1996: 146).

All three theories attend to career development over time – past, present and future. Change is implicit in the passage of time, from personal growth and maturational processes (Erikson, 1997) to the increasingly complex and individualised circumstances of the 'risk society' (Roberts, 1995). Whilst this is acknowledged in Career Construction Theory and the Systems Theory Framework, it is the focus of discussion and theory development in Careership theory. As alluded to earlier, in early expositions of the theory (e.g. Hodkinson et al., 1996), the longitudinal aspect of career development was explained as a series of 'turning points' interspersed with periods of 'routine' (Hodkinson et al., 1996: 141). Originally three causes of turning points were proposed: structural, externally generated or self-initiated. Routines too had three types: confirmatory, contradictory or socialising; a list which was extended with the addition of dislocating and evolutionary routines (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). This aspect of the theory has been increasingly problematised by its authors with regard to the difficulty of distinguishing turning points, sometimes extending over considerable periods, from routines, which might be quite short-term. Alongside routines and turning points, career decision-making is an integral part of career development, but is normally a process over a period of time, rather than an event (Hodkinson, 2008). In 2008, Hodkinson was focusing on learning, widely conceived to include formal and informal learning and 'ubiquitous in people's lives' (Hodkinson, 2008: 11), as an encompassing explanation of routines and turning points. There are however aspects emerging from the data reported later that lead me to find value in some parts of the earlier explanation (see Chapter 7).

Academic context for the three theories is different. Career Construction Theory and the Systems Theory Framework receive attention in the

specialist international journals on career and career guidance. There is also interplay between them, often elaborating the shared interest in the use of narrative techniques within the metatheoretical perspective (e.g. McIlveen and Patton's (2007) application of the theory of dialogical self to the life themes aspect of Savickas' theory of career construction). By contrast, Hodkinson's Careership model has been influential within the sociological and educational fields, but receives a lower level of attention (as judged by citations) in the career field. This difference may partly arise from the spheres of activity of the authors. Savickas, Patton and McMahon are all active in the field of career guidance and counselling research and practice, and develop their theory into the arena of practical application (e.g. McMahon and Patton, 2006b; Patton and McMahon, 2006a; Savickas, 2005), whereas Hodkinson and colleagues have done less to develop the career guidance application of their theory.

There are differences in the presentation of the three theoretical positions. Career Construction Theory is presented by Savickas (2002, 2005) as a set of sixteen propositions, rather in the way that Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology is presented as a set of postulates (Kelly, 1955). The Systems Theory Framework, as it relates to individuals (there are also models for other purposes, such as the career counselling dyad, school systems, and research) appears as a diagram of concentric circles of influence, and includes specified elements of recursiveness, change over time, and chance. Careership contrasts most sharply with postulated theory, following Bourdieu's proposal that theory further evolves in the process of its own use. Wacquant explains Bourdieu's work as 'sociological *method*' (Wacquant, 1992: 5, emphasis in the original) and later as a 'recursive and spiralling mode of thinking (which) unfolds over time and across analytic space' (Wacquant, 1992: 6). Hodkinson reflects this way of thinking in his review of the iterations of Careership through a series of studies, finding confirmation of the broad thrust of Careership theory, and applicability over a much longer time period in people's life span, but also identifying aspects of the theory that need 'important refinements' (Hodkinson, 2008: 8).

2.6 Careers advisers learning career theory

A considerable range of career theories, located in differing worldviews, would be encountered by novice careers advisers during their postgraduate training (training at this level being one criterion for my research sample). QCG Learning Outcome 6 - Understand models of career guidance and development and allied theoretical concepts – includes the following *Indicative statements*:

a) Develop understanding of theories, concepts, models and techniques relevant to own role and area of expertise.
b) Base own practice on understanding theory, concepts and effective practice relevant to role and client base.
c) Demonstrate understanding of theories of career development.
d) Demonstrate understanding of the range of ways in which clients manage change.
e) Evaluate theories, concepts and models of effective practice for their relevance and usefulness to role.

The extent of the coverage of differing theories, and the priority accorded to specific theories, would have varied between the course centres in the UK, and would have changed over time. However the number of course centres has always been small – five at the time when I trained, and currently thirteen in total – and the curriculum has been directed by centrally managed guidelines, as above, by a succession of national bodies. A reasonably extensive introduction to the array of career theories has always been part of the requirements, but as each trainee examined theories for him or herself, the use of different terminology for similar concepts in the different discourse traditions would have exacerbated problems in developing a personal theoretical position. Kuhn (1962) proposes that scientific paradigms use a language and way of formulating theory, rooted in worldviews, that makes it difficult to translate from one to another.

It is also important to remember that not only are career theories situated within distinct worldviews (Lyddon, 1989; Patton and McMahon, 2006b; Pepper, 1942) but trainee careers advisers approach their training from personal viewpoints developed through life experience and rooted in a personal worldview. A clearly expounded theory of career may exist on paper, but it moves to become a range of variegated understandings as it is read, absorbed and discussed by trainees, and indeed their tutors.

The process of engaging with career theory is not solely an exercise in applying reason. On most postgraduate courses the trainee careers advisers are encouraged to undertake considerable reflection on their own personal and career development, which is not always comfortable, and frequently crosses into the affective domain. Rachel, a participant in my study, described her experience:

> '... you have to look into yourself quite a lot, don't you, ... at the beginning part of the course. I found that really awful. That was quite a wake-up call actually. The kind of things, you know, that happened at school for me ... that wasn't that pleasant really.'

Development of self-reflective understandings of career through their own experience is, for each individual, augmented by their own beliefs about how society works, and how other people operate within social and cultural settings.

After completion of the QCG course, trainees will have needed to make their own way as they entered professional practice: perhaps using a number of theories eclectically, or forming a personal 'convergent' or 'metatheoretical' view on career, or adhering to one theory to the exclusion of others. An alternative position is that recognised theories, although encountered in some depth on the training course, may have been put aside afterwards in the interests of 'just getting on with job'. Winter (2012: 22) confirms this likelihood: 'Within career guidance, practice often exists in isolation from theory and research'. While use of theory may not be explicit, this does not remove theory from practice. Instead, implicit personal theories will be founded in the individual's worldview; they will guide action in the absence of the kinds of efforts at

reflective activity proposed by Winter (ibid.) and Mulvey (2011) in her call for 'existential CPD'.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the contested meanings of 'career'. I share the view that the potential power of the term arises from its conceptual positioning between the individual and his or her economic and social surroundings (Collin and Watts, 1996). There are five themes that are interwoven in career in all situations of contemporary usage: that it is *personal, developmental, interpretative, shaped* and *situated*. This potential power is released when careers advisers, amongst others, engage in a conceptual effort to formulate their own understandings as a basis for their professional action.

Career is also a boundary word, both proposing boundaries (e.g. work – non-work) and transcending them, for example between personal and institutional careers and between the academic discourses that relate to career (psychology, economics, education, amongst others) (McCash, 2008). The underlying concepts and the porous boundaries that are indicated by 'career' exist in a state of continual change and recursiveness.

Career theories need to encompass the changing, recursive and chance aspects of career, as well as spanning the range from individual to social, cultural and economic setting. Three theories, Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2002), the Systems Theory Framework (Patton and McMahon, 1999, 2006a) and Careership (Hodkinson et al., 1996), have been explored as potentially achieving this span, and I find it more helpful to hold them as contiguous theoretical positions with different shades of emphasis, rather than seeking to adhere to one to the exclusion of others. This position is made possible by their common underlying worldview, which is *contextualist* and accords with my own contextualist and social constructionist perspective. It is this contextualist underpinning that distinguishes these theoretical positions from many earlier ones; aspects of

earlier theories, such as the trait-and-factor matching approach, can be encompassed within the contextualist view to the extent that it has contemporary relevance.

While theories are situated within underpinning worldviews, those who come to learn and use them will hold, inevitably, their own worldview developed through lifelong relationships with people and the sociocultural settings of their life. Personal worldviews will shape what makes sense, and even what is comprehensible (Lyddon, 1989), for each individual. They may adhere to one theoretical position, or make eclectic use of several related ones (using 'eclectic' here in its earlier philosophical sense of selecting carefully elements that most suit them, rather than the more recent sense of just ranging widely). Career theory provides a conceptual base for career guidance practice, which is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: CAREER GUIDANCE – THEORY AND PRACTICE

Career counselling is not a simple three-step process that is completed when the client names an occupational aspiration. Career counselling is an exceedingly complex and fascinating process that involves both personal and work-related issues, knowledge and wisdom about the realities and possibilities of life, and a profound care for the welfare of humankind.

(Mitchell, Levin and Krumboltz, 1999: 123)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the practice of career guidance, on what careers advisers do in their day-to-day interviewing work with clients. I have retained the term 'client' reluctantly, as it can have overtones of dependency in comparison with the expertise of the careers adviser (Reid and West, 2011). My intention is to use it in the simple un-value-laden sense of a role description: the person engaging with a careers adviser when they are enacting their professional role. In this sense it is a role within a relationship, and that specific sense which would be lost if I resorted to a non-specific word like 'person'. The clients discussed varied widely in age and situation, and I have no other distinctive generic word for their role.

The range of careers advisers' tasks stretches far beyond interviewing (Cedefop, 2009; Nykanen at el., 2007; OECD, 2004). The activities of career guidance, originally identified as seven-fold by the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) in the 1980s, was extended to eleven in 1992 by the Standing Conference of Associations for Guidance in Educational Settings (SCAGES) and subsequently to fifteen by Ford in 2001 (Plant, 2001) (see Table 1, next page).

Conceptions of career will underpin all such activities, whether face-to-face with clients individually or in groups, or in the range of enabling, networking, advocating and managing actions that surround the core service delivery.

Table 1: Activities of guidance

UDACE	SCAGES additions	Ford additions
informing	teaching	signposting
advising	networking	mentoring
counselling	managing	sampling, work experience or learning tasters
assessing	innovation/systems change	following up
enabling		
advocating		
feeding back		

The focus for this research is narrowed to address specifically work with individual clients, as conveyed by the first five activities of the UDACE column. This limitation is both for manageability, and because the initial puzzlement that grew into the research was situated in that context.

This chapter identifies and examines a number of strands that have been present, and often contested, in career guidance throughout the last century. Connections are made back to the previous chapter on 'career', and a number of themes elaborated as the basis for further discussion, particularly in Chapter 9 which reports on careers advisers' discussions of their career guidance interviews with clients.

3.2 Origins

> *To each is given a certain inward Talent, a certain outward Environment of Fortune; to each, by wisest combination of these two, a certain maximum of Capability. But the hardest problem were ever this first: To find by study of yourself, and of the ground you stand on, what your combined inward and outward Capability specially is.*

With these words, published in 1833-34, Thomas Carlyle identified the problem which would wait another 75 years before Frank Parsons

proposed 'a social solution to the problem, namely the profession of vocational guidance' (Savickas, 2009). The earliest proposals for professional activity in this sphere contain all the strands that will be contested throughout its century of professional practice.

- Career guidance has philanthropic roots, and philanthropic motivation persists despite challenges from scientific method and public policy
- Career guidance recognises individuals as capable of change and development, although some practices are based on assessment of characteristics which are, by implication, seen as persistent
- The nature of professional expertise in career guidance is viewed on a spectrum from expert to companion
- The capacity of career guidance to combat social circumstance remains contested
- The advisability and the nature of career decision-making are debated
- Career adaptability gains greater attention as workplace change intensifies

These strands, which are elaborated in turn in the following sections, interrelate in ways which lead to them to become, at times, conflicted with each other. They also describe viewpoints on career guidance which are periodically in alignment or conflict with prevailing political ideologies. Career guidance, being largely funded from the public purse, can be seen as an instrument of both economic and social welfare aspects of public policy (Watts, 1991). In recent decades, governments have repeatedly sought to direct the activities of career guidance to achieve policy intentions, causing tension for careers advisers between the demands from their principle funding source and their own perceptions of how best to serve their primary clients, the users of their services (Colley at al., 2010; McGowan et al., 2009; Peck, 2004; Watts, 2001, 2010).

3.3 Career guidance as philanthropy

Career guidance has philanthropic roots, and philanthropy remains at the core for most practitioners, regardless of changing policy contexts. At the

beginning of the twentieth century, in Boston, Massachusetts, Frank Parsons addressed within the YMCA the needs of young men who were recent arrivals in the city (Parsons, 1909; Savickas, 2005, 2009). In Birmingham, UK, the Education office (still in the same building as at the beginning of the twentieth century) has on its top floor the dormitories which a hundred years ago housed young people embarking on apprenticeships. In a city with more miles of canals than Venice, many of these young people were canal children, supported in both training and accommodation by welfare officers of the Education department (Peck, 2004).

In Scotland the remarkable Mrs Ogilvie Gordon found time between being 'the most prolific female geologist of the nineteenth century' (Scottish Geology, n.d.) and negotiating for the representation of women in the League of Nations, to pioneer educational information and employment bureaux (Ogilvie-Gordon, 1908; Savickas, 2009). In Australia Edith Onians' extensive range of advocacy for social reform included concern about youth unemployment; she was a 'persistent and ultimately successful promoter of the concept of vocational guidance for school leavers' (Ramsland, 1984: no page; also 1994). Ramsland (1984) refers to Onians as 'a keen advocate of professional training for the social welfare worker and very much opposed to the blundering 'do-gooder' '.

Ramsland's comment reflects an aspect common among these pioneers of vocational guidance. They share a concern to bring scientific insight together with philanthropic care to the social conditions of the time, drawing on the new sciences of human behaviour and social action to address the problems of social dislocation and employment difficulties of young people. This motivation can be traced through the following century, changing in hue with the shifting social paradigms of the period. It remains apparent in the considerable disquiet expressed by careers advisers at losing their status as public servants during the Conservative government 'privatisation' of careers services in the 1990s, and is visible as a significant motivating force for those who remained with career guidance work despite the turmoil of the Connexions era (2001-2010) in

England (Baughan, 2011) and the resultant ethical dilemmas (Colley et al, 2010).

As well as persisting over time, the philanthropic motivation is consistent across different approaches to occupational psychology and vocational guidance, including those that are at times characterised as treating individuals as 'objects' of study and action. Evidence of this is clear in the mid-20th century views of Alec Rodger, best remembered for his rigorously scientific approach to 'matching' processes using the Seven-Point Plan (Rodger, 1952/1968) and for FMJ:FJM – 'fitting the man to the job; fitting the job to the man' (sic). In Rodger's inaugural professorial lecture (Rodger, 1961: 13) the definition of occupational psychologist stresses concern with 'people as workers, workers of every kind and level' emphasising 'satisfaction at work' alongside satisfactoriness.

As the approaches of developmental psychology (Ginzberg et al, 1951; Super, 1953/1968) and person-centred counselling (Rogers, 1951) impacted on the provision of career guidance, its philanthropic basis became a taken-for-granted assumption. The more significant tension, during the second half of the twentieth century, was an increasing policy concern with an economic agenda that, at its worst extreme, viewed people as workplace fodder. Where work was viewed from a New Right free market perspective as a 'disutility' (Hutton, 1995: 99) with hours of labour viewed from a narrow economic perspective as traded for wages, then the task of career guidance would be seen as serving the needs of supplying suitable labour for employers (Watts, 1996). Such views were countered by a career guidance (and wider) community that understood work as playing a more complex role in people's lives, as a source of personal identity, of social connection, and of 'meaning' (Law, 2003) and 'mattering' (Savickas, 2010b).

Internationally, systems to support career choice and career allocation diverged markedly following the Second World War. Up until that time

much of the work on vocational guidance in western societies was broadly based on notions of expert matching of personal attributes to the occupations which were necessary in an industrialised and commercial society; from then onwards personal choice became increasingly important, in line with the individualisation and increased expectation of personal freedoms of the ensuing decades (Giddens, 1991). By contrast totalitarian states such as China and the USSR, although pursuing different political ideologies, operated systems of allocation to work which prioritised attention to labour needs, and reflected an antipathy to individualism or to a personal search for career satisfaction or success. The countries of the former USSR, notably those which have acceded to the European Union, have paid great attention to career choice and career guidance systems as their economies have gone through the process of transition from planned economy to free market systems (Roberts, 2006; Sultana, 2003). The pressures to do so arise from the need to promote economic efficiency, coupled with concerns for both social equity and individual liberty (Watts, 1998). These concerns are noted by Sultana (2004: 30) in comments on the ten central and eastern European (CEE) countries in his Europe-wide study: 'Perhaps understandably, CEE countries are particularly firm in emphasising the priority of the individual over the needs of the social or economic system'.

'Priority of the individual' is not however unproblematic, but is conceived in differing ways by those holding different ideological viewpoints. New Right thinking prioritised individual autonomy and 'competitive individualism' (Hutton, 1995: 27), whilst seeking to limit, or where possible remove completely, the role of the welfare state (Watts, 1991). The individualistic view that 'winner takes all' has a counterpart in 'devil take the hindmost'. In the mid-1990s, the 'hindmost' included 16 to 17 year olds not in education, training or work, from whom benefit entitlement had been withdrawn in 1988. By the mid-1990s, contractual targets for careers services, and the funding tied to achieving targets, no longer included this group of young people, who had no formal entitlement to support from

careers services until the new labour government 'refocused' the careers service from 1997-98 onwards (Ford, 1999; Peck, 2004).

In the face of these constraints, careers services sought to pursue their philanthropic intentions by embracing alternative funding streams which could support work with unemployed 16-17 year olds. An example is the involvement of 20 careers services (out of the total of 47 in England) in the EU Youthstart-funded MAP project co-ordinated by the Institute of Career Guidance from 1995-97. Peck (2004: 86-87) refers to this project as a 'concept so radical that it was described at its launch as subversive, in the best sense that it reminded everyone, including the government of the day, of the importance of this element of careers work'.

3.4 The individual's capacity for development
This chapter of my thesis was first drafted in the centenary year of the publication of Frank Parsons' 'Choosing a Vocation' (1909), widely recognised as the first volume to address the concept of career in relation to career guidance and career choice. Within his commitment to 'scientific method' (1909: 3-4), Parsons' emphasis on 'self study' both foreshadows the emergent idea of career as personal and developmental as well as echoing the passing era of 'character' as conveying a notion of socially desirable attributes which an individual should strive to attain. In an indication of how he talks with clients, he proposes to them:

> Look yourself in the eye. Compare yourself with others … Watch the people you admire, note their conduct, conversation, and appearance, and how they differ from people you do not admire. Then see which you resemble most. See if you are as careful, thorough, prompt, reliable, persistent, good-natured, and sympathetic as the best people you know. Get your friends to help you form true judgements about yourself, and, above all things, be on your guard against self-conceit and flattery. Test every element of your character, knowledge, mental power, appearance, manners, etc., as well as you can.   (Parsons, 1909: 6)

This passage, with its statement of desirable aspects of moral character, might have been as recognisably applied to one of the characters in Jane

Austen's novels in the early 1800s as to the youth of Boston in the early 1900s. It mirrors the concern within the YMCA in America, an early provider of career support and vocational education, to promote 'character education … building self-discipline and habits of responsibility and morality' (Savickas and Baker, 2005). Parsons and other early pioneers of vocational guidance were concerned with the problems that arose as both migrants from rural areas and recent immigrants to the USA converged on America's rapidly expanding industrial cities. Savickas and Baker (2005) describe this as a period of both societal and intellectual change. The societal resulted in part from the large numbers of people, particularly those at the beginning of working life, being removed from established social backgrounds and needing to fend for themselves. Instead of expectations of moral character being impressed upon and expected of the individual, those individuals now found themselves with the need to support themselves, and consequently to think of oneself ahead of others.

Although Parsons' words appear to spring from a concern with character formation, it is significant for the practice of career guidance that he is proposing to individual young people that they are capable of change, and that change rests at least in part within their own control. This second theme accompanies career guidance throughout its century of development. Scientific 'matching' approaches to career guidance are frequently condemned for treating the individual as an entity whose personal bundle of capacities and inclinations are static. This, if it were true, would sit at odds with the philanthropic motivation of most career guidance practitioners. Rodger (1952/1968) asserts otherwise, urging users of the Seven Point Plan not to 'allow its cross-sectional pattern to blind us, even momentarily, to the fact that everyone's attributes and circumstances are continually changing' (1968: 360).

As the influence of developmental psychology on career guidance spreads and deepens, personal development becomes a 'given' (Ginzberg et al, 1951; Savickas and Baker, 2005; Super, 1953/1968). In early years,

individual career development is judged against normative frames and stages of progression, leading to vocational maturity. Later, Super (1980, 1990) moves the emphasis away from normative stages and toward ongoing adjustment.

In more recent decades, Holland's (1997) theory of vocational personalities has provided a widely used typology of career interest and environments (Leung, 2008). Whilst ostensibly based on measuring individuals to identify their three-letter code for matching individual to the work environment, Spokane (1994) acknowledges that Holland's work pays considerable attention to the change process which is necessary to resolve issues of incongruence. Others make efforts to understand change processes underpinning work adjustment (Dawis and Lofquist, 1984) and person-environment fit (Spokane, 1994).

In the Theory of Career Construction proposed by Savickas (2002, 2005), the author considers how personal narratives capture the 'dynamics of the open system' and explore 'how the self of yesterday became the self of today and will become the self of tomorrow' (Savickas, 2005: 58). Savickas emphasises the need to 'view storying as an active attempt at making meaning and shaping the future' (ibid). The method by which this happens is further theorised by McIlveen and Patton (2007) through application of the idea of the dialogical self with multiple *I-positions* interacting between themselves or with other people. Following the work of Hermans and colleagues (Hermans et al., 1992; Hermans, 2003), they refer to the dialogical self having 'the capacity to be innovative, that is, to change through positioning and re-positioning' (McIlveen and Patton, 2007: 72)

The preceding examples of change are in a direction assumed to be emancipatory. Change may alternatively arise from circumscription, constraint and accommodation to circumstances. In section 2.2, when exploring uses of the term 'career', I made reference to direction of

development, noting that 'perceived direction depends on viewpoint' (see page 24, where I contrast the social status of a criminal amongst the general public with status in his closer social group).

Roberts (1971: 150) refers to 'the unsatisfying nature of many jobs', noting that 'the capacity of vocational guidance to increase satisfaction that the labour force derives from work is limited by the nature of work itself'. In situations where only poor quality, unsatisfying work opportunities are available, people have the options to adapt or to refuse. Adaptation may take the form of socialisation into the work situation (Hodkinson et al., 1996; Roberts, 1971; Spokane, 1994) but Richardson (2012: 194) argues for 'what is good for people beyond what is adaptive'. Compromise for some people (but far from universally) is compensated by the leisure activity enabled by financial income. Other people will find constructive alternatives in marginal, domestic or illegal activity, using such alternatives as personal reactions to a feeling of personal failure which has arisen in part in response to a public discourse of free will that attributes any problems or limitations as the fault of the individual (Richardson, 2012; Zemblyas, 2006) rather than paucity or poor quality of opportunities.

3.5 Career professionals – experts or companions?

The societal shifts at the beginning of the twentieth century, which gave rise to career guidance, were happening at a time of intellectual change when new methods, based in science, were seen as essential to addressing society's problems. As physical sciences were revealing natural laws, so social sciences were anticipated to be able to reveal 'laws' of human nature (Savickas and Baker, 2005). The scientific study of individuals was anticipated to contribute to their management in society and direction within the labour market. Parsons (1909) argued:

> In the wise choice of a vocation there are three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitation, and their causes; (2) a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; (3) true reasoning on the relations between these two groups of facts.   (Parsons, 1909: 5)

Parsons' methods of vocational guidance include measurement of the individual against an 'objective' norm which resides in the 'expert' head of the counsellor. In this attention to capacity and personality, the self becomes a 'scientific object' (Savickas, 2009); this self as 'object' is reflected in Parsons' reference, above, to self-understanding as a 'group of facts'. Savickas (2009) addresses how personality was construed from the scientific viewpoint; he emphasises that '(p)ersonality as a scientific construct was initially conceptualised as an individual's adaptive response to the demands of industrial jobs and urban living. … From the very beginning of applied psychology, adjustment of self to society was its central construct' (*no page*).

This assertion brings a broader sweep to the notion of career as *shaped* (Section 2.3). *Shaping* needs to be understood as happening not only through an individual's proximate personal circumstances but in response to paradigmatic shifts at a societal level. Shaping is both purposive within an emergent paradigm, as character formation was in earlier and more stable social times, as well as adaptive to individual circumstance. Where character formation sought to shape selfhood through individual striving towards accepted moral standards, personality development emphasised selfhood as self-expression and striving to realise personal potential (Savickas and Baker, 2005). Self-expression and personal achievement are now seen as enacted through the day-to-day activity of choices, within a paradigmatic assumption of multiple options for a personal lifestyle (Giddens, 1991). In earlier social paradigms, people seldom envisaged choice beyond what they were 'born into', as remains the case in the least economically developed parts of the world now (Watts, 1998). Choice of occupation is one key aspect in the process of realising potential and developing a 'lifestyle' (Giddens, 1991: 6).

Under the influence of person-centred counselling (Rogers, 1951), careers advisers were encouraged to move away from being the expert sitting face-to-face, conducting assessments of their clients. The shift was to a

shoulder-to-shoulder position, seeking to work as companions in the task of addressing opportunities and barriers, and working alongside clients in their task of constructing their own career path. Such shoulder-to-shoulder work assumes the primacy of the person seeking and receiving help as the 'client' of career guidance. Since this individual is seldom the person meeting the cost of career guidance, questions of the role of the funder as a 'client', with potentially a competing viewpoint, are considered in the final section of this chapter.

Egan (1990: 11) encapsulates shoulder-to-shoulder positioning in his term 'the collaborative nature' of helping, emphasising additionally that clients bring their own resources into the helping interview. Egan's three-stage model, widely used in careers adviser training in recent decades, starts with helping clients to tell their stories. Where Egan's emphasis is on the story of the present predicament, those advocating the use of narrative techniques in careers work propose to start stories from further back (Cochran, 1997; Peavy, 1992; Richardson, 2012; Savickas, 2002, 2005). Savickas in particular focuses on specific discussion approaches in his outline of the case study of Elaine (Savickas, 2005: 60-68), which have been adapted and trialled in the UK (Reid and West, 2010, 2011). In broad terms the aim of narrative usage within careers work is to bring forward past life themes for present consideration and as a basis for 'storying' possible futures in a collaborative endeavour between a careers adviser and client. These approaches, while strongly advocated in theoretical work, have not yet been widely adopted in practice. Reid and West (2011: 176) discuss the need for 'new, flexible, and less reductionist models' for careers work, but also explain the difficulty for busy careers advisers to find 'time, space and confidence to apply a new approach' (ibid, p.181).

3.6 Career guidance and social structures

The early development of scientific techniques for vocational guidance was rapidly followed by criticism of its aims through a theme which intertwines with career guidance throughout its history: to what extent can, and should, the profession engage with social forces? In the early

days in the USA, criticism was framed as encouraging people to be reconciled to their fate rather than aiming high, following the American Dream. By the 1970s in the UK, Roberts (1971) and Willis (1977), amongst others, were arguing that social factors were so pervasive as to be beyond the capability of careers advisers to have any widespread impact, or any significant effect on the individual person.

Opportunity-structure theories of career see social position as the key determinant for career development. Circumstance is seen to inscribe into the individual expectations which are limited by family and immediate community. Roberts (1971: 143) asserts that 'the socialising influences in the wider society are so pervasive that it is doubtful whether any special vocational guidance service could hope to counteract them'. Willis, in 1977, echoed this viewpoint when he gave his book 'Learning to Labour' the subtitle *how working class kids get working class jobs'*. An exploration of how circumscription occurs is offered by Gottfredson in the various expositions of her Theory of Circumscription and Compromise (Gottfredson 1981; 1996; 2005). Whilst her theory is developmental and focuses on intrapersonal processes, it gives greater attention to the role of the social self over the psychological self in implementing career actions (Swanson and Fouad, 2010).

The balance and interaction between the parts played by social structural influences and individual psychological processes remains one of the key debates within career guidance theory. It was formative in the creation of the expanded list of the activities of career guidance (SCAGES, 1992). Direct work with clients had been central since the initial proposal of seven activities by UDACE in the 1980s, but the expanded list includes such items as *innovation/systems change*, clear suggestions that careers advisers should engage with social structures. In the USA, theories of work adjustment (Dawis and Lofquist, 1984) address person-environment fit from the premise that adjustment processes in available work have a strong influence alongside aspiration, supporting Roberts' (1968: 176) view that career ambitions are 'products of occupations that individuals

are entering rather than determinants of patterns that careers take'. Socialisation is seen as continuing in employment, and is not just a family, school and pre-employment factor (although those factors will be formative of perceptions of what work is 'available'). In recent years, the influence of the work of Bourdieu (Vilhjamsdottir and Arnkelsson, 2003) on the career guidance field has contributed to the debate, more so in the UK and Europe than in the USA.

Such broad-brush pictures of social conditions will always lose sight of the specific and less usual. Within the individualistic norm of contemporary American society, the Amish culture allocates work roles according to the needs of the immediate community; it is not uncommon for a birth announcement to be framed in occupational terms, such as 'To Aaron and Sarah, a young carpenter'. An enquiry addressed by a researcher to a young Amish adult about this apparently enforced career choice was met with an answer based in *gelassenheit* (the Amish concept conveying reluctance to be forward or self-promoting): 'Why would I seek anything else if this is what my community needs?' (Handrick, personal communication, 10 May 2011).

3.7 Career choice and decision-making

Undeniably, people reach stages in their life when choices have to be made. One obvious and relevant example falls at the age when statutory schooling ends. Those remaining longer at school are implicitly making a choice to do so, although they may not frame this explicitly as a decision point. Redundancy, geographical moves and health issues are common catalysts for engagement with the processes of career choice.

The process of choice amongst available (or perceived) options has generally been framed in career guidance as decision-making (Hilton, 1962; Tiedeman, 1961). While the terms 'choice' and 'decision-making' are at times used in the career field as if interchangeable, and focused on a point in time, they are somewhat distinct: 'choice' places emphasis on the selection of one among several options; decision-making focuses on the

psychological processes by which an individual decides on a choice. Constructionist views of career frame choice or decision as process over time, not an event (Hodkinson, 2008).

Discussion of decision-making has included models based on rationality, which may extend to formulae for incorporating the valence assigned to aspects of choice and the probability of outcomes. Such models, which assume that the path to 'decision' can be methodical and objectively evaluated, have been widely criticised as not reflecting 'real life' (Krieshok et al., 2009; Meijers and Lengelle, 2012). They correspond poorly with evidence of what people actually do, and they try to remove, or 'control for', 'emotion, intuition, affect and consultation as nonrational phenomena' (Phillips, 1994: 158), whereas Hodkinson (2008: 10) sees such elements as fundamental to pragmatically rational decision-making, which is 'not a decision-making style, but an important way of highlighting how career decisions are always made'. Part of the reason for the persistent focus on technically rational career decision-making is that it exists within the 'folk theory of career' (Bowman et al, 2005: 90) and as one of the 'seven myths about career' enumerated by Swanson and Nouad (2010: 8). Krieshok et al. (2009: 276) note also that the individual's belief in 'one right career for me' is too often met by the belief of 'one right career for you' in the mind of the career counsellors.

The primacy of models of rational decision-making as a psychological process has been challenged from a number of theoretical stances. One, following from the previous section, is that sociocultural conditions circumscribe choice to the extent that the concept is almost meaningless. The view has to be tempered by acknowledgement that some people move well beyond such circumscriptions, although the majority do not (Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, 2009). It also needs to be updated in the light of changing labour market patterns. It is no longer common to have a single type of employer or employment dominating a local labour market, as in the days of pit villages and mill towns. Both changing provision in education and training and new family structures result in

people having distinctive and varied biographies by their early 20s. Roberts, a strong proponent of opportunity-structure theory in the 1970s (Roberts, 1971), offers a shifted view two decades later (Roberts, 1995: 30-31):

> It is as if people made their life journeys in public transport vehicles – in buses and trains – and everyone from a given origin moved through life together, whereas now they follow their life course in private vehicles – in motor cars – and all weave their different paths. Of course, their cars have differently-powered engines: opportunity structures are not entirely dead. Young people's prospects still depend very much on their family background, their qualifications from initial education, where they live, their gender and ethnicity. But the point nowadays is that these all interrelate in a host of different configurations and it has become more difficult to generalise.

Some results of these changes, for Roberts, are that young people no longer have the benefit or the constraint of a view of their likely future, and that transitions to adult independence are longer. 'Prolonged transitions demand recurrent guidance' (Roberts, 1995: 31).

This revised view of opportunity-structures brings it closer to learning theories of career guidance. Learning is acknowledged in all career theories, and it plays a central part in some. Krumboltz's (1979) Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making (SLTCDM) is a prominent example, based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. The processes of adjustment in the theory of work adjustment (Dawis and Lofquist, 1984) and the circumscription and compromise of Gottfredson's (1981) theory are explored as learning processes. Hodkinson's (2008) recent reconsideration of the routines and turning points recasts career development as an ongoing learning process.

Learning extends beyond these theories of learning as the key driver of career development, to include the learning outcomes associated with the guidance process itself. Killeen and Kidd (1991) propose the identification and measurement of *learning outcomes of guidance* as a replacement for earlier measures of process, of client reaction, and of occupational match

and job stability – the last of these being 'objective' outcomes of guidance much favoured by those seeking tangible measures of return on investment. Their work reflects the 'shift in emphasis from handing down expert recommendations, to helping clients make their own decisions' (Killeen and Kidd, 1991: 2). The new approach 'looks beyond the immediate predicament of its clients, seeking also to provide them with personal resources which they can use repeatedly in the course of their careers' (ibid.). It uses the DOTS schema of addressing self-awareness, opportunity awareness, decision-making skills and transition skills (Law and Watts, 1977) with the addition of a strong focus on *transfer*: 'learning to conserve these skills and apply them under analogous conditions in future decisions and transitions' (Killeen and Kidd, 1991: 5).

Since Killeen and Kidd's work, attention to helping clients develop metacognitive skills for career development has been scarce. McCash (2006) addressed the issue, seeking to challenge the 'dominant matching paradigm' with its 'assumption … that clients *ought* to choose self-fulfilling work' (p.439, emphasis in the original) when for many people other aspects of their lives might offer more engaging self-fulfilment opportunities. Introduction of students (McCash speaks from a higher education careers setting) to theory on career development could enable a deeper and less instrumental engagement with career choice and life-design. McKendrick (2009) developed student-focused materials on career theories and reported some positive reactions, with the majority finding this approach useful to them. A minority, having engaged in the process, still clung to the idea that there was a perfect match for them, if they could find it, or they wanted just 'to be told what to do' (McKendrick, 2009: 5).

Law (1996; 2010) examines career-learning as a series of processes moving from *sensing* through *sifting* to *focusing* and finally to *understanding*. Later, the focus on learning as central to career development moves to embrace 'narrative' ways of learning, rather than 'paradigmatic' ones (Bruner, 1986; Law, 2003). Narrative ways of incorporating 'the interplay between the conscious, the unconscious and experiences' (Meijers and Lengelle, 2012)

are explored in some depth within the broad four-stage framework of Law's career-learning theory. Within schooling, the processes from *sensing* to *understanding* may be planned as a sequence associated (but loosely) with chronological age. For careers advisers working with the hardest-to-help, they are reflected in the concept of 'distance from the labour market' (a concept increasingly addressed in policy contexts, e.g. O'Connor and Boreham, 2002). One careers adviser in this study offered as an example interview the activities of the initial *sensing* stage of the path towards learning and employment for a school leaver with special needs.

3.8 Career adaptability, resilience and workplace change

Labour markets are changing, and those who seek employment have to find a way to accommodate themselves in relation to new workplace conditions. Broad shifts from extractive and manufacturing industries to service jobs and to the information society are widely documented. Moynagh and Worsley (2005) provide an excellent summary, along with the de-bunking of some persistent myths. Savickas et al. (2009) propose distinctions between core, peripheral and marginalised employees, reflecting a vision of a 'thirty, thirty, forty society' (Hutton, 1995) in which only the final forty per cent have stable, salaried employment with access to benefits such as company pension schemes. Some of the middle thirty percent will be, by choice, in contractual work with significant reward in both finance and enjoyment, but many will be engaged on short-term or flexible contracts as their only available option. The other thirty per cent is disadvantaged, at the edges of the labour market, which Richardson (2012: 193) describes as one not only of 'radical change; it is also one of deteriorating conditions'. To borrow Bourdieu's expression, many people make a 'choice of the necessary' (Bourdieu, 1987: 372).

Richardson (2012: 193) goes on to argue that adaptation is not the best answer where the work available is of very poor quality: '… to the extent that adaptation implies adapting to prevailing social conditions, something beyond adaptation is required to respond to the radical changes in contemporary lives'. For Richardson, as with Savickas et al.

(2009), the argument is for career guidance to engage in a wider 'life design' role. While these authors propose attention to life-wide personal development, seeing career issues as one element of 'much broader concerns about how to live a life in a postmodern world' (Savickas et al. (2009: 241), their focus is generally on how to resolve tensions between different life roles, and between personal values and values implicit in the workplace. Bright and Pryor (2005, 2008) promote the development of qualities that allow people to handle chaos: to seize unexpected opportunities and to navigate through difficulties. Career resilience – the capability to address uncomfortable career situations through agentic action and self-awareness – becomes more desirable than adapting to poor conditions and chance events. Others recognise that resilience may have different manifestations, including constructive alternatives which are pragmatically rational for some people but fall outside socially normative action, from hidden economy work to criminal activity (Colley, 2006; Ford, 1999).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored some significant themes that contribute to career guidance being the 'complex and fascinating process' of the chapter's opening quotation. The former certainties of an expert role have long dissolved, but conversely the claims that the impact of social structures vitiated any beneficial effects of career guidance have also been modified as transitions into and progression through career become prolonged and more complex (Roberts, 1995).

The philanthropic roots of career guidance have been extended, in increasingly segmented societies, into a concern for social justice (Arthur, 2006; Irving, 2008). This concern for the welfare of each individual is linked to a developing understanding of the multiple ways in which people learn and change. As careers advisers move from 'expert assessor' to 'expert companion' in their work with clients, they need to help them to interact with the multifarious aspects of changing work and learning opportunities in a changing society. This help is no longer seen as being

focused on a point-in-time rational decision, but as an extended process of learning through experience and making pragmatic choices among both the structured and the chance opportunities that occur. Savickas (2009) captured these changes as he traced the 'self' in vocational psychology from 'object' (of study) to 'subject' (the changing and developing individual) to 'project' (ongoing construction of identity through relationships). This shifts the focus towards the development of adaptable and resilient behaviours, which allow individuals to gain appropriate career-related experiences in the context of their broader 'life-design' project (Savickas et al., 2009). Proposals for self-construction as a lifelong project could be strengthened by increased attention to the *learning outcomes of guidance* (Killeen and Kidd, 1991) and development of the limited attempts to encourage metacognitive skills through encouraging direct engagement of clients with career development theory (McCash, 2006; McKendrick, 2009).

The primacy of the welfare of each individual client, within a broad commitment to social justice, provides the core focus for codes of ethical practice developed by professional associations (e.g. ICG, no date). Acknowledging that 'there is no single approach to the range of ethical dilemmas that members face in their daily practice' the ICG Code of Ethics asserts the precedence of the interests of individual clients above all other parties, including members' employers where this would 'compromise the best interests of individual clients' (ICG, no date). Higher level professional activity, such as career guidance work, draws upon multiple contexts for understanding, and requires 'a view of professional practice as the temporary resolution of competing social demands and needs' (UWE, 2011).

As is the case for many publicly funded services, professional dilemmas for careers advisers will be compounded by issues arising from social controversy and political ideology. The concepts which underpin my understanding of these themes are further explored in the next chapter,

while Chapter 9 returns to the specific theme of career guidance in my reporting of how careers advisers discuss their professional practice.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

All narratives are suspect, unreliable. The stories we tell to make sense of our lives are essentially made up.

From 'Ghosting' by Jennie Erdal (2004)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the social constructionist position from which I approached the study, including how that position developed from early life experiences and was recursively reinforced within professional practice. It explores the 'self' as having both aspects of stability as well as being in constant state of (re)construction, constantly making and re-making meaning from experience.

During the research I had an evolving, and somewhat migratory, engagement with different methodological approaches, and this chapter explains how I eventually came to abandon an initially attractive one as it did not accord with my social constructionist views. This is followed by a discussion of complex issues - and stages of ambivalence – that were gradually resolved in the final stages of analysis and reporting. Central to these processes was finding a way to hear, respect and recount the voices of individual participants, which are not single but composed of a variety of contrapuntal *I-positions* (McIlveen and Patton, 2007). Then I wanted to find ways to combine the voices of my participants and their experiences with my own understanding of what they said.

Interviewing is a core professional skill in careers work, and has been central to my professional life as careers adviser and later as researcher. I convey here the way that I became engrossed in studying more fully the conduct of interviews, ways of transcribing and how to draw meaning from the data, which throughout the research process remained auditory – constantly replaying the recordings while working with the transcripts – as well as existing in written form. I have therefore written this chapter in the form of the journey through interviews, transcription and analysis,

unpicking the fundamental issues about ways of 'knowing' during the journey. The theoretical story needs, then, to start with me, the traveller.

4.2 Personal history

Work roles cannot be divorced from underlying assumptions. My work in career guidance would not have been possible without the underlying belief that 'choice' is to some extent 'free'. In an early assignment for the doctoral programme, I wrote as follows:

> There are certain ontological beliefs and values that are inherent in career guidance. It would be worrisome to see a careers adviser reading horoscopes. Essential to the being-in-practice of a career adviser is the belief that people can and do play a significant role in shaping their own self and their future. Every act, or inaction, on the part of a person seeking career guidance is a part of their constructing both a 'learning and work' life and their very personhood. The role of the careers adviser is to support and assist that process of career- and self-construction, and to do this they must believe that change is possible, and that actions that bring change are within the remit of the person seeking advice. This belief is integral to the practice of career guidance, even if it is not shared or understood by the person seeking help.

There is a long history of debate in philosophy about determinism, free will and compatibilism (Adamson, 2011; Honderich, 2005), and concomitant positions on moral responsibility. For each of us, our personal position is shaped through life experiences, and my own experience has engendered in me a strong sense of freedom of action, and the moral responsibility that this entails.

After an increasingly troubled adolescence moving between a grammar school promoting high ethical standards and personal responsibility, and a home shaped by an amoral or immoral father, who acted only in accord with his own interests, I left home abruptly at the age of eighteen. Living entirely on one's own resources from a young age means that survival is 'up to you' (Adamson, 2011). It is possible to dig deeper. Ostensibly, there were specific teachers and experiences which enhanced my sense of personal agency. I also need to acknowledge, if reluctantly, that my father's refusal to conform to social expectation brought independent

action within my own scope for action: in Bourdieu's term, my disposition (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

There is a fine line here between, on one side, a possibly deterministic view that my school and my family, in their different ways, created this disposition in me; on the other, a sense that all people are 'condemned to be free' (Sartre, 1943/2003: 574). In acknowledging Sartre's 'radical distinction between physical matter and consciousness, the latter characterised by its freedom' (Law, 2007: 336), I not only have a sense of my own freedom to act – to make certain choices when I could have chosen otherwise – but I also carry the moral responsibility for my own actions. This will later become a strand within my discussion of research ethics.

It is important to end this section with a reminder that my positioning on 'agentic action' (Richardson, 2012: 214) is personal. Other people – and I need to be particularly aware of both the participants in my research and the readers of this account of it – may feel shaped or constrained by their social upbringing, environment and experiences. The following analysis of the data will show this to vary between individuals, and to be explicit for some participants and implicit for others.

4.3 Theoretical principles

Berger and Luckmann (1967: 13) address the definition of 'reality' as 'a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognise as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot 'wish them away')'. In undertaking this research, I needed to hold in mind two concepts. First, even the 'reality' which cannot be 'wished away' has different meaning and relevance for different people. Second, that I see 'social reality' as being of a different quality from the 'reality' that I deal with in tending my garden, where I ensure physical conditions such as good soil structure and adequate nutritional elements for healthy plant growth. I tend my garden in the 'natural attitude' (Husserl, 1913/1982) of a common-sense fact-world; nor am I a gardener who talks to plants or attunes my seed sowing

to lunar influences. I respect Stake's (1995: 101) suggestion that to ignore an external reality is a 'poor way to cross a busy street'.

In both cases, these 'realities' may be construed differently by different actors. My garden will seem a chore, not a delight, to some people. The car driver on Stake's 'busy street' is likely to construe the setting differently from a pedestrian. But the scene is not limited to two viewpoints. Amongst both drivers and pedestrians there will be styles of action from the cautious to the risky, depending on many personal factors and experiences, and each actor will be adjusting their specific present actions in accordance with their assumptions about the specific characteristics they perceive in individuals in the other group.

This view of social reality, and how it may be understood, brings me as researcher as centrally into the research endeavour as the participants who agreed to play a role in my study. Throughout the processes of interviewing, transcribing, listening, analysing and describing, I remained constantly aware of my own active – and imperfect – role as interpreter and storyteller of other people's experience.

4.3.1 Social constructionism

In the early stages of the professional doctorate programme, I came to understand that my instinctive worldview was a social constructionist one, which accords well with the understanding of agency and disposition outlined in the previous section. Following Richardson (2012), I find it helpful to consider social constructionism as a metatheory or metaperspective. My professional work with clients, and subsequently as a trainer of other careers advisers, had been based on a constructionist approach, and I had made use of specific techniques based on personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1955; Bannister and Fransella, 1986; Offer, 1995).

The terms constructivism and (social) constructionism are not always clearly differentiated, at times being used as near-synonyms, and with the Vygotskian social constructivism occupying some middle area (Bassott, 2011). I have struggled with conflicting descriptions of the ontological distinction underlying these terms. With selective reading and citation, one could argue for a continuum from a dualist 'constructivism' to a non-dualist 'relational social constructionism'. Whilst such a continuum is elaborated in the following paragraphs, it is not consistently applied, even by cited authors, let alone in constructivist and constructionist literature more widely.

Constructivisms, based in the underpinning discipline of psychology, acknowledge the role of each individual in making personal sense of an external world, a 'conceptualised personal reality' (Patton and McMahon, 2006b: 4). Vygotskian social constructivism takes a step towards acknowledging the social aspect of conceptualisation:

> The word 'social', when linked with the term constructivism, is important in two different ways. Firstly, it highlights the interpersonal nature of learning, where people construct knowledge and meaning through interactions with others (such as in career guidance interviews and career education group sessions). Secondly, it emphasises the social and cultural context of learners, characterised by the norms and values passed on through generations. … Social constructivism argues that people develop *in* society, and are immersed in, and inseparable from their culture.
>
> (Bassott, 2011: 8; emphasis in the original).

This view moves away from knowledge being gained purely cognitively, arguing that social participation is central to knowledge acquisition (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As a result of social participation, each person's actions are shaped by the meaning that the world has for that unique individual (Gergen, 2009).

The distinction which I have adopted between constructivisms and social constructionism is summarised by Gergen (2009: 26) as follows:

> … constructivists tend to place meaning within the mind of the individual, while social constructionists locate the origin of meaning in relationships.

Hodkinson (2008: 11) is more specific about this distinction in a critique of social learning theory as expounded by Krumboltz (1979):

> He saw the individual as separate from and interacting with other people and contexts, and learning through those interactive processes. There was a failure to understand the positioned nature of the individual, and that the person is an integral and influencing part of their fields.

This sits consistently with the distinction elaborated in relation to career by Young and Collin (2004: 375):

> [Constructivism] focuses on meaning-making and the constructing of social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes while [social constructionism] emphasises that the social and psychological worlds are made real (constructed) through social processes and interaction.

Social constructionism is based on assumptions that the social world is internalised within us, and contributes to the way we interpret our ongoing experience: 'social structure interpenetrates the person' (Bowman et al., 2005). This 'interpenetration' of our social world in us contributes to and shapes the way we interpret our ongoing experiences (Gergen, 2009). This assumption that individual meaning-making is shaped by our social interactions applies both to myself as researcher and to the participants in the study, when they interact with me and in their professional activity (Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2008). A social constructionist perspective places on me, as researcher, a commitment to seeking the meaning behind the words and labels used by research participants (Bosley et al., 2007), for which purpose understanding contexts and relationality is a crucial aspect (Patton and McMahon, 2006b; Richardson, 2012). Context includes people's (participants' and my own) past and current social and professional contexts, as well as the specific context of the research discussion. Knowledge and understanding are subjective, not objective, and the usefulness of the study is directly affected by the extent to which I can understand, interpret and explain the life-worlds of others (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000; Riessman, 2008). Interview design and interviewing skill make a significant contribution to the dependability of data generated for the study (Mason, 2002).

4.3.2 Stability and change

'Career', in the sense that is relevant for this thesis, is a social construct. Career has been depicted metaphorically as a 'pathway through life', but is different in nature and quality from the 'reality' of the stone or grass of the physical pathways in my garden. Both physical and social 'realities' have aspects of stability but are also in a constant state of change both internally and in relationship with their surroundings (Patton and McMahon, 2006a). As I sit and write, my physical body breathes in oxygen from the air, utilises it at a cellular level and excretes through exhalation the waste product of carbon dioxide. My body, although the same height and weight as when I was 18 years old, is unquestionably a different-but-same body. The room around would be depleted of oxygen if it were not linked to natural ecosystems that use carbon dioxide and replenish the oxygen I need.

Mental and social processes have these same qualities of stability and change as I have just described for the physical world. My mind and the ways in which I individually experience and understand the world continue to undergo lifelong processes of change, in interaction with the social, cultural and physical environment in which I find myself. Conversation, study and reading are obvious examples of mental development; they have a different quality from the 'flow' that I experience as time disappears in my garden (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008) and the elation of spirit I feel as I walk on a cliff-top overlooking the sea, but all leave me subtly changed. The change in external physical 'reality' is evident at levels from tectonic plate movement to microbial and quantum change. The physical and mental are blended in the famous dictum of Heraclitus (c. 535 – c. 475 BCE) that 'you cannot step into the same river twice', which applies both to the ever-changing flow of water in the river and to the ever-changing 'you' who cannot be the same (physically or mentally) when taking the step a second time. Whilst the individual is 'an open system, constantly interacting with the environment' (Patton and McMahon, 2006a: 4), individuals also seek stability and explain themselves as retaining identity over time. In order to 'go on' in Giddens'

(1991: 35) term, people need some continuing sense of themselves as a human being. I share the view that '(e)mbedded with self-change is self-stability – we are all changing all the time and simultaneously remaining the same' (Mahoney and Lyddon, 1988: 209).

4.3.3 The dialogic self

To this point, I have considered social constructionism broadly, and looked specifically at the interplay of self-change and self-stability over time. The notion of the dialogic self adds syncretically to these ideas, sharing a common ontological position, rather than being discrete from the previous ideas. The question is whether we can each be described as a single, consistent psychosocial entity at any stage in our life, or whether we act out different personal qualities as we play different roles in our life-space. The notion of the 'dialogic self' (Hermans, 1992) has a lengthy history in constructionist thinking, following from Bakhtin's (1929/1984) study of the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky's work. The 'dialogic self' stands in contradiction to Descartes' 'cogito' which 'is based on a disembodied mental process assumed to be essentially different from the body …' (Hermans et al., 1992: 29). By contrast, the dialogical self may engage in a number of 'types of talk' each engendered by or arising 'out of a relation of difference or differentiating' (Wegerif, 2008: 356).

Notions of relationality are developed extensively in social constructionism. Gergen (2009) argues that our use of language is developed through relationships, as are our understandings of most aspects of the world we inhabit. Objects do not require us to understand them in a single way. A tree may be understood as beauty, shade, food-provider or fuel for a fire. We learn which of these meanings are important in our own world through our relationships with others. As we operate in different settings and with different people, we may act in different ways. McIlveen and Patton (2007) adopt Herman's (1992, 2003) proposal of *I-positions* as the many positions in both time and space from which a person may act. Some *I-positions* are recognised in professional and public spaces, others in family and social space, and some may relate

to an imagined or lost 'other' in the relationship. In different circumstances people may speak from different *I-positions*, which is something that I tried deliberately to utilise in the two-part structure of my research discussions with participants. In the early half of the discussion, I encouraged stories of personal life and experience; in the later part, I encouraged their professional voice. More detail follows, in a later section, on the narrative techniques through which I sought to achieve this in practice.

The 'self' as a dialogic complex using different *I-positions* extends beyond the use of speech. While language is a primary means of communication, there are other forms. One is visual and auditory media such as artwork and music, for example, which fall outside my current scope. The other is embodied communication which encompasses a range from general demeanour, with overtones of social position and personal manner (Riessman, 2008) to specific action in a specific site. The latter is often termed 'non-verbal communication' in the professional setting of careers work, and is included in training for such work. The embodied nature of communication is considered further in my discussion of interview performance.

4.4 A diversion: the meandering research journey

Research is a journey, and seldom one that follows a straight line. I embarked on this research journey with a conviction that narrative approaches would be useful in my methodology. 'Narrative' in research is variously used to refer to the stories told by people, including users of career guidance and participants in research, and the explanatory stories told by researchers to represent their research, termed 'narrative inquiry' by Clandinin et al. (2007: 21). Some argue that 'narrative ways of thinking about the phenomena under study are interwoven with research methodologies' (Clandinin and Murphy, 2009: 598). Narrative ways of knowing (Bruner, 1986) apply to the researcher as well as the researched subject. Narratives are situated in relationships: they are told *by* somebody and *to* another, so a narrated event will be framed by the audience as well

as the recollection. It will be one type of talk, an adopted *I-position* (Hermans, 1992) which differences or differentiates (Wegerif, 2008), so my use of a narrative is a further element in an eclectic but coherent research approach.

The recent narrative turn (Chamberlayne et al, 2000; Merrill and West, 2009) apparent in psychological and social science fields has drawn much attention in the field of career guidance theory (Reid and West 2011a; Savickas 2001b, 2010b), although it is commonly remarked that it has as yet had little impact on practice in the UK (Bimrose, 2006; Reid and West 2011a, b).

Through early trial interviews in the doctoral programme, I confirmed that narrative-based interview methods offered the potential to develop insight into practitioners' experiences of career (their own careers and those of the clients they sought to help). A question remained about the exact location of the experience I was seeking to study. If a phenomenologist looked at my area of interest, her concern as researcher might be to understand this social phenomenon (i.e. 'career') 'from the actors' own perspectives … describing the world as experienced by the subjects' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 26). My endeavour was not to develop this kind of understanding of career per se. The focus for my study tended more towards the participants themselves, but I was not intending to explore individual life and career histories. The conundrum of what exactly it was that I intended to study was illuminated by reading in the literature of phenomenography.

4.4.1 Phenomenography: how did it help … and hinder?

The study was to look at career advisers, and how they conceptualise career. But neither 'careers adviser' as the focus of study, nor 'career' as the focus of study quite captured the core interest. The eureka moment can best be demonstrated by a diagram:
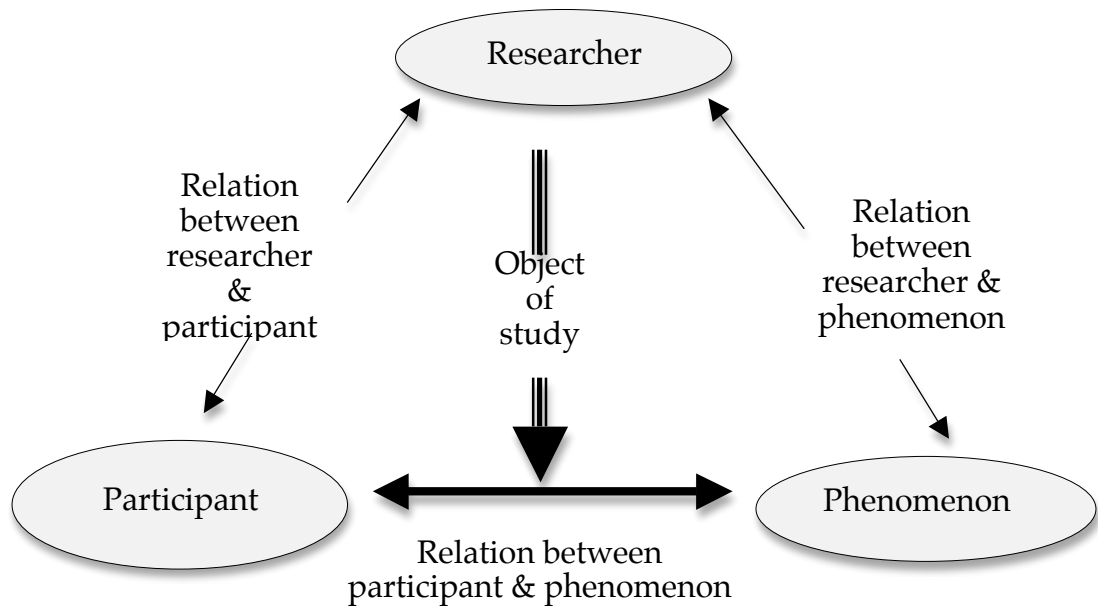
Figure 2. Phenomenography: Object of Study. Adapted from Bowden (2005: 13)

Advocates of a phenomenographic approach usually term it *second order* research, not examining the phenomenon (career) per se, but the way that the research participants relate to the phenomenon (Francis, 1996; Trigwell, 2000). They make frequent assertion of its non-dualistic ontology, which does not view an object 'career' and any subject, such as 'careers adviser', as separate. The relation between any individual and any object of their experience implies that neither the person nor the object 'would be identically the same without the relation between them' (Marton, 1996: 175). This position is confirmed by Ebenezer et al. (2010) who explain that phenomenography 'presupposes that conceptions of reality do not reside within individuals (individual capacity or developmental stages) because people's conceptions of reality are particular-to-particular context and problems raised within that context' (p.28). Although these descriptions of the phenomenographic approach use a distinctive phraseology, they appeared to sit coherently with my ontological position and understanding of relationality as I had come to understand them through reading within the literature on social constructionism.

In general, phenomenographic studies make the assumption that each individual has their particular view of any phenomenon, and researchers are concerned with identifying the range of different views held by different individuals (variations in the horizontal arrow which I have labelled 'relation between participant and phenomenon' in Figure 2). Phenomenography was developed within a university education faculty by people concerned particularly with investigating aspects of students' learning in the sciences (Dall'Alba, 1996). For these original phenomenographers, their primary concern was to design learning approaches, through 'mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them' (Marton, 1986: 31). This mapping would constitute an 'outcome space' that contributes to implementation of the Variation Theory of Learning (Bowden, 2005; Hella, 2007; Trigwell, 2006). However, there is elsewhere in phenomenographic writings the possibility that individual people may hold concurrently different conceptions of a single phenomenon, a state termed 'conceptual dispersion' by Linder (1993; also Linder and Marshall, 2003). This seemed to accord with the multiple *I-positions* proposed by Hermans (1992), the contrapuntal voices of the Listening Guide (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Gilligan, 2003), and reflected a particular interest which I wanted to explore within this study.

At the stage in my research when I was conducting the interviews, I perceived an apparent alignment between phenomenography and my narrative approach positioned within a social constructionist metaperspective (Richardson, 2012). The phenomenographic literature advocated a style of interviewing that opened discussion with participants through a limited number of research topics, carefully used in the same way with each participant. Further researcher input would be limited to requests for more detail or clarification, carefully reflecting the participants' own words in the ways these requests were phrased (Bowden 2000; Green, 2005). This aligned closely with the narrative techniques which I had trialled. The processes for identifying the

'variations' in conceptualisation placed heavy emphasis on detailed attention to the transcripts through reading and re-reading. The idea of a structured 'outcome space' constructed from these hierarchically arranged variations seemed attractively tidy.

It is important to me to record here the apparent suitability of a phenomenographic research approach at one point in the research journey, as it was foremost in my thinking during the period when I conducted the research interviews. From the first moment of tackling transcription of recorded conversations, and for the rest of the research project, phenomenography became increasingly problematic, to the extent that it plays finally a small part in the overall conduct of the research. As I progress with descriptions of interviews, transcription, 'listening' to the data (Gilligan et al., 2003) and working on methods for analysis, I will make reference to the reasons for my movement away from phenomenographic methods. In doing so, I will create a critique of phenomenography as it might be applied to research in the social world.

4.4.2 Narrative and phenomenographic interviewing – resemblance and divergence?

Narrative and phenomenographic approaches to research interviewing have resemblance in that both assert the possibility of the expression of experience through conversation (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000), and that the researcher can, to some considerable extent, engage empathetically with the world as experienced and perceived by another person, the research participant (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000; Josselson, 1995). In both approaches the interviewer's effort is directed to following the lead of the participant after the succinct introduction of the (or a) topic of interest (Gilligan et al, 2003; Green, 2005). The interviewer cedes control of the detailed interview process, accepting diversion, unexpected detail and (apparent) irrelevance as part of the interview process (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Riessmann, 2008), retaining mainly the role of seeking clarification or elaboration as stories unfold. In conducting interviews, I made considerable effort not to interrupt, heeding Thompson's (1978: 172) warning that interrupting a story if the episode appears irrelevant cuts off

not just that information but a possible range of subsequent offers of information that might have been relevant.

Leading exponents of the phenomenographic approach (e.g. Bowden and Walsh, 2000; Bowden and Green, 2005; Dall'Alba and Hasselgren, 1996) emphasise the need for preparation of a small number of opening questions, and for all further interactions during interviews to reflect the research participant's own words, feeding these back and seeking further comment or clarification. The intention is to 'avoid introducing new material that is not part of the planned interview structure' in order to avoid the interviewer 'adding her own concepts or ideas to the interview' (Green, 2005: 36).

As I worked on, I began to see epistemological divergence in the thinking behind the instructions for interview procedures. Bowden (2005: 14) explains the reason for his phenomenographic interview style as follows: 'This means that all subjects receive the same information from the researcher and so their responses are to the same phenomenon'. This diverged from the social constructionist view that the perception of any phenomenon is socially, culturally and personally shaped. Coal is a very different phenomenon to the miner, the impoverished and cold householder, the commodity trader, the geologist and the environmental campaigner.

Mishler (1986: 2) contests any notion that an interview conversation can treat language as a neutral tool: 'Language is not a clean logical tool like mathematics that we can use with precision …'. From a constructionist viewpoint, words and their use in speech are seen to be individually shaped by personal, social and cultural experience. The more similar the backgrounds of the participants in an interview conversation, the greater the likelihood of overlapping use and understanding of language. But even between family members and within longstanding marriages, speech and language usage may divide people as well as unite them (Tannen, 1986, 1992). A research interview will seldom be conducted between

people with 'shared assumptions, contextual understandings, common knowledge' (Mishler, 1986: 1) – indeed the primary purpose of much research interviewing is to gain an understanding of those who are 'unlike'.

Bowden's (2005) view on providing 'the same information' is at odds with the concept of people adopting different *I-positions* (Hermans, 1992, 2003; McIlveen and Patton, 2007). Within the phenomenographic literature Linder and Marshall (2003) develop this possibility through their notion of 'conceptual dispersion', suggesting that an individual may hold different conceptions of a phenomenon depending on circumstance. Their example is of a physicist referring to a vacuum cleaner 'sucking up dirt' in a domestic situation, where in his laboratory work the notion of 'sucking' would be nonsensical, and the movement of dust particles would be explained by outside pressure 'pushing' them into the vacuum (Linder and Marshall, 2003: 276). I understand their use of 'conceptual dispersion' to differ from the notion of 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger, 1957) where attitudes and behaviour are in conflict. In the work sphere, cognitive dissonance might arise for a person holding a job in an organisation with values that differed fundamentally from her own, or required her to interact with people in a manipulative way that she found personally inauthentic. Conceptual dispersion seems to me to align more closely with Husserl's (1913) development of 'natural attitude': that we can adopt an every-day view of phenomena in going about our daily life, but need to think about them differently, divesting ourselves of 'natural attitude', when we address them through scientific or philosophical approaches. Cognitive dissonance is a troubled state, when two different belief systems or modes of action are at odds within the individual. Conceptual dispersion is a comfortable coping strategy for dealing with phenomena in different settings, sometimes in their full complexity, at other times more superficially. Luft (1998) suggests that moving from 'natural attitude' to 'phenomenological reduction' (Husserl, 1913/1982) is akin to the concern to progress from *doxa* (accepted beliefs) to *episteme* (true knowledge) in ancient philosophy.

Bowden (2005) follows the sentence quoted above, that all subjects receive the same information, with an explanation that acting other than in the manner prescribed for phenomenographic interviewing might lead the research participant to 'rethink and perhaps re-conceive the phenomenon'. This view makes no allowance that people will, inevitably, review past experience through their current understanding. A participant in my research, Heather, provided an example, as she interrupted herself while recalling events some two decades earlier in her life. This reflection occurred some four minutes into a quasi-monologue (i.e. without verbal intervention from me, although in receipt of my full attention):

> What scared me is that I – would it scare me now? No, it wouldn't scare me now, you see – I was coerced by my manager into setting up day conferences …

Heather here exemplifies Wegerif's (2008: 358) proposal that 'exploratory talk' (which I take to include interviews) including 'open questions and listening with respect' creates a 'dialogic space of reflection'. Whilst Wegerif relates this to the emergence of 'creative solutions to problems', the same space of reflection allows the alignment of remembered past experience with current understanding, and the creation of new understanding. This example could be framed to suggest that the remembrance created a problem which was then immediately resolved, constructing new understanding in the process: social constructionism in action. This reinforces a theme common throughout social constructionist and narrative research literature, that the research interview is a site of unique, relational co-construction (Clandinin, 2006; Cohen and Mallon 2001; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2008).

Bowden's (2005) suggestion that identical words can provide an identical stimulus for interview conversation ignores also the embodied nature of discussion, and wider aspects of what people carry with them. Interviews include a present 'here and now' (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 36) of bodily presence in the location of the interview. This is not all that is present. Both participants bring memory, experiences (some shared

although not directly in relation to the other party in the interview - for example policy changes affecting our work for both of us) and their current lifeworld of relationships in work and non-employment settings, all of which aspects vary in distance or closeness (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; McMahon and Patton, 2006b). Both interview participants are also present for the other, and create a conversation within a relationship. We will act out a self-identity that fulfils our own needs in relation to our perception of the expectations of the other (Wegerif, 2008). And we will do so through a learned, and largely shared, understanding of the words and the conventions of human communication of our Western society and our similar places within it.

Ashworth and Lucas (2000) develop these aspects of conversational exchange in their more nuanced proposal for phenomenographic interview activity, reverting to phenomenography's early close links with phenomenology. Acknowledging that what is sought is 'students' *very own* descriptions of their relevant experience' (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000: 297, emphasis in original), they advocate methods for attending to empathy between researcher and participant, and the use of the phenomenological concept of 'bracketing'. Bracketing requires the research interviewer to set aside preconceptions about participant and phenomenon, and to avoid assumptions, as far as this is possible. Since, as noted above, much research interviewing is with people who are 'unlike', it is important not to approach with a circumscribed agenda of topics. This is hardly a new thought. A fragment from Heraclitus (c.535-475 BCE) proposes:

> He who does not expect will not find out the unexpected, for it is trackless and unexplored.   (Fragment 7 in Kahn, 1981)

Josselson (1995: 30) agrees:

> If we listen well, we will unearth what we did not expect. This becomes the paradigm for discovery.

An interviewer will not find what they are not looking for, so the necessary approach is not to look for any specific thing, but to be open to everything. This approach had proved illuminating in my earlier work (Barham, 2008; Barham and Hawthorn, 2009) in a project where older

workers made frequent references to time, a construct which had not entered the consciousness of the research team during the planning stages. Had we adopted a more structured interview style, to our own agenda, this important aspect might not have emerged.

Notions of bracketing and of openness to another's agenda are comfortable territory for a careers-adviser-turned-researcher. At the heart of effective relationships within a careers interview is a willingness to suspend personal preconceptions and work within the lifeworld of the client. In passing, it can be noted that this also sits at the core of many ethical dilemmas: for example, a pacifist careers adviser assisting a would-be soldier, and the necessity to develop reflexive understanding of personal, hegemonic 'taken-for-granted' attitudes when working with people from other cultural backgrounds (Bradley, 2011:19).

Phenomenographic researchers are advised by Ashworth and Lucas (2000) to attend to 'bracketing' techniques built up in *phenomenological* research for 'enter(ing) the lifeworld of research participants' (p.297). Acknowledging that bracketing can only be partially successful, they argue that empathy based on 'imaginative engagement' with the participant's description can greatly help.

> Empathy requires a detachment from the researcher's lifeworld and an opening up to the lifeworld of the student. For instance, views and factual claims which the student expresses in an interview may well be regarded by the researcher as quite erroneous. The temptation would be to marginalise such material. But the researcher who adopts an attitude of empathy with the student should find such views and factual claims of *immense interest* (cf. Wertz, 1983). The researcher begins to be taken up with questions such as: what does the espousal of such notions mean; what does it say about the student's experience? Does it merely mean that the student is unclear, foggy, and uncertain on this area of experience? Or is there a more developed set of student perceptions and conceptualisations here, such that the world looks very different for the student than for the researcher?
>
> (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000: 299, emphasis in the original)

I take empathy to have both affective and cognitive aspects, as elaborated both by Stake (1995: 34) as 'knowledge of the plight of another by

experiencing it yourself' and by Elliott (1991: 1271) describing 'accurate empathy' as the ability to 'grasp accurately the <u>content</u>, <u>meaning</u> and <u>feeling</u> of what a person says' (emphasis in the original). Empathy is reliant on such behaviours as active and attentive listening, accompanied by interpersonal manners that do not alienate the other or inhibit a personal account. It can supported without extensive participation in a conversation, through an 'attitude of attention' (Josselson, 1995: 31).

I retain doubts about the possibility of removing presuppositions from my own mind, an issue which became foregrounded as I embarked on data analysis. What is possible, but challenging, is management of one's behaviour within the relationship: to behave in a way that as far as possible screens out such presuppositions from the awareness of the other participant and attends deeply to the embodied part they are playing in the conversation. At the level of language exchanges, this can be achieved through careful planning of introductory explanations and questions, and subsequent focus on using only neutral requests for elaboration, or reflecting words already introduced by the participant. (It is noteworthy that this *practice* is the same as that advocated by Bowden (2005) from his different standpoint.) Interviews are however far more than language exchanges. Careers advisers are trained to both use and to take note of non-verbal signals: alertness to particular remarks, uneasy shuffling, or any of a plethora of possible actions within an interview. In this instance, I needed to walk a tightrope: on the one hand using non-verbal cues to signal interest and attention and encourage a continued flow; on the other the need to maintain such attention even when participants had wandered into apparently irrelevant topics. Factual inaccuracies had to be allowed to pass without any form of response, as this would serve as a reminder of my knowledge of the field they were describing, and that I brought a critical faculty to their story.

4. 5 Interviews as a research tool

I came to the research project with a lengthy history of conducting interviews and training others in interview skills. While the purpose and

conduct of career guidance and research interviews differ from each other, there are skills and attitudes that they have in common. I would highlight two aspects in particular. One is the capacity to engage in 'active listening', a term used widely in career guidance interview training, and implying attention to body language, facial expression, tone of voice and all aspects of physical manifestations in the interview. The other is a comfortable tolerance of silence. If an interview is conceived as a 'dialogic space for reflection' (Wegerif, 2008) and a site for relational co-construction of understanding (Clandinin, 2006; Riessman, 2008), then people need space and quiet, respectful attention while they formulate thoughts and seek ways to express them.

4.5.1 Roles within interviews

Interviews as a specialised form of conversation seem ubiquitous nowadays, but are comparatively recent as an identified form of interpersonal exchange (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The present-day ubiquity of interviews raises a complex of issues for the qualitative researcher, who needs to understand her own purpose and proper use of interviewing as a data collection technique, and to remain finely tuned to her participants' assumptions and expectations. This cautionary note has special relevance in the current study. My participants conducted interviews on a daily basis, and engaged in preparing clients for interviews – with a distinction immediately to be made between the supportive career advice interviews which they conducted, and the selection interviews for which clients might have needed preparation.

Research interviews are neither of these. Roles within interviews were rearranged when careers advisers took part in my research rather than working with their clients. They moved from being the person conducting the interview to being the subject of it. But not everything switched. In conducting careers interviews, they are the helper. In participating in my research interviews, they were helping me; what remained stable for them is that they were helping their interlocutor.

In this there was advantage for me: willing, accustomed and helpful conversationalists; but also danger: people who potentially had a view on what may 'help' me which was different from my research intention. This consideration was important in my final interview design, where I sought consciously to start interviews in a way which would be unfamiliar, and through this to create a form of interview 'practice' for participants. There was however need for a careful balancing act. Giddens (1991: 36) reminds that 'practical consciousness is integral to the reflexive monitoring of action, but it is "non-conscious", rather than unconscious'. Practical consciousness is integral to feelings of 'ontological security' (ibid.). If I used outlandishly unusual techniques with participants, they might well have felt a level of insecurity which would have inhibited the telling of the personal accounts that I was seeking. By tapping into the instinct to tell stories, and showing appreciation of stories I listened to, I hoped to be able to engender an expectation of and respect for personal experience in a friendly conversation that was at a considerable remove from the logical-rational discussions, based within the norms of professional discourse, which participants themselves might associate with 'research'. It equally consciously drew on a style of interpersonal activity, personal 'stories', with which we are all familiar. The novelist A.S.Byatt comments that 'narration is as much a part of human nature as breath and the circulation of blood' (Byatt, 1999, no page).

4.5.2 An ongoing engagement with narrative

I had come to this research endeavour influenced by the emerging awareness of how powerful narrative techniques could be in the interviewing that forms the core of much career guidance (Cochran, 1997; Law, 2003; Reid, 2006; Savickas, 2004). Narrative techniques had underpinned my initial trialling of interview methods, during which it became apparent to me that some participants were describing 'career' differently at times when they were recounting their own personal career experiences in contrast with when they were describing their professional tasks in helping others with career issues. This was an aspect of fundamental interest to me, which led to further specificity in the research questions; clearly a single question about career would not elicit responses

that reflected the 'conceptual dispersion' (Linder and Marshall, 2003) that can arise when a phenomenon is viewed against different thematic backgrounds – in this instance the personal or the professional themes of career. These differing descriptions of 'career' were however central to my interests as I embarked on data generation.

Interview methods vary across the space occupied by narrative and life story research (Taylor, 2006). At one end of the spectrum, the researcher develops an active and participating role in the narrative inquiry (Blaufuss, 2007; Clandinin, 2006), with their own research story intermingling with that of research respondents. At a far point on the spectrum, the researcher may prioritise the story recounted by the respondent, seeking to engage with and influence as little as possible the telling of a personal biographical narrative. This latter stance was essential to my work. I wanted to strive to the maximum extent possible to capture my respondents' story of 'career', not shaped by my personal understanding of that concept, nor by the worldview from which my own understanding is developed. The personal stories in Studs Terkel's *Working* (1974) were iconic exemplars.

In general, people find that describing their own experiences is easier than articulating deeply rooted but infrequently examined beliefs about abstract constructs. People need to explain life events within a context that has meaning for them and find it more difficult to give an abstract explanation of reasons for specific actions (Cohen and Mallon, 2001). However, as people relate personal experiences, these are framed by the 'meta-patterns of thinking' (Cherry, 2005: 59) which are not in each individual's conscious awareness of life events. It is the conceptualisation of career that may be mined from these 'meta-patterns' that I was seeking in this study, though it should be noted here that information embedded as implicit in personal experiences will demand more of the researcher in identifying what is relevant and what meaning can be attributed to the utterances.

Central to my data collection was the process of using narratives of my respondents' past career issues and dilemmas to explore their current conceptualisations of career development. I sought ways to manage research interviews so that I gave priority to the respondent's voice. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989: 87) remind us that, in considering the management of unstructured interviews, such an interview 'depends heavily for its success on the relationship that is developed between the interviewer and respondent'. I think it inevitable that the interviewer will always inherently hold a kind of power advantage in the interviewer-interviewee relationship (Kulka, 1982; Platt, 1981) as initiation and overall management of the research process is according to the researcher's agenda.

Acceptance that a power relationship within the research interview is inevitable leads to a need to address the way that power will be used. Whilst power can be exercised in directive and hierarchical ways, I have sought to do something very different. Following the suggestion by Mishler (1986) that an interviewer can play a role in 'training' the interviewee to give the desired form of responses, I have sought to use the power inherent in my role in a subtle way through careful planning of the interview structure, with a key purpose of prioritising the voice of the respondent.

Having exercised gentle direction to encourage a full flow of narrative and reflection on experience, it was also necessary not to interrupt the resulting flow. From a phenomenographic viewpoint, Marton (1986:42) explains that what the participant chooses to address is a source of information in itself:

> … we used questions that are as open-ended as possible to let the subjects choose the dimensions of the question they want to address. The dimensions they choose are an important source of data because they reveal an aspect of the individual's relevance structure.

4.6 Conducting the interviews

I wanted to engage distinctively with the two thematic fields of the personal and the professional, and this separation was reflected in the interview method that I finally adopted. Interviews took place on a single occasion, but in two stages. The first stage firmly espoused narrative method, and focused on collecting an account of the participant's own life and career history, culminating in an account of their own career from their initial interest in becoming a careers adviser through to the current date: what I termed their 'career in careers'. The second stage was based on recall of two recent interviews with clients; after the initial description, these moved into a questioning stage exploring the intention behind the approaches and activities undertaken, and so gradually shifted from a personal story into a two-way discussion more akin to a professional dialogue.

At the outset of the interview, my primary concern was to establish a mode of working for the first stage of the interview. In a context where both interviewer and interviewee acknowledged a shared background of training and work in career guidance, I needed to open interviews in a way that immediately removed them from typical professional discourse and 'standard, espoused theories' (Bowden, 2005). Conversely, I did not want to do anything unduly challenging or alarming, which might inhibit the development of the empathy advocated by Ashworth and Lucas (2000).

At an early stage of this study, I had learnt from a colleague working alongside Linden West of his approach to auto/biography (West, 2003) including techniques for starting interviews. One technique is to ask people for the 'story' of their name: how they understood that they had gained their name, and how they have lived with it throughout their life, liking it, disliking it …? The preceding sentence reflects almost exactly the wording that I used in opening my interviews with participants. This followed from a written description, sent as part of arranging the interview, and a brief introductory discussion on meeting, where I

explained that I would be asking them to 'tell stories' in the first section of the interview. I further explained the stories as personal, but not intrusive.

Reactions to the opening invitation to 'story' their name often included an element of surprise, and quite often a recognition: 'Well, there is a story really' (Kate, interview during the trialling stage). Stories unfolded of family connections, parental intentions, links with literature or family heritage, and memories of childhood and life transitions, with familiar and shortened names often relating to one period or context in a person's life. I never had the sense of anyone being uncomfortable in the telling of such stories, and most spoke for several minutes in response to this invitation to talk.

For the purposes of this research, this technique seemed successful. It positioned the discussion in people's own life space and their personal life history, in a space of which I could have no knowledge. People were both author of and authority on the story that they told. Despite the power implicit in my interviewer role, I had no authority in this story. Name stories opened a realm of personal discussion – names are remarkably personal and versions of names may reflect aspects of identity which both develop over time and differ between life-wide settings, such as professional or family. Philip captured many of these issues as he concluded his story of being named after an uncle who had died as a young man attempting an heroic act in the First World War:

> So all of that actually is quite important to me because it is partly my history and partly my identity and it relates very much to a very significant time in our history and therefore I feel part of that in some way, in being able to continue the family name. So, you know, they say 'what's in a name?', well there's quite a lot in a name actually. And so I think it does talk about one's identity and one's history and, you know, if you become more aware of the family that you belong to, and the community, it's actually quite important to know who you are. So I've got quite interested in delving into that. I would have loved to have met him, to have spoken to him.

The training of participants continued with a second story, this time the geographical story of their life. My script for this question reads:

> The next story is about the geographical story of your life. Obviously you were born somewhere, and there probably have been some moves between then and where you are – geographically – now. Can you take me on that geographical story?

Again the topic was very personal, non-threatening, and a topic on which the participant was 'expert' and on which my only apparent role was as receiver of information. This story continued the prioritisation of their voice, and confirmed the primacy of their role within the interview dyad. It also introduced a stronger time-line in narrating experiences, an aspect that sometimes occurred with names, but often not. That aspect was intentional in my planning of the interviews, but I also discovered that the geographical story led many people to reflect on aspects of their own nature in a way which gave enhanced insight into the person, and contributed to the background picture in which their conceptualisation of career was situated.

Rachel provided this sort of reflection:

> (I) really wanted to go out and see the world, and I've ended up a few miles from [*laughs*] where I grew up. You know, it really wasn't the plan, and it's really not my future, you know I sort of see myself as being somewhere else.

Philip provided a marked contrast, having always lived and worked within a few miles of his birthplace. Again a significant personal reflection:

> The interesting thing was, talking about geography, my first job when I left school was in a silk-screen printing company and you'll never guess where it was, in [area of London], what is now the careers centre. It's on the land where the printers was that they built this [name] House which is my base office. And I thought, isn't this ironical? I work in the college opposite where I was born, and I've now gone back to the first job I had when I left school, as a careers adviser. So there's something really strange about that, almost spooky.

He had just previously, within the geography story, commented:

> … the thing was I didn't go to university, and the reason was I didn't get enough qualifications to go. And that has always dogged

me, all of my life. I've always wanted to try and recapture what I missed out on.

In each case, these invitations to talk about names and personal geographies have led to narration of personal history on which I have little, if any, prior knowledge, and where the respondent is clearly the 'expert'. As we move to the third topic, the 'career in careers', the interview moves to shared ground, as both I and the respondent have experienced a number of policy changes that have affected the careers and the specific employment tasks of careers advisers. However, in each interview, the respondent is by now 'trained' to tell their personal story, not expecting interruption from me. They have also been free to talk about feelings, and about very personal transitions such as change of name or move of house.

When the third story has been narrated, I am able to identify points in the story where it is already clear, or where I judge it likely, that career issues or dilemmas arose for that individual. A very general prompt, identifying the point at question, checking if it was a point which the respondent might identify as a career dilemma, and then gently probing how they handled the issue and whom they used for help, proved enough to encourage a flow of introspective explanation.

4.6.1 Learning within the interview

It is important to remember that an interview has its own dynamic and internal development. Each interview will 'feel' different at the end from at its beginning. One aspect of this is the development of the relationship between the participants. Another is learning within the interview. Learning occurs in both actors, and I will focus first on the research participants. I can identify two types of learning (at least) within the interviews conducted for this study. There is learning associated with the interview process that I was conducting, and the participant's role within it, reflecting my 'training' (Mishler, 1991) of them. This is notable in several participants, including William, who moves from an episodic account of his name, to a time-line approach in his geographical story, and

then, during the 'career in careers' story moves quite soon from a simple action account ('I went off to work at various things') to a more complex and introspective account of his actions and motivation:

> 'I realised law wasn't my subject ….'
> '… my whole set of ideas had changed …'
> '… that's when I started getting interested in people …'
> 'That has an impact on (me) …'.

Shortly after this, when William recounted his entry to employment in the Careers Service, he immediately drew together a list of factors recounted in his 'stories' which contribute to and explain the appropriateness of this as his own career choice, then extended this list to include reflection on status within employment. This constituted a significant journey in 'learning' the part he could play in the research interview as he responded to my interest and attention. He increasingly arranged his story to give present meaning to prior events (Josselson, 1995).

The second area of participant learning within the interview is through the reflection that, almost inevitably, accompanies an account of one's past life. In Section 4.3.2, I recounted Heather's pause for consideration of whether she would now be scared, as she was earlier, in relation to a particular work activity.

I captured much on my own learning from the interviewing process in the reflective notes I made after each interview. However, some learning emerged much later, after I had worked with the transcripts and recordings for a long time. This stage of work had been influenced early on by a supervisor's comment about my first transcript, where I had included indications of tone – the specific instance was of my noting 'said ironically'. The supervisor regarded this as my interpretation and suggested that it should not be added to the transcript. The lack of such annotation with its emotional dimension led me instead to repeatedly listen to the interview recordings, a process which I came to greatly value. In one such listening, reminded by the 'listening' of the true import of something I had slipped into construing differently from 'reading' words

on the page, I suddenly realised that many of my participants were very playful with language, voice and tone. Careers advisers are verbally competent. I knew this from extensive past experience of running courses to train careers advisers in using psychometric tests, during which process they had to experience taking such tests themselves. The team of tutors quickly realised that if we used a verbal ability test first, all careers advisers achieved high scores, unfailingly above the statistical norm, and had positive feedback. Within the course we subsequently used tests of numerical and spatial abilities, and the results for careers advisers were much more widely distributed in statistical terms – useful evidence that we then utilised in our teaching on both interpretation and the feedback of results.

My late-stage learning from 'listenings' was that I was experiencing this verbal ability in action. Participants were often playful:

- they played with irony (Lorna says, with heavy emphasis '… which was *fascinating*, as you can imagine' as she describes a tedious temporary job)
- they played with tone (for example mimicking a tone that might be used, sometimes ironically rather than as a real example),
- they played with ideas (Bill describes talking to clients about options: 'I … include things like … you can sit at home and watch the telly, or you can go to prison, but let's say for now we're not planning to do those …)
- they played with other people's voices, recounting as if verbatim conversations that had taken place years or decades ago.

The supervisor who questioned my early transcription style had also listened to parts of recordings and made a comment along the lines of: 'They can really talk, these careers advisers, can't they?'. It seemed a comment on quantity, and maybe fluency, at the time. It came finally to seem to me an acknowledgement of considerable skill and dexterity in the use of language, and the part that it plays in creating effective relationships with clients. It is an integral part of the phronesis of a career

adviser, and essential within the forming and conveying of relationship and relationality. It also contributed to the quality of data that I was able to obtain.

4.7 Transcribing and analysis

The activities of transcribing and analysis are reported together, as transcription is an interpretive step, the first step in analysis (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009; Riessman, 2008). Participants' facility and playfulness with language created a challenge in capturing the lively quality of many on the discussions into black print on the white page. The problems were exacerbated as I tried to apply the very specific processes of data analysis, seeking to identify the 'limited number of qualitatively different ways to conceptualise a given aspect of reality' (Johansson, 1996: 142) as widely advocated in the phenomenographic literature (Bowden, 2005; Walsh, 2000). Phenomenographers seek to *discover* or *construct* (a debate articulated by Walsh, 2000: 20-26) so-called 'categories of description', which finally constitute an 'outcome space' for the research undertaking.

My personal 'wake-up call' came when I read of one example within a phenomenographic study where a researcher had been unable to fit some affective aspects of how teachers described their teaching, and so left them out (Walsh, 2000). Elsewhere within the literature on phenomenography advice by Bowden (2005: 12) is that 'the only evidence used in developing categories of description is that contained within the transcripts'. His following assertion that the researcher can put aside their relation to both the participant and the phenomenon seemed to be both practically impossible and epistemologically unsound. We cannot 'un-know' what we know, and the greater need is to be deeply reflexive about what part it is that I am playing in reading, listening to, and analysing the interview data (Etherington, 2004). I cannot be absent.

In the early days of data analysis, I was also becoming attuned to the increasing attention in career theory to the role of worldviews (Collin and

Young, 1986; Lyddon, 1989; Patton and McMahon, 2006b). This raised for me the need to be reflexively aware that I listen from my worldview, but may be listening into the stories of others framed in a different worldview (Lyddon, 1989). My presence, rather than 'absence', came to seem imperative.

Proposals for narrative data analysis which I did not see as relevant for me included:

- any sort of 'distancing' through coding and quantitative analysis;
- 'reality congruence', or how what is narrated relates to what really occurred (Mishler 1986: 78), or 'factual truth' (Riessman, 2008: 186)
- narrative inquiry as understood by Clandinin et al. (2007) which appeared to place emphasis on a narrative (co-)constructed by the researcher immersed in the field.

What felt more relevant was:

- looking for the 'social meaning' of what participants said;
- looking for themes: recurrent assumptions, beliefs and goals expressed by participants (Agar and Hobbs, 1982), but not focusing on content to the exclusion of the enacted dialogue;
- watching for the voices they used and the enacted roles they played in their stories: agent, patient, beneficiary.

At this point I felt the need to abandon any attempt to categorise the data, but I lacked any way to access and draw meaning from it. Advice was plentiful, but not helpful. Ashworth and Lucas (2000) suggest starting the readings of the transcripts with a process of 'sensitisation' which 'would involve the development of an attitude of "dwelling with" the train of thought of the research participant' (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000: 304). Bosley et al. (2009: 1500) make a similar reference to 'total immersion in the transcripts'. Whilst close familiarity with the transcripts was of benefit, it did not much help me towards their further suggestions of breaking the transcript into 'meaning units' through which to identify 'points of focus'

(Ashworth and Lucas, 2000: 304) or 'meaningful statements' leading to 'focal themes' (Bosley et al., 2009: 1500). My participants had themes and contradictions, perhaps instances which I might eventually frame as 'conceptual dispersion' (Linder and Marshall, 2003) or contradictory 'doublethink' (El-Sawad et al., 2004: 1179). Participants showed ways in which a group of two or three had clear commonalities, alongside other aspects where they differed from that group but each had themes in common with other participants, who themselves differed on the first theme. Any attempt to group these themes into phenomenographic 'categories of description' based on 'similarities and differences between them' (Francis, 1996: 43) seemed to splinter the whole person in a way that I could not be comfortable to do. I needed to find a way to engage with the recordings and transcripts that did not lead directly to an uncomfortable fragmentation, but accommodated the need to see distinctiveness in a way that would eventually contribute to analysis.

The Listening Guide (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Gilligan et al., 2003) offered a way forward. The Listening Guide acknowledges each person's voice as 'multilayered' (Gilligan et al., 2003: 159), and proposes a series of 'listenings' which may take the form of reading transcripts or listening to recordings, or both. Key aspects are the active involvement of the listener, and that each listening is attuned to an aspect, or layer, of that voice. 'Listening' was an important word for me. I had experienced the much greater attunement to each respondent, and clearer memory of their non-verbal signals, that came from playing the interview recordings alongside my work with the transcripts. I also welcomed the assumption (perhaps even requirement) for personal response in the initial listening (Gilligan at al., 2003).

The Listening Guide proposes four sequential 'listenings':

1. listening for the plot, and making notes of my own response to the interview;
2. focusing on the voice of the 'I' who is speaking, and constructing I-poems;

3. listening for contrapuntal voices; this for me brought in the relationality of the participant, including other people who were present in their story;

4. listening for structured power relations and dominant ideologies; this for me included listening for the policy, professional and employment discourses that have had changing impacts on careers services in recent years.

Detailed description of the suggested procedures for the Listening Guide are available elsewhere (notably, Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Gilligan et al., 2003) so my concern here is to elaborate the value that I gained from following these processes.

Gilligan et al. (2003) describe interaction with data by reading or by hearing as a 'listening', but place considerable emphasis on returning to the recordings as often as possible. Modern technology makes this much easier than it would have been in the days of 'tape' recorders. Digital recordings can be stored and transferred for use with desktop and portable devices; it is as easy to dip into the mid-point of an interview as it is to access a specific track on a music album. I made extensive use of this flexibility, linking transcript to recording by occasional notation of the 'time elapsed' in the margin.

Words fixed on the page can easily become distorted from their original intent. I offer one example from Lorna's transcript:

> His degree was in Environmental Science, and he's always kind of wanted to get back to it, but is fearful that he might be too late. I tend to agree with that.

The word 'tend' sounds tentative, a provisional judgement. The audio recording reminds me that this was stated with certainty and emphasis. Lorna is expressing a thoughtful and firm judgement on this issue, and it influenced her future discussion with the client. My engagement with the stories remained more faithful to the speaker's intention when I used both recording and transcript. It calls into question Bowden's (2005) emphasis purely on the data in the transcripts, especially when the transcript is

being used by someone who was not present at the original live discussion.

The interviews had focused on personal stories and then on recent experience with clients. Implicit in such 'small stories', described as the 'everyday, ephemeral narratives arising from talk-in-interaction' by Watson (2007) is a contingent identity. I am viewing identity not as some fixed, internal aspect of the person, but as a continually constructing enactment of the person in relation to others: more 'identification' (Watson, 2007: 372) than static identity. Strauss (1962: 63) makes the same point:

> The individual is never considered to be an entity except insofar as it is an animal organism. Psychologically, the individual is emergent out of a social process and constantly develops or changes.

Strauss calls this psychological aspect of the individual a 'self'. His description emphasises change over time; Watson (2007) adds to this the sense of 'self' as contingent on place and relationship, a concept which reflects the 'relationality' of a social constructionist approach (Gergen, 2009; Richardson, 2012) and accords with the notions of 'conceptual dispersion' (Linder and Marshall, 2003) and of different *I-positions* (Hermans, 1992; McIlveen and Patton, 2007). By making extensive use of both the audio recording and the transcript, I felt able to maintain greater attunement to the shifting pattern of the self in relationships.

The I-poem technique proved especially useful with a minority of the participants when stories appeared somewhat disjointed. The focus on their use of the pronoun 'I' together with the following verb or verbal phrase often showed a change of tone, for example a move from tentative and exploratory verbs to more active and agentic verbs. Re-reading a passage in the light of such new understanding often gave a deeper insight into themes.

At this stage of working with the data, I was far removed from constructing tight categories and fitting people into tidy boxes. My concern was to engage with and (re)present the subjective truth for participants, remaining comfortable that this did not mirror 'objective' truth of past events. When participants recreated, as if verbatim, conversations from years or even decades earlier, they could not possibly be using the actual words used then. Ben-Ari (1995) illustrates this point in her presentation of two accounts of a past mother-son conversation, both enacting the 'words' of the conversation. The accounts are distinctly different from each other in detail, though holding great emotional impact for both parties in the conversation.

My final approach to data analysis was influenced by Mishler (1968); following a lengthy exposition of both structural and thematic approaches to narrative data, he comments that, in practice, what people do is very similar. It is partly informal, contains a significant element of the researcher's intuitive response, and is framed by the researcher's understanding of sociocultural conventions. Heppner (2011: 653) makes a similar point:

> … over time I grew to appreciate listening to the data themselves, rather than what I expected the data to be. More importantly, I learned to understand what the data were trying to tell me; and if I listened hard enough, I could find important clues. In essence, when I listened, the data would inform me, which led to more and better investigations.

Riessman (2008) acknowledges Mishler's way of working. She adds advice to pay detailed attention to transcripts, language and the contexts in which the data were created, along with awareness of structural and dialogic features of the discourse. Careful comparison of similarities and differences between participants may be appropriate. At this point, data analysis becomes inextricably linked with reflexivity and ethics. The requirement is to seek as deeply within oneself as within the data, and to be honest to what one finds.

4.8 Writing about participants

The main descriptive writing about the participants in this study falls in chapters 6 to 9. It starts with brief individual vignettes, then moves to an examination of participants' descriptions of their own careers, followed by their reflections on who has helped them with career dilemmas and transitions, and finally their descriptions of work with clients. This presents the next challenge in being 'true' to the participants. Careful and thoughtful interviewing, followed by transcription that seeks to remain close to the intent of the speaker, produces a mass of data. From this, I needed to construct some few hundred words for each participant that convey what is most insightful about their exploration of their career and their professional experience.

This four-chapter presentation emerged from a process of struggling to give each individual their own space, without which I could not attempt to capture their individuality. My original plan was to intersperse vignettes amongst analytical writing, thus keeping the people closely integrated with the findings I was deriving from the discussions. However themes that emerged related to multiple people, and each person evidenced a variety of themes. There were no tidy boxes in which to package various types of people. It seemed to me confusing to make brief reference at an earlier stage to someone whose main descriptive vignette might occur much later, and so finally, and with some reluctance, I have lifted the initial descriptions of the 'objective' career (Watts, 1981) into a separate chapter to precede the other analytical chapters. These descriptions draw upon such facts as were presented to me, so often fall far short of being complete learning-and-work biographies. The advantage is that they can be presented, alphabetically, page-by-page, in a way that allows quick and easy reference when they are encountered in later chapters and the reader wants a quick reminder of the context.

This decision to place vignettes of the 'objective' career separately from analytical writing came at a cost. When vignettes were placed at pertinent points, these short descriptive pieces of writing could capture an

'evocative episode', somewhat reflecting the meaning of vignette in a photographic context, of a small portrait 'with the edges of the print shading off into the background' (entries 2b and 2a in OED, 2011). There was however a tension to convey concisely the 'evocative' aspect that I wanted to bring forward without reifying it. What I brought forward would be evocative *to me*. I cannot present an absolute truth about another, any other, and I encountered difficulty in differentiating my descriptive voice and my analytical voice, indeed in deciding at times what was 'description' and what was 'analysis'.

This kind of issue is seldom fully resolved in reflexive writing. Etherington (2004: 213) refers to analysis as 'the creation of coherent and resonant stories' which needs also to value 'the messiness, depth and texture of experienced life'. Unresolved and messy issues cannot, by their very nature, be tidied away into neat packages, and this lack of a sense of tidy resolution in description and analysis was a tension inherent in my methodological approach. Throughout my work with the data, I walked a tightrope between achieving useful and coherent description without 'tidying away' what sat messily and deeply textured in participants' stories and in my own thinking about them. Sometimes people said things that were clearly important to them, and which I did not understand. In extreme cases, the only way to neither reject nor tidy away such issues was to simply present the words for the reader to contemplate their meaning (Reissman, 2008).

4.9 Quality and ethics in qualitative research

The concepts of what constitutes 'quality' in qualitative research are different from those that apply for research in a positivist research paradigm. The positivist research paradigm seeks to *explain*, valuing reliability and validity (as does psychometric testing, mentioned above) and seeking objectivity, replicability and a predictive capacity of research findings. By contrast research in the qualitative paradigm seeks to *understand* the instance, sometimes at a unit of one. Quality then needs to be addressed in part by making visible to users of the research that it

stands upon dependable procedures, a systematic process systematically followed.

There are aspects of naturalistic inquiry where systematic working might prove more challenging than in my case. A local example that comes to mind is a doctoral student giving young people video cameras to film themselves and aspects of their lives – a situation where the unexpected may be of great research interest; any attempts to encourage 'system' in the primary data collection would cut across the research purpose. By contrast I was working with participants who would have expectations of an interview and of how a researcher would conduct herself. Not to be somewhat predictable and systematic could have shaken their confidence in me, and put in question their commitment to assist in the study.

I could have done otherwise. There is a school of thought that proposes that people can gain novel insights by being jolted out of familiar ways of thinking. I could have explored 'career' through offering coloured pens to 'draw your career', or an invitation to 'dance your career', 'sing your career', or 'If your career were a fruit, what fruit would it be?' Such techniques are occasionally used in career guidance settings, and can be powerful with clients who are 'stuck'. I chose to adopt the expected demeanour. This reflects both a personal view of how people should be treated, and considerable trust in members of my profession, who were voluntarily responding to an invitation to talk with me, being willing to do so in an engaged and helpful way. The proposition that people should be unsettled to explore their true character (trick questions in job interviews, discomfiting tasks in training events) seems to me to risk being manipulative. My beliefs centre on treating people with profound respect as individuals, and engaging their trust in me in such a way that they are willing to co-operate in my legitimate endeavours.

Manipulation is a concept that needs to be addressed even with my chosen interview method. I have referred earlier to Mishler's (1991) idea of

'training' an interview subject, and have claimed that whilst I, inevitably, exerted power, I used my position properly. The interview method gave me a personal way of working in which I could act authentically. This reflects my personal understanding of ethics in qualitative research. Codes of practice and institutional procedures clearly have a part to play, but they can only address what can be predicted. Such procedures are explained in Chapter 5. Truly ethical behaviour rests on the reflexive processes outlined in Section 4.6, and on a personal commitment to be honest to one's reflexive thinking, and accept responsibility to address anything that is uncertain or of personal detriment to other people, particularly research participants. Sometimes interests will conflict; that must always be addressed according to the best judgement that one can bring to the situation, using other people for support as appropriate.

My researcher position was broadly analogous in this respect to the conduct of career interviews expected of my participants in their work with those they seek to help. All participants had received extensive interview training, including attention to ethical behaviour, as part of their postgraduate course, and it is reasonable to judge that they would be aware that I, as interviewer, was using carefully planned methods. Reinforcing this point, some of my participants specifically commented after the interview on techniques I had used, and their own response to them. Some engaged in discussion about whether a 'story' approach might be a useful addition to their own interview skills repertoire.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has engaged repeatedly with issues of voice, power and responsibility as they intersected in my research journey. An aspect of my emergent understanding related to the complex and multi-layered nature of voice. I have explored my respect for the voices of my participants during the collection of the data, and suggested that the influence of phenomenography on my interview design did not hinder the collection of data which was compatible with my later transition to analysis based

on multiple voices (Gilligan et al., 2006), conceptual dispersion (Linder and Marshall, 2003) and different *I-positions* (Hermans, 2003).

As the research progressed, new questions arose as a result of the shift in my method of analysis, away from a phenomenographic search for 'categories of description' to be mapped into an 'outcome space' (Bowden, 2005). A particular question was the involvement of participants in the analysis of and subsequent use of their contribution to my work. I had made arrangements with participants on the assumption that their role ended at the end of the interview. Although I offered (and provided when requested) a transcript of the interview, I followed phenomenographic practice in not inviting feedback beyond simple 'corrections'. Trigwell (2000:81) explains why, for phenomenographers, participants cannot be involved in analysis:

> Because the outcome space of a phenomenographic study describes the variation with the group, rather than rich descriptions of individuals, it is the aspects of the variation that are the focus. For this reason it is not possible to critique the outcome without access to the full data set.

As my method of analysis developed, it would have been possible to contact participants to enquire as to their interest in engaging with my analytical work. I did not do this. Time was one constraint, but a greater one was a concern about how to handle with individuals the inconsistent and sometimes contradictory views they had offered. This is not unfamiliar territory; careers advisers 'feedback' or 'challenge' contradictory views expressed by their clients as an important step in helping them uncover underlying inconsistencies and important personal value positions in their career thinking. However, in professional discourse, consistency is a more highly regarded attribute. Any listener to news programmes will have heard journalists attacking their interviewees who attempt to explore perspectives or nuances on a subject. Bowden (2005: 22) remarks that such interviewees are 'quickly dismissed as being someone who (a) has no real opinion, (b) wants to be liked by everyone, and/or (c) is an academic'.

Addressing this question in more academic terms, I had set out to encourage both personal stories and professional discussion in the anticipation that there might be inconsistencies between the two, in a setting where inconsistency is generally a pejorative term, particularly when assembling accounts of professional practice. This might have raised an ethical dilemma – though I do not know because I did not travel this route – in 'proving my point' in a way which might have appeared to be at the cost of their professional self-esteem. I made the decision not to risk losing my own researcher credibility by proposing a change in clearly set out methods, and not to risk discomfiting my participants.

Instead, there remains an ethical question as to whether I exercised undue power in giving my own interpretation priority over a more consensually developed interpretation. I have acknowledged earlier (Section 4.5.2) that examining the 'meta-patterns of thinking' (Cherry, 2005: 59) behind the spoken words places great demands for deeply reflexive practice onto the researcher, and have sought at all times to work to that standard.

This chapter, exploring my use of narrative approaches, has largely taken the form of a narrative of my own experience. The doctoral journey is a process of 'becoming' (Riessman, 2008) and I apply to myself, as well as my research participants, words from Riessman (2008: 8):

> There is, of course, a complicated relationship between narrative, time, and memory for we revise and edit the remembered past to square with our identities in the present.

Something as worked-over as doctoral research is intentionally situated in a process of emergent and deepening understanding. I am no longer the person who embarked on this research project, and much of what I report from the early days is reported through the person that I am now. This chapter has provided the grounding from which the thesis moves on to demonstrate how this changing person put the principles of this chapter into practice.

CHAPTER 5: COLLECTING DATA

5.1 Introduction

This brief chapter contains a description of the processes of trialling and then implementing the data collection for this study. It includes a summary of how the ethical aspects of my methodology, as described earlier, were implemented in practice.

5.2 Trialling the data collection methods

I pursued an incremental process of developing my research practice. At an early stage in the EdD programme, each student was required to complete an assignment involving professional colleagues:

> A report … based on interviews with two professional colleagues about an issue related to the area of professional knowledge that you will develop in your thesis.

I was an experienced interviewer and interview-trainer, but had not overtly used narrative methods of interviewing. I therefore interviewed two colleagues who I knew had this experience. With their consent, I undertook these interviews in a 'narrative' way, with their agreement that they would offer feedback at the end on their experience of the interview. The considerable learning in terms of both content and process were recorded in a written assignment, and have influenced the methodology, as already described.

My next step was to engage two former colleagues in practice interviews for the procedures I had designed for the first stage of my interviews: name story, geographical story and story of their 'career in careers'. I gave each of them the sort of advance information that I intended using with my research participants, i.e. that I would ask them to 'tell stories', but without detail on the exact topics. These interviews were very illuminating and encouraging. Both former colleagues expressed some surprise at and considerable responsiveness to the process. Afterwards, both engaged in conversation about how the interview had 'felt' and both

chose to discuss whether the approaches I had used might be of value to them in their work roles.

The following stage involved the spouse of a current colleague, someone whom I did not know personally, and who was an experienced careers adviser. Her employment history included work with young people and adult clients, as well as her current role in both higher and further education. I undertook a first interview as already trialled, and then met her on a second occasion to trial the second stage interview. At this stage, I had planned a semi-structured interview with questions covering ways of working with clients in general, and the theoretical basis for that work. This experience provided evidence of Cohen and Mallon's (2001: 54) statement that 'participants seemed to find it difficult to articulate their reasons in the abstract'. Particularly evident, in my de-brief discussion with this trial participant, were two aspects: her desire to give me what I wanted, and not being sure what that was. Neither of these were my intention. Instead I moved to the request for descriptions of specific situations (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) and trialled with another former colleague just the second stage of the interview, this time asking him to describe to me two recent interviews. From this trial, I developed introductory wording along these lines:

> Could you describe this interview, starting from what you saw to be the presenting situation, how you tried to help, and what difference you think you may have made for your client.

This initial wording allowed me to use prompts such as 'what were you trying to achieve?' and 'what difference do you think you made for him/her?'. This worked well in the final trial, and these prompt questions generally yielded thoughtful descriptions in subsequent interviews. They also led to interesting contrasts in how easily participants seemed to address these questions, and indeed the extent to which they appeared to enjoy or to be made uncomfortable by such enquiry. The form of response to the enquiry was a relevant finding in itself.

5.3 The sample

There is no national definition of the role or qualifications for careers advisers, and specific requirements for qualification to fulfil publicly funded roles has changed over time (McGowan et al., 2009; Peck, 2004). Qualification requirements also differ between the four 'home countries' of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. For the study I required participants who had entered the profession through the postgraduate Qualification in Career Guidance (previously Diploma in Career Guidance) route which has been delivered across the whole of the UK, and exclusively within higher education. Other training routes, including the NVQs/SVQs, are very varied in their coverage of career theory (McGowan et al., 2009), but coverage within the QCG/DipCG route has been required and monitored by the national awarding body.

Since I wanted participants to discuss their work with clients, it was also necessary that casework made up a reasonable proportion of their professional workload. In the event, all had casework as fifty per cent or more of their working time. The sample therefore has a values bias, particularly for its older participants, towards those who had placed value on retaining case work rather than career advancement into purely managerial roles.

5.3.1 Gender and ethnicity

Career and employment is highly gendered (Höpfl and Atkinson, 2000; Richardson, 2012). I achieved my intention of balancing the sample roughly equally between male and female. Over recent decades the careers workforce has moved from having a slight preponderance of men towards a preponderance of women. Working with a small sample, I decided that the societal aspects of gendered experience were considerably more important than exactly attempting to slightly balance the sample to the current make-up of the workforce, particularly as sound data on the workforce are notable by their absence.

There is inadequate information on the ethnic make-up of the careers workforce, an issue which the Research Committee of the Institute of Career Guidance (the largest professional body) has actively pursued with the ICG Council since 2010 (as evidenced in committee Minutes). No relevant information is provided in the report of the Careers Profession Task Force (2010). With the current process of amalgamation of several UK professional bodies into a single body during 2012-13, little information is anticipated until the new arrangements are established. Cultural sensitivity, social justice and taken-for-granted attitudes are extremely important issues for career guidance (Arthur, 2006; Arulmani, 2007; Bradley, 2001; Irving, 2011; Richardson, 2012; Sultana, 2008). The lack of information troubled me, but despite the efforts described below, my sample lacked any participants from minority ethnic backgrounds. This may in part be attributed to the likelihood that a higher proportion of minority ethnic careers advisers have entered the profession through NVQ/SVQ routes (though this is far from exclusively the case), and I here acknowledge my personal decision to prioritise that participants had exposure to career theory during postgraduate training.

5.3.2 Selecting the sample

I collected a non-probability opportunity sample (Blaxter et al., 1996) of participants through response to an invitation to participate circulated within a regional mailing by ICG, and by direct approaches to course tutors at university QCG training centres to ask them to pass on details to former students with whom they were in contact. Most responses to my circulated information were from individuals. A manager from a nearby local authority contacted me and suggested that he circulate to staff, a route which produced three participants. One participant arose from a chance conversation when I visited her office to interview a colleague, and she volunteered herself.

Although I had more volunteers than my planned sample size, at a late stage, I made a second approach to the east London centre in the hope of establishing contact with possible participants from non-White ethnic

backgrounds, but this was not successful. I selected from the volunteers a balance of male and female, and a mix of age, work settings (and therefore client types) and place where they had undertaken postgraduate training. In practice, the time since training was so varied that those who had attended ostensibly the same course may have had completely different tutors and varied curricula.

Name	Age band	Training course	Current work
Bill	40-45	East London	14-19
Christine	50-55	Manchester	14-19 (recently university)
Frank	30-35	Kent	14-19 and some adult work
Heather	55-60	Kent	University
Lorna	45-50	South Bank, London	University
Louise	40-45	Kent	Further education college
Lucy	45-50	UWE	14-19 and some adult work
Philip	55-60	East London	14-19 in further education
Rachel	30-35	Reading	14-19
Sean	30-35	UWE	14-19 and some adult work
Stefan	55-60	UWE	Adult clients
Tony	35-40	East London	11-18 school-based
William	50-55	Kent	14-19 school and FE
Analysis			
M 7; F 6		Kent 4	
		East London 3	
		UWE 3	
		Manchester 1	
		Reading 1	
		South Bank 1	

Four participants made comment on further study undertaken since completing their postgraduate qualification in career guidance. Two participants were engaged with Master's level study at a university that

also ran the QCG course. Two others had undertaken formal accredited training in counselling.

5.3.3 Characteristics of the sample

As I conducted the interviews and transcribed them, I became aware of characteristics within the sample that are noteworthy in that they seem to me to differ from the population at large. I have no way of knowing whether these characteristics are particularly common for careers advisers, or are a chance occurrence in my sample.

Extended travel and work abroad, of a period of one year or longer, was related by seven of the thirteen participants. One of the seven had settled in the UK following earlier decades in his country of birth and nationality. Of the other six, three had undertaken substantial periods of work abroad (two as teachers and one as an au pair) and three had travelled and worked casually. Travel abroad for four participants (one substantial worker and three casual workers) followed drop-out from university.

Six participants had followed the normative route from school to graduation by their early 20s. Five followed an undergraduate course after a period of travel and/or other work, of which three had previously discontinued and were re-entering higher education. Of the two older first entrants to HE, it is not quite clear whether one graduated, or moved on with 2-3 years study experience but no degree. The remaining two participants entered QCG postgraduate training without a first degree.

I did not set out to collect information on participants' status as parents, but it emerged within their stories. The thirteen participants, ages ranging from early 30s to late 50s, had a total of twelve children between them, of which one person, Philip, was the father of four. Seven of the thirteen (two women and five men, including one in a gay relationship) had no children. Fertility rates are published by the Office for National Statistics

(ONS) only as births per woman, which have averaged about 1.8 per woman over the last three decades. It averaged 1 for these female participants; this could change with time, although only one woman was still of a statistically likely age for child-bearing. Unpicking gender-related birth statistics is beyond the remit of this current enquiry. However Demey et al. (2011) demonstrate that in the years from 2001-2009 about 75% of the UK population were parents by their mid-30s; at the time of interview the youngest participants were close to that age, yet the proportion of parents was below 50%.

Parental status was the subject of comment from several participants. For two male participants, fatherhood heightened their need to fulfil a breadwinner role. One woman deliberately chose to compromise her labour market activity in order to prioritise her parenting role, while another woman reported tensions between parenting and work pressures, concurrently acknowledging the enhanced insights she had gained which affected her work with other mothers. Conversely, two participants (one male, one female) made reference to the freedom from constraint on work choices that followed from their child-free status.

5.3.4 Why did they volunteer?

This question did not trouble me with the majority of my participants. There is traditionally a strong sense of community within the comparatively small and highly people-focused profession of career guidance. During my career, I have often approached people for participation in projects and training events, and very rarely been rebuffed out of hand.

Christine met me by chance when I was visiting her office to see another participant, and her recent, unusual career move caught my interest. She had her own agenda for volunteering, having been through a turbulent time in both her career and with a health problem. It quite quickly became clear that she recognised therapeutic possibilities in the situation, which

was confirmed after some hour or more of discussion when she commented, 'I have to say I'm still very angry, and … this is the first time I've managed to tell anybody without crying'. Not surprisingly, Christine's is the longest interview, by some considerable amount.

I feel a sense of gratitude to those participants who were not settled in their careers, and both recounted personal uncertainties and recalled client interviews which were far from successes. I hope they gained some value from revisiting their experiences, and I feel some modest satisfaction that I was able to create an environment where people felt able to talk in this way with me. Rachel and Frank are the two who come to mind in this respect. My role as researcher precluded my taking any role in offering assistance with their career issues. I have often since wondered what paths they have followed.

5.4 Location and duration of interviews

Interviews were held at a location of the participant's choice, which in all cases was a place of work. Most were held in interview rooms which the careers advisers themselves used when interviewing clients, and which were designed to provide suitable levels of privacy.

The interviews ranged in duration from 45 minutes to two hours of recorded time, with an average duration of 70 minutes. All but three are clustered in a duration length of 50 – 80 minutes, with just three outside this range: one shorter at 45 minutes, and two longer at 1 hour 50 minutes and 2 hours duration.

5.5 Ethics and informed consent

I have explored my understanding of ethical requirements fully in Chapter 4. Formal procedures included presenting a description of my proposed research for approval through the University of West of England's systems. The description included copies of the information

sheet for participants and the consent sheet (Annex 1). These were sent to every participant at the time when I made arrangements to meet them. At the beginning of each discussion, I checked that they understood this information, offered the chance to ask additional questions, and ensured they understood their right to withdraw at any time.

The information provided also covered issues of anonymity and confidentiality (BERA, 2011). Careers advisers routinely manage confidentiality issues in their work, and none expressed concern about this. In relation to anonymity, I asked each participant to choose a pseudonym for use in any written work that might be accessed beyond my supervision team. All but three provided such a name. Two felt it unnecessary as their names were common ones, and I felt comfortable with this. The final one caused me problems. His name was foreign and distinctive, but also is used exclusively as a female name in this country, which could have led to confusion for readers. After lengthy reflection, I decided that I should myself choose a pseudonym for him, and undertook web-based research to identify a name that was in common use for males in his country of birth, and that I judged would be easily recognisable to English readers.

5.6 Safe storage
All audio materials have remained exclusively in my hands since the interviews. Audio recordings were transferred to an easily manipulated format and used within an MP3 system on my own computer. Transcripts are stored on my own computer, in a secure 'cloud' facility, and on computer memory sticks. All these facilities are password controlled.

CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contains brief verbal sketches of the thirteen participants in the study. These are summaries of their *objective* careers, the visible series of learning and working positions held. They pay little attention to the *subjective* (i.e. personally experienced) or *institutional* (i.e. from employer's viewpoint) career (Watts, 1981). These summaries were constructed by me from the descriptions of the succession of learning and employment activities as each person recounted them to me. As such, they are not comprehensive accounts of careers. They lack the chronological specificity that one would expect in, for example, a CV. Here, as throughout the study, I have worked on the principle that people will tell me what is most salient for them. Each of us has a vast store of experience in our memory, and I am using the term 'salient' with the sense that within the research discussion some items will be prompted to the person's conscious thought (Newcomb et al., 1965). Participants made comments like 'I haven't thought about her for years' (Lorna) as they described influential people and events from their past. Some things remain unprompted, forgotten; other things may have been salient, but have been deliberately withheld.

The purpose of these *objective* career summaries is to provide a context, and when necessary an easy reference point, for the following chapters. The next chapter delves into the career stories to explore the *subjective* career, using themes to explore commonalities and differences between the participants. Its thematic structure did not easily permit a space for each person's *objective* career to be summarised. This chapter may therefore be a useful reference point when 'facts' seem useful to contextualise the career themes that unfold.

6.2 The participants

These descriptions are in alphabetical order of the participants' chosen pseudonyms, and are arranged with each one on a fresh page, to aid quick reference.

6.2.1 **Bill**

Bill came from a socially well-established background, although from a family where his parents divorced when he was seven years old. He attended a prep school and then the local grammar school where he 'messed up' his A levels. After a year out, he started a polytechnic degree course, but recounted that he was 'in that frame of mind … I should be at university'. He dropped out during his first year, and then stayed in the locality of the polytechnic, unemployed, continuing a 'student lifestyle' with aspirations to be a writer. Bill described this period ruefully: 'I … look back and think … what did you think you were doing?'.

The catalyst for change was a visit to his brother, working for an aid agency abroad. After a further period travelling, and some quite extensive periods in short-term jobs, Bill entered university again and completed a degree in Social Anthropology. Further short-term and casual work followed, until imminent fatherhood brought what he called a 'time to grow up' moment. Bill saw a careers adviser at a local university, where the role of careers adviser was one option explored. He undertook some work shadowing, then applied for postgraduate training.

Bill had worked almost exclusively with a client group aged up to 19 years for a considerable number of years up to the time of our discussion.

6.2.2 **Christine**

Christine appeared to come from a middle-class background. She progressed from school to a science degree, then directly to a PGCE and taught for about five years. Her initial motivation for training for teaching was in order to undertake VSO, although she finally did not do this. In school, her role as a year 11 (then 5th year) tutor led to contact with the careers adviser who visited the school. Additional contact with a student careers adviser who chanced to be on placement gave greater insight into the training route, and Christine almost immediately applied for a trainee careers adviser post with her local authority.

After secondment to a full-time postgraduate course, she returned to the authority and worked there for thirteen years, interspersed with two breaks for maternity leave. Christine then obtained a post in a university careers service where she worked for twelve years, before returning to work in a careers company delivering careers work in schools and local colleges. This last change had taken place a few months before our discussion.

Christine made only passing reference to parenthood. She had remained working throughout the early childhood of her two children. There was other focus of anxiety in her career story, but none was attributed to conflict between work and home responsibilities.

6.2.3 **Frank**

Frank chose to divulge little of his early life. Putting together the scraps scattered throughout the conversation, he appears to have left school at 16 without 'any GCSEs or anything', and to have spent some years working in catering : 'I was a chef for quite a long time. That was my sort of … job, I suppose'. After several years travelling and working, ranging from Israel to Denmark, he embarked on an Access course in the UK at about the age of 27 years.

From age 27 to about 31, he completed the Access course and then attempted, but left early, two different degree courses related to sound engineering and music. Towards the end of his fairly extensive period on the second of these courses, his involvement with voluntary work at a drop-in centre for adults led him to review what he had enjoyed at various stages in his life. He had never seen a careers adviser, but recalled:

> I think I was just doing some research and I realised there is a job called careers adviser. What do I need to do to do it? You need to do this. And I thought that's what I'm going to do …

Frank applied successfully for a postgraduate QCG course. After the year's training he applied for careers adviser posts. He had been in the same employment for about two years at the time of our discussion.

Heather chose to train for entry into the careers service straight after graduation from her Chemistry degree. She worked initially in schools, then in specialist roles, preferring this diversification with casework rather than progression into management roles. She spent some years in closely allied fields, including work with unemployed young people on government schemes, and training other professionals, during the years when NVQs were being developed and implemented.

In the later stages of her work outside the career service she was on short-term contract work associated with a polytechnic. When the institution advertised for a careers adviser, she joined the careers unit. Heather had worked for this employer (now a university) on various sites and with various specialisations for about twenty years at the time of the research interview.

Heather had undertaken counselling training, which she felt added a considerable adjunct skill element to her work role, but she had not worked otherwise as a counsellor.

6.2.5 **Lorna**

Lorna made a 'false start' at university, dropped out, and then entered another university the following year to study Social Policy and Sociology. Her initial career choice was to start a PGCE for primary teaching but she left the course, commenting in discussion 'I knew that I would find it incredibly boring teaching the same stuff day in, day out'. Her next intention was to become a social worker, but this was thwarted at an early stage by a health problem.

Lorna then discovered the job of careers adviser, and trained for it before working initially in a local authority careers service. She moved to an adult guidance position, then - following a geographical move arising for family circumstances - she decided to work on a self-employed basis. For the two decades or so since then, Lorna has actively sought opportunities to work in a portfolio style, combining two or three activities in different career guidance settings. In more recent years, this has been a combination of national and institution based roles in the higher education sector.

Lorna is a parent of one child, but made only passing reference to parenthood as affecting her career, although the move into self-employment was partly influenced by having a young child at the time.

6.2.6 **Louise**

Louise dropped out from a university course in her first term, then spent some years working abroad as an au pair. She returned to England and had about four years of employment in some convenient and congenial work which she did not see as a long-term career opportunity ('it was a nice time, but I always felt it wasn't really me'). A redundancy led Louise to address career issues. At this point, and with the help of a careers adviser, Louise developed the idea of training as a careers adviser herself. She noted that this was the first time she had been encouraged to think about what she would like to do, rather than just what she could do.

Louise undertook postgraduate training and worked as a careers adviser with largely school-leaver clients for about three years. She then described herself as becoming 'bored' with the pressures of blanket interviewing, the policy requirement at the time, and finally left without a specific new job to move to. At this time she combined temping in office work with training part-time to qualify for teaching in FE. Soon after, she obtained a job that combined teaching and career guidance with adult clients, and moved from there to another job running courses for 'women returners' – ostensibly a teaching role but infused with career development issues: 'everything underpinning the whole programme was guidance'. From this, Louise took the step to becoming a careers adviser in an FE college, where she had worked for eight years at the time of the interview with me, although she had made some efforts to move into higher education careers work.

Louise was undertaking a master's degree part-time at the time of the interview, and mentioned her ambitions of a move to lecturing or to research. However she had also been a mother for the past four years, and reported significant tensions and time pressures in managing her parenting, working and studying roles.

6.2.7 **Lucy**

Lucy made only limited reference to her early life, which was spent in a part of the country where both her parents had longstanding roots and family connections. She went to university and graduated at the normal time, and had been in a stable relationship since her university years. She commented at times on the unconditional support from her partner at times of career difficulty.

For some years, Lucy worked as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language. Whilst she had a qualification for this work, she did not frame it as a 'proper career', and she left it on the birth of her first child. Lucy placed her role as mother as her highest priority over the next decade and more. Whilst she undertook part-time work while her two children were young, first as a 'bookseller' and later as a teaching assistant in their primary school, these positions were relatively congenial but above all did not compromise her commitment to parenting. Lucy conveyed no sense of role tension – family came first. Work provided a bit of variety and some useful income.

As her children grew older, Lucy faced a career issue. She embarked on a two-year teacher training course, but left after one year. Lucy had seen, and been interested in, an advertisement for training to become a careers adviser many years before, but ruled it out as incompatible with her parenting priorities at the time. Lucy recalled a deep sense of 'failing' (not academically, but in terms of not completing) on the teacher training course, but soon afterwards saw an advertisement for careers work, including part-time QCG training, and applied successfully. She had worked for her local Connexions service for about five years at the time of our discussion, working with both school-aged and adult clients.

6.2.8 **Philip**

Philip left school at a young age, with few qualifications but a distinct capability in art. He soon decided that proper apprenticeship training would be important for career progression, and set out to achieve such training. After fifteen years working in commercial art, and aged 29 years, he felt that he needed a career that fulfilled the interests he had developed.

A committed Christian and active in his local church, he had been encouraged by the minister to take responsibility for the youth group. Philip reported considerable success in this, both in terms of the range of activities and the large increase in the numbers of young people involved in the club. He reported both satisfaction with the work, fulfilling his 'very strong will to serve', and increasing dissatisfaction with the transitory nature of what he produced in his commercial art employment.

From a range of career possibilities, including youth work and the probation service, he found careers work to offer a satisfactory compromise between his ambitions and his need to combine a training route with his family and parental responsibilities. At the time we met, he had worked in the careers service for thirty years, fulfilling a range of roles; and at the time of interview he was working part-time, and working as a self-employed counsellor for some further time. He had undertaken several years of part-time training related to his counselling work.

6.2.9 **Rachel**

Rachel came from an academic background, with both her father and a sister studying sciences at Oxbridge, and her sister progressing to a PhD. Rachel went to a post-92 university to study English and History, and describes neither the subject nor the institution as meeting her father's standard for a 'real' degree.

After university, her 'plan' was 'to go out and see the world', so she spent two years travelling and doing casual work in Australia, Cuba, Mexico and Asia. On returning home, she felt unsettled so completed a qualification to teach English as a foreign language, then worked for a year each in Poland and Latvia and six months in Siberia. On her next return home, she struggled with feelings that she 'wasn't achieving' and 'didn't know what I wanted to do'.

Finding herself again in the UK, she took the step of attending a 'good' university to pursue the QCG postgraduate qualification, but as she embarked on the course she was uncertain about where it would lead her. At the end of the course, she was certain that she did not want to work in Connexions, so took a job in a charitable trust delivering career guidance services for adults. She listed a number of problems: dealing with the wider 'life' issues of adults, rather than just careers; being the only careers specialist; feeling she lacked the initiative expected to start new projects. After a year the structure and colleagueship of the Connexions service seemed attractive, and she moved job.

At the time of the interview, Rachel had worked in a Connexions service for about three years. She was contemplating a job move and/or further study to master's level, but had not formed any clear plans.

6.2.10 **Sean**

Sean progressed through A levels to university, left his first degree course, and re-entered a different university for a different subject a year or so later. After graduating, and with no clear career ideas, he recalls: 'Still didn't know what I wanted to do, so went travelling and kind of put it all off, making a decision'.

About two years later, the desire to join his girlfriend, a student in a northern city, led to job-hunting in line with his only stated career preference of working with people. He obtained a job as a learning mentor in school, which permitted the move north. The learning mentor job brought him into contact with the careers adviser who visited the school. Sean was attracted to the role, and particularly to the fact that it was similar to the work he was currently enjoying, but offered considerably better training and earning potential.

When his partner graduated, Sean sought a careers adviser job while she sought an opening in her own career, with both agreeing that they wanted to move south. After two years in a comparatively expensive housing area in southern England, and with Sean failing to receive the anticipated training for full qualification, the next move combined relocation to a more affordable housing area, with, for Sean, a move to a job where the professional training was certain. His partner clearly moved jobs too; Sean's description of his career and housing moves included references to establishing mutually acceptable commuting distances.

During his three years with his current employer, Sean had completed the QCG on a part-time basis alongside his work which was mainly in the Connexions service, but also included work with adults for a small part of each week.

6.2.11 **Stefan**

Stefan started life in a fortunate situation: well-educated parents and an involved wider family. He grew up in one European country, and spent part of his childhood in two other countries, one European, one further afield. He studied law at university, then joined his country's public legal service. Over a number of years Stefan was internally head-hunted (though that is too aggressive a term for the pleasant chats which led to future career moves) to widen his experience and to take increasingly senior posts.

Stefan then moved into the legal aspect of health insurance work. Internal progression with his new employer, of a type very similar to that in his first employment, led to Stefan becoming manager of a team of lawyers.

Stefan married a British woman, and decided to move to the UK, rather then her moving to his country. Continuing with law would have been possible, but required extensive retraining for recognition in the UK. He was aware that in recent years he had enjoyed his responsibilities for staff management and development, and during his exploration of related opportunities in the UK, he became aware of career guidance as a career. He undertook the year of full-time training, and in the following ten or so years he had moved from work with young people to his preferred work with adult clients, and then to a team leader post in this work.

6.2.12 **Tony**

A gifted linguist at school, and with no particular career interests, Tony took the natural progression to a languages degree in French and German. After a four-year degree, including a year abroad, he used a further year in Europe to give him the chance to test out his liking for teaching. He then returned to the UK to pursue a PGCE course. Niggling doubts, and a growing acquaintance with Swedish language, led to him following a tutor's suggestion that he work for the Folk University in Sweden, which he did for the following year.

Still with reservations about a teaching career, he put his teaching experience to use for a two-year period of VSO in Poland, moving his professional focus to the training of language teachers. On his return to the UK, he decided to train as a translator rather than enter into a teaching career. He rapidly learnt that 'I wasn't a wordsmith, I was a linguist', and for a while split his time between translating and supply teaching, before making the break with translation and taking his first established post in a secondary school.

During five years in that school, he became more involved, through his tutorial role, with careers work and was inspired by an exceptional careers co-ordinator. He left in order to enter the postgraduate QCG course, then worked for the Connexions Service as a careers adviser for a relatively short period. An opportunity arose to take a full-time specialist careers post in a school. At the time of the interview he had moved to another similar post in a different school.

When we met, Tony was studying part-time for a master's degree in career guidance with the university at which he had undertaken his initial postgraduate training.

6.2.13 **William**

William left school with A levels, and worked in bookselling for about four years before entering university with the intention – quite soon abandoned – of moving into legal work. His next stages of employment were in administrative posts, mainly on the staff of professional associations. As part of his duties, he had contact with people seeking qualification, including refugees looking to convert overseas qualification for UK employment.

The last of these posts was with an organisation which William found overly bureaucratic. His departure was by mutual agreement, and was followed by a period of unemployment and re-evaluation of his career direction. He recalled an earlier interest in careers work from when he was at university, explored further, and embarked on a DipCG course. At the end of the course he obtained employment with a career service, and had been with that same employer for about eighteen years at the time of our discussion. He had deliberately remained in careers specialist roles during the Connexions era, and claimed that as his distinctive work identity.

CHAPTER 7: THE CAREERS OF CAREERS ADVISERS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the early parts of the discussions that I held with each careers adviser, exploring the ways of conceptualising career that were implicit in their own career story. After the preliminary stages of the interview, in part practising the ways in which I hoped they would talk with me, I invited each person to tell their personal career story from 'the first inkling of the idea of becoming a careers adviser' through till the present day. I tried to avoid other substantial input until they concluded this story, and then invited them to identify a couple of points in the story where they had faced uncertainty, or some kind of career dilemma, and to tell me how they had tackled this. The final aspect with personal career stories was to probe for the stories of whom they had talked with at times of uncertainty, and in what way those people had helped. The role of helpers is covered in Chapter 8.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. The first concern is to consider aspects of career stories in relationship to the theories of career which appear most relevant, reflexively questioning both the career story and the models from the viewpoint of the other. In this, it follows a practice of ongoing enquiry of career theory by Hodkinson and others (Ball et al., 2000; Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000; Bowman et al., 2005; Hancock, 2006), who continually re-examine the Careership theory through a series of studies. The second purpose is to identify the explicit and implicit assumptions about career that can be discovered in each story, with a view to considering, in Chapter 9, the ways that such assumptions relate to practice as a careers adviser, as described by each participant.

These accounts are based on the repeated listenings to the interview discussions and the transcripts. My intention is to convey the voices that I heard in the series of listenings. Each listening was seeking to be attuned to specific voice or voices (Gilligan et al., 2003), introducing contradictions and compromises which I have tried to respect. Extensive use of the

participants' own words gives an illusion of authenticity, hoping to give the reader a sense of the live participant and some direct connection with their words. We should be wary of thinking that this can remove my interpretative presence. My surrounding exploration and explanation of their words guides the reader's attention, and indeed I chose which words to present, so I am present in actively shaping the understandings that are afforded to the reader. That I have worked diligently and honestly in these explanations does not mean that I have necessarily brought forward what is most salient for each person.

7.2 Planning (rather than unfolding)?

'Plan your career to help you get the most out of your working life!' - a prominent heading on the UK Government's website for the new National Careers Service launched in 2012 (UK Government, 2012). The career theory discussed in Chapter 2 has suggested that this exhortation is not closely related to the ways that careers most frequently unfold; rather that it reflects the 'folk theory of career progression' (Bowman et al., 2005: 90), assuming linear, meritocratic career progression based on initial matching of person to occupation. Amongst participants in this study, an overt concern with planning his own career was apparent for only one participant, Stefan. Stefan tussled within himself between a disposition to plan and follow 'a pre-set career aim', in contrast with actual career experience reported as 'fantastic' despite the fact that he 'rolled into it, more or less'.

The striking point in Stefan's story was hearing a voice that seemed to feel driven to exercise a particular kind of planful agency (Krieshok at al, 2009; Richardson, 2012) even when circumstances did not overtly cry out for it. For Stefan, there was something not 'right' about his steady series of job advancements. His words to me were of recalling that 'I can't go on like this', which on questioning he explained to mean that it was wrong not to make deliberate, planned choices but only to 'go with the flow' (his words). My challenge to him was that many people might think it was perfectly acceptable to have a reasonably congenial occupation and receive steady progression within it. Stefan countered this:

in the last ten years for me it … it helped to have quite a determined sort-of planning, from doing the course first, then to the probationary year, and then move up to adults, and then move up, to be in charge of a little group.

Although Stefan was here articulating that he had felt benefit from planning in the latter stage of his career, his careers adviser period, to the observer this period includes a lot of progressive movement that is almost indistinguishable from what had happened in earlier times. There is some difference in that he could see likely jobs on the horizon, but with an assumption that they were his for the taking, more or less.

Actually, if you talk about the first move from probationary school work into adult work, everybody more-or-less in the company knew that I was there and that I, well, I told everybody that the next opportunity would be for me, and I would do that. Going into adult. So it was more-or-less expected that as soon as there would be a vacancy, that I would go for that and that I would be successful. And then the second one, I thought you were talking about the second one actually, the move from being a member of the team to team leader. That also was something where I was quite confident that that should be within my reach.

Although Stefan had made a careful decision to change career, he did not report subsequently putting into place development plans for securing job advancement. In discussing career, particularly in relation to a question from me on how 'theory' might explain his own life (he had earlier stressed the benefit of learning 'theory' before embarking on practice), he did not attribute career progression to his own social and cultural capital, although this seemed outstandingly obvious to the observer.

As that observer, I could offer a story based on another theory of career, of Stefan gradually increasing in self-knowledge through his experience of work. From my perspective, I could describe Stefan's 'self-learning' career and place him under my later section heading of 'career as a (self-) learning journey'. Stefan had explained earlier that his career interests had shifted and developed, away from a lawyer's 'small print work' and towards 'people management' and 'making sure that people are moving in the right direction for their own development'. Stefan could have traced

136

through these career interests and experiences the story of how he developed his current occupational identity. Later, we will meet William who did exactly this.

In 'The New Careers', Arthur et al. (1999) describe the accretion of interest and skill as threads that are woven into careers. It is framed as learning by Krumboltz (1994: 17): 'People learn their preferences by interacting with their environment in a long and complex series of experiences'. This view is broadly supported by Hodkinson (2008), but from a perspective different from Krumboltz's (1979, 1994) conception of the individual as separate from, but learning cognitively within, his field. Following Bourdieu, Hodkinson (2008:11) argues that 'the person is an integral and influencing part of their fields', with the person's active presence, including the embodied and internalised dispositions arising from interactions within their social position (Bourdieu, 1990), playing itself out through career.

At a point of necessary change (his move to the UK), Stefan sought out career possibilities that matched his current awareness of his interests and work values, seeking the 'personality-occupation congruence' which is central to career theory in a 'matching' paradigm (Dawis and Lofquist, 1984; Holland, 1997), but has some relevance to all career theories.

However 'matching' offers only a partial explanation of how Stefan describes his steps in career change. His preoccupation was not so much with a matching process as with his necessity for personal, planful agency. Savickas (2002: 162) would identify this as someone 'transforming a preoccupation into an occupation'. In a symposium in 2009, Mark Savickas gave an example of how he encourages clients to 'author an identity statement' on a **will … can… may** model; his example could have been Stefan:

> I WILL become a vocational psychologist so that I CAN help people choose careers and in the process I MAY overcome my problems with indecision.

(Savickas, 2009, no page)

Stefan did not deny the value of his past working life. At another stage in the interview, a different voice acknowledged this:

> But then I think, well, you have to go through certain phases in your life to be able to do the job as I am doing it now. So it's not wasted time, it's all sort of – is the baggage I can use in doing the job as I am doing it now.

However, previous career deficits, in that he only adequately (but not greatly) enjoyed his work, were explained by his perception of his own lack of hard-thought-through technically rational decision-making. These deficits were resolved by his exertion in planful decision-making. As I shall explain later, this personal emphasis on technically rational planning impacted strongly on Stefan's approach to his professional work.

I have here reached the paradoxical position that the rational, planful model of career that Stefan espouses provides a limited explanation of his own behaviour. Many career theories, including the Theory of Career Construction expounded by Savickas (2002; 2005), Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise and, notably, Hodkinson and colleague's (1997; Bowman et al., 2005) Careership offer greater illumination of how class, gender, ethnicity and geographical horizons created the 'contexts' (Savickas, 2002) or 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997: 34) of his career development. Stefan's horizons were broad in every sense; he took considerable and valuable capital to his career 'field', and influential players in the field recognised this and treated him extremely propitiously.

And yet … for Stefan the 'pragmatically rational decision-making' (Hodkinson, 2008: 10) that is evident throughout his early career did not satisfy some aspect of his disposition. His voices appeared almost to enter into dialogue with each other as he spoke of his past career that did not lack enjoyment:

> probably I'm a bit ambivalent about it because I enjoyed … the majority of my life quite well …

Stefan's urge to exercise agency had arisen somewhere in his familial, social and cultural background, and had created an insistent internal voice which appeared, at the time of my discussion with him, to have been appeased. He had absorbed from his culture that he should be agentic and that he should expect to do 'tough' things; one should not drift through life too easily. In parallel to the 'folk theory of career' (Bowman et al., 2005), there is a folk theory of 'manliness' explored by Macfarlane (2003: 86-87) in relation to nineteenth century notions of self-improvement: Nietzsche's assertion that 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger'; John Ruskin's claim that turning back from danger means 'your character has suffered some slight deterioration', and Samuel Smiles's (1859) exhortation that 'it is not ease, but effort – not facility, but difficulty, that makes men'.

It may be no coincidence that Stefan is the son of a high-ranking military officer. Stefan's disposition with regard to agency came from somewhere. At a commonsense, everyday level, I do not have a problem recognising it, and I have met it elsewhere. Many years ago I had an adult client who had had a similar, fortuitous career pattern, and consulted me because she felt her fortunate but serendipitous career pattern (shaped undoubtedly by her personal capital) was 'not right', just as Stefan felt this. We met two or three times to discuss her career options, until a further offer of advancement and significantly increased financial reward took her attention elsewhere. It would not, however, have resolved the issue for her.

In both cases, Stefan and my long-ago client have internalised a social expectation. Stefan's considerable re-adjustment to his 'field', by changing country, provided the opportunity to satisfy the expectation, whereas influential players in the career field of my past client provided a continued 'routine' rather than the 'turning point' that Stefan created for himself. Stefan's own perception of his career development is that an episode of rational decision-making and planfulness has greatly improved

his career satisfaction. This is his personal construal of his experience that goes with him to shape his practice with clients.

Conscious, longer-term planning is notable only by its absence from the other career stories, with one exception. Lorna follows a description of what she perceives to be lucky chances (which I will question later) that led her to careers work by suggesting that planfulness would be aberrant behaviour:

> I've only met one … person, that's set out to become a careers adviser. And she was always regarded as slightly odd. And she did her psychology degree with a view to becoming a careers adviser. Every other careers adviser I have ever talked to about how they got into it, it's been by accident.

An 'accident' hypothesis of career development is not carried through into Lorna's description of her work with clients.

7.3 Unfolding (rather than planning)?

'Unfolding' career stories is a term I have used to characterise stories where people have taken chances that arose, but have not offered an explanation of their career progression as a self-learning progress, as people in the following section have done. For these people, career was not recounted as a central concern. For one, Lucy, her role as parent was her over-riding priority, and career activity needed to be accommodated around it. Lucy was distinctively a 'family guardian', exercising strong boundary management, in Kossek et al.'s (2012: 121) typology of how people manage boundaries between work and non-work roles. For Sean, who also told a story of an unfolding career, there was limited sense of his training and employment to date being driven by a specific career goal, and this seemed not to trouble him in day-to-day terms.

There was a good deal of comfortable, thoughtful, pragmatically handled happenstance in Sean's story. Several of the points of impetus related to financial reward; this affected his move from learning mentor to Connexions Personal Adviser, and intersected with getting qualified (with

its financial implications) in his move from one geographical service to another.

> I got a job working in a school in Manchester as a learning mentor, and I was doing a lot of information and advice, trying to keep people in school and a lot of pastoral support in that type of role. I came across the careers adviser at the school, and was interested in his role, and if I'm honest I was also interested in what he was being paid in comparison to what I was being paid at the time.
>
> … so I was interested in the role, interested in continuing in working in education and supporting young people, but I think I was bit motivated by the money compared with what I was on at the time.
>
> … because I wasn't on the NVQ4 Guidance, I was kind of restricted on the salary band. When I applied for other posts, I was kind of offered quite a bit more, but I was also offered the chance to go for the QCG and get qualified, so kind of didn't look back really. And fortunately it's worked out well.

Sean's story conveyed to me a sense that he was not pursuing a career goal beyond a loosely identified field of 'working with people'. He had taken a next step forward when he could, and while careers/Connexions had provided what he had sought recently, he was not committed to careers work as a vocation. If an opportunity that was congenial and well-rewarded turned up, he could easily have moved on.

Sean's pragmatism may in part have reflected an instrumental view of work. I did not judge him to be motivated by large financial reward, but by a level of financial return on his efforts that permitted an agreeable standard of life. This is not to downplay the intrinsic value of work, and when he discussed possible future career directions they were consistent with his expressed interest in helping people, particularly young people. Sean frequently mentioned career moves in relation to other aspects of his life; he was a comparatively recent homeowner, in a settled partnership, and now in a geographical area he found congenial. The 'life-design question … *What am I going to make of my lif*e?' (Savickas et al., 2009: 241) implies that some things matter over others (Parker, 2007: 1). The question appeared to have been set in a broad, relational context for Sean, and I was discussing only one – perhaps narrow – segment of his life.

I risk tidying Sean away too easily. There were two weaker contrapuntal voices to be heard. Through one, he acknowledged the potential for there to be underlying career 'norms' against which he could measure his own career: although at one stage he said 'I've never had a clear idea ...', at another he commented 'I've always had career aspirations; I've always wanted a career which I felt worthy of and enjoyed ...'. The other voice, which he termed his 'restless spirit', had a constant eye out for other things he could be doing. He was not pursuing other ideas at the time for 'various reasons, mainly personal', but when I asked if he debated ideas for his future career, he replied with a laugh: 'I tend to debate most days, in my head!'.

Sean's pragmatic career progression could undoubtedly be framed as evidence of 'pragmatic career decision-making' (Hodkinson, 2008). His eight or so years in Connexions/careers work had not been characterised by the career commitment evident with Tony. Tony, a little older than Sean, had somewhat similar early career years of doing congenial, available work. Like Sean, he had not had a clear early career focus, and, also like Sean, had used travel to buffer the need for real career decisions. Their comments are quite similar:

> *Sean*: ... went travelling and kind of put it all off, making a decision
> *Tony*: ... I'd run off abroad or gone somewhere ... never really engaged with that idea of getting on with it ....

Tony's personal relationship with his own career (a 'journey' recounted more fully in Section 7.4) was highly committed and very different from Sean's at the time when I met him.

While I had only a limited sense of Sean's total lifeworld beyond his employed role, Lucy in contrast clearly articulated the importance of her family roles and values. Her parenting role was central: 'that's always dominated my choices'. Decisions on other action could not compromise that priority. When Lucy used descriptions of indecisive stages: 'I didn't

know if I could …', 'I didn't know if I wanted to …', these related to 'family considerations' and above all her children, not 'to put them at risk'.

As her children became settled in school, Lucy confronted her role in relation to her family. Earning a good income would potentially be a welcome contribution to the family unit. Lucy was clear that this was not pressure from her husband but a feeling that 'it's your own sense of duty that drives you on, isn't it?' Lucy conveyed here the significance of personal dispositions in the acting out of her habitus within her perceived horizons for action:

> I thought, if I'm going to work it has to be something worthwhile. It has to be something that … is professional level because, you know, I think it is depending on your education and experiences, you kind of set yourself up for a certain level, and that's where that came from. I couldn't reconcile myself with never achieving what I felt I ought to and was able to achieve.

Lucy made the 'sensible' choice and embarked on a course of teacher training: 'the most obvious career to go into' but 'teaching was always that kind of big cloud'. This career choice did not work out for Lucy (and the painful departure from the course is described more fully in Chapter 8).

Lucy's story evidences aspects of Careership theory. The decision to embark on a teacher training course was undoubtedly pragmatically rational. For Lucy it was an obvious option to fit with her family priorities, but also with her perceived horizons for action, which included achieving a 'worthwhile' professional role. This achievement need is a disposition within her habitus; Bourdieu elaborates habitus in this way:

> The strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations … a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks.
>
> (Bourdieu, 1977: 72, 95, cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 18)

Bourdieu balances the structuring aspect of habitus, meaning it is not 'strictly individual' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 18) with the notion that is also not fully 'determinative of conduct' (ibid.). Lucy struggled to find the coping strategies that would allow her to settle into the 'routine' that would become a teaching career (in Careership terms, to socialise into this routine):

> You're doing it for a lot of right reasons, a lot of very logical reasons. But actually there's that real key element that if it's not really in your heart, and you know part of you is resisting, then you really do seriously have to think why you're driven on. Are you driven because you want to, you know, develop yourself, or are you driven on by these external factors? And I think that's not saying everyone should be driven by what's .. what excites them, because lots of external factors come into everyone's considerations and you have to be realistic about it. But it's the coping with that, isn't it?

Despite the strong steer from her peers, Lucy could not achieve the coping strategies needed for a 'contradictory routine' (Hodkinson et al., 1996: 144) and entered a 'self-initiated further turning point' (ibid.)

Some years before embarking on teacher training, Lucy had become aware of careers work as a profession through a newspaper advertisement for a trainee careers adviser to follow a work-based learning route. She was interested but did not pursue it because her children were still small. At this stage of the discussion she reflected on careers guidance. She had no personal experience of seeking such help: 'I'd never seen any model of it' and 'even at university it was quite remote'. Nor did she have a sense of need for help: 'I was quite resourceful and quite independent in finding work' which she had always been 'able' and 'happy' to do. Lucy described herself as remaining 'quite remote from the idea of needing guidance', commenting 'the professional guidance idea – it would have been a very alien step to go and seek some after thirty years of not'. However this absence of personal sense of having a need for guidance was conveyed as a trigger to considering it as a career:

> … making your own decisions, and the flexibility you have to have, and the resources you have to have to make things work for yourself. That was the germ of it, I think, was that idea that it's actually really interesting – the idea that if you have a lot of

experiences yourself … you can focus on putting that to good use for other people.

Lucy's departure from the teacher training course created a highly emotional sense of failure, but despite being 'in a wilderness' she felt her only route was to 'work things out for myself' (see Section 8.4).

This difficult stage was resolved by the coincidence of a further local advertisement for a trainee careers adviser, for which she applied successfully. At the time of our discussion, Lucy expressed satisfaction with her employment, other than some frustration that promotion opportunities were limited, which she attributed to lack of openings rather than her own unreadiness.

7.4 Career as a (self-) learning journey

The majority of participants in the study created personal narratives that offered some coherence in their story of how they chose to become a careers adviser. As audience to their stories, it is important to be reflexively vigilant that coherence is not formed in my hearing rather than their telling (Riessman, 2008). In some cases this anxiety can be allayed, as people made their self-learning very transparent.

> William:
>
> A lot of it comes from all kinds of things, why I'm doing careers work. I think the experience I had with my head-teacher, the experience I had at university, the experience I had working with doctors who were having difficulties getting themselves qualified and retrained et cetera when they come from overseas. That was quite interesting. Also the experience of being unemployed. So I think those are all key reasons that sort of led me towards seeking some form of employment. And I think actually one of the interesting things is that I wanted to do a job where I can be seen as having some expertise and knowledge in careers, which people would value.
>
> Christine:
>
> I think it was probably the first time I'd thought really seriously about my career because I'd got into teaching by accident, … but there were aspects that I really enjoyed, working with the young people. But I found talking to the older students much more rewarding than talking to the younger ones. And I was very interested in the way that they were making their career decisions, what they were going to go on and do at A level. So I think the

client group still appealed, but the relentless teaching did not appeal any more. And it is probably one of the things I enjoy about my job, wherever I've done it, doing groupworks, planning groupworks, producing fairly good quality events, and not having the marking but still feeling that you've influenced, you know, somebody in a career decision. And I suppose the independence and in those days the ability to plan your own workload, … So I think it probably overall was the autonomy that you had, working in a similar environment, working – still being able to teach to a certain extent, and influencing people's decisions that they were making.

Bill:

And the way I see it now is that there is this link between the – you know, the careers advice and those ideas that I had years ago around human rights work, and you know, there is – maybe it's fairly tenuous but there is that kind of link around people-orientated work.

Tony was one of the participants from whom I heard a coherent voice and the least internal conflict at the point of reflecting on his career up to that date. Tony was aware that he had tested out ideas through real experience and remarked on his personal capability, what I could call his 'horizons for action', to take up suggestions such as working in Sweden: 'I had that confidence obviously because I'd done a year abroad, so it wasn't a problem for me to go off to Sweden'. The experience of working was not segmented into a separate part of life for Tony. He described the formation of enduring friendships in Sweden, and the 'enriching' experience of networks and working with a group of volunteers in Poland.

The balance of Tony's description of his own career leant strongly towards an interpretation of it as self-learning and personal development through engaging in challenging career experiences, the sort of personal 'stretching' advocated by van Vianen (2007) as an alternative to focusing specifically on making decisions. In his account to me, he paid little regard to measuring himself against the normative stages for professional progression, other than a wry comment relating to his late 20s that 'by that time I think my parents … thought I had completely lost the plot'. He followed this comment by a response to their suggestion that there was a hereditary tendency for travel, and, recalling the experience of one

grandparent, remarked that 'there's definitely movement in the genes', but did not pursue this line of thought.

Tony was aware of making a 'very clear decision' to leave teaching in order to undertake career guidance training. This gained emphasis in his recall of discussions with others, including his headteacher, who saw good prospects for his advancement in the teaching profession. At this point, Tony had identified self-learning which provided clear reasons for the change. The isolation and 'wordsmith' aspect of translating did not suit his social and linguistic interests; likewise in teaching, he felt a forced 'personality change in me that became sort of regimented, lesson 3, (it) wasn't playing to my personality strengths'.

Tony reported that, at the point of departure from teaching, he had had clear objectives and took significant actions (re-mortgaging his flat, arranging supply teaching alongside the QCG) to allow him to fulfil his aim, which he articulated as 'a development opportunity'. Later, reflecting on how his career had evolved, Tony contemplated 'there's a history in me of putting things together which are practical but not really thinking about what I feel about it'. His earlier choices had been pragmatically rational in the light of his particular abilities and his lack of a strong career motivation, but they did not fit well with 'something more complex than that', which was satisfied during the year of the QCG through 'a very, very deep sense of knowing this was the right thing to be doing, on a commitment level, on the heart thing'.

This sense of 'rightness' was apparent in two voices which Tony used. One was a 'professional' voice, more ready than others to refer to the career theory that he had learnt, and the personal learning about how his own career had been shaped that arose from that professional learning. This carried forward into his descriptions of shaping his work roles within both the Connexions service and the two schools where he had worked as careers adviser. It picks up a role noted by Cedefop (2009: 19) when

specialist guidance providers need to develop the role of others in networks and institutions by:

> … making 'the specific theories and specific methods of career guidance' accessible to others, at an appropriate level of detail and complexity, and also aligning them with the existing professional competence frameworks of other professional groups, or with the perspectives and interests of other groups such as employers, parents and volunteers.

Alongside the professional voice was one that was comfortable to work across the affective domain. He makes frequent use of verbs such as 'inspired' and 'driven' to bring a strong sense of 'self' into his story.

Philip told the story of his early career as a learning journey. He reported a boyhood interest in sport and outdoor activities as one of the reasons for lack of application to study and poor exam results.

> I was messing about until I was about fifteen or sixteen. I was in the Boys' Brigade and I was doing mountaineering, I was doing camping, playing games, and not really concentrating – I was what they call a late developer.

His initial training and career followed his other passion and aptitude from school days, leading to a career in commercial art. In his early years of marriage, and through his connection to a church, he became a successful volunteer youth leader, drawing in part on his sport and outdoor activity experience.

> We'd only just got married. Of course we were ideal material for youth leadership, and hadn't got any kids or anything ... we built the club up from six to two hundred in about four years, and I was in charge of about ten leaders. We had a ratio of one to ten, which was important. So it was a very successful youth group. We used to take them away for weekends, and, you know, get speakers in and we used to sort of get them to play games. And it was a really good club. What that did was, it really reinforced my interest in doing more of a social type job, and helping people. There was a very strong will to serve which I identified within me. Which wasn't being satisfied by doing all the art work, you see.

This experience of working with young people, and building an ailing club with six members into a thriving community of two hundred young people, led to a desire for 'more of a social type job' with lasting impact, in

contrast to the short-termism of his art work. Careful exploration of youth work and the probation service did not produce an opening in line with his situation as a young father with financial responsibilities.

The idea of careers work was introduced by a friend, himself a careers adviser, within Philip's church community. It pulled together the strands of how Philip had developed during his twenties, and offered, pragmatically, the chance to train through a salaried training post. Philip also explained how his life in careers work was satisfying at a deeper level, matching his personal values. He had thoroughly enjoyed a long period working in an FE college, and being able, under the policy arrangements at that time, to work across the entire age range. The 'second chance' aspect of FE fitted with what Philip describes as his 'core values about giving people a second chance … I'd missed out, I hadn't got my qualifications … I did it through the alternative route, so it fitted in with all that in my values system'.

Philip is conveying a sense of his own being and his personal development inextricably linked with career development, and firmly situated in both a social and geographical space. We return later to Philip's geography; my reflection here is on the process of self-learning which underpinned a significant 'turning point' of entry into a career which provided a 'confirmatory routine' where 'the new identity develops broadly in the way in which the hoped and intended' (Hodkinson et al., 1996: 144).

7.5 Routines, turning points and energy flows
 The preceding section has examined stories of career development as a process of personal self-learning, augmented by learning about opportunities. In chapter 2, I explored how ideas of 'routines' and 'turning points' had developed over time within the model of Careership proposed by Hodkinson and colleagues (Hodkinson et al., 1996; Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997; Bowman et al., 2005). Latterly, Hodkinson (2008) addressed the difficulty of differentiating routine from turning point, even with

considerable hindsight, by subsuming both into a broad conception of learning as pervasive in all aspects of life and experience (Hodkinson et al., 2006; Hodkinson, 2008). The participants discussed in the previous section can all be understood in that way.

There is a danger that, in proposing career construction as an ongoing learning process, a view which I accept, that we lose sight of an aspect related to 'turning points' which was seen as significant by some of the participants in this research. Bill told a career story where there is comparatively clear demarcation of routines and turning points, albeit with turning points sometimes extending over a period of time, as Bowman et al. (2005) propose. Turning points for Bill were characterised by 'release' and positive energy flow. He used the phrase 'turning point' to describe the end of the extended period of student lifestyle following drop-out from his first degree course. This occurred when he visited his brother, an aid worker in the Philippines: 'It was just a complete eye-opener. It was a real turning point'. This led to him going travelling, pursuing a human rights interest:

> … in terms of my own situation and what did I think, it just gave me perspective really. Who did I think I was kidding? …

> … And I sort of got involved in – I went on some human rights fact-finding missions, and I wrote a couple of pieces for some local magazines ..

> *Were those different from the sort of writing you'd done before?*

> Yes. Yes, it was, but I don't – yes, I suppose it was very different really. But .. just to put this in perspective, you know, the output of my writing was never great. I sort of, I think I was more – it sounds terrible to admit but I think I was more – I liked thinking of myself as being a writer, or somebody who was going to be a writer rather than actually getting on and really doing it

On his return to the UK, needing to earn money before embarking on a second spell at university, Bill talked of a very positive experience with work and friends in London:

> … it was a release, a real sort of release, and …. looking back on it I would say that was one of the best years of my life. I was sort of

> free .. and vastly more confident than I'd been before. It was affirming, really affirming …

I asked for explanation of his sense of release, and he talked of 'a release from the sort of prison I'd put myself in'. Bill experienced a similar state some years later, after a period of what he termed 'meantime' jobs after completing his degree. Once he had decided to train to become a careers adviser, 'then again it was this freeing up … my mission was to be the best … I wanted to be the best … student'.

These descriptions go beyond the confidence of having a choice confirmed or enabled. Bill conveyed a whoosh of energy. Energy also played a complex part in the career steps taken by Rachel. Rachel told a story of an unsettled career, which will be explored later. Here, I am concentrating on energy flows. A year or two before our discussion, Rachel had made a number of job applications, and those that had been unsuccessful were at times when she 'really didn't like' the job she was in. She explained like this:

> … it just didn't really feel right at the time, and also I think sometimes if you are not on a high with things, that will just come across, won't it, one way or another? People will just pick up on how you're feeling …

Conversely, when she made a move from adult guidance to Connexions, she had been 'within a comfort place' and 'got it (the job) when I was feeling quite relaxed and happy'.

The most recent year in her current job had been much more enjoyable: 'things changed here and things started to really pick up and I started to really enjoy it …'. At this point, I misread Rachel, assuming a newly enjoyable job was one she might wish to stay in. It was obviously a suggestion over which Rachel showed sufficient doubt that I acknowledged 'You're very hesitant'. Later in the discussion, we returned to this idea, and established Rachel's view:

> I'm also just feeling at the moment that because I'm happy and enjoying it that - because there's good energy flowing at the moment – that this is a good time to think about moving forward -

Right

- rather than before when I was fed up. And trying to think about moving forward when I was fed up. That didn't work out. So that's kind of where I am at the moment.

So you're actually reflecting back that my supposition that you might stay because you are happier is the wrong supposition. Being happier is actually the energy possibly to move on.

Possibly. Possibly it is the energy to move on. But it also obviously makes staying …. It's where it – it's actually the same actions, but it's the drive, the feelings you have when you do it that's …. that makes all the difference really.

Accepting Hodkinson's (2008: 11) own critique of the 'linked concepts of routines and turning points', I am still anxious that something important could be lost if we do not retain the concept that turning points often have a relationship to impetus, release (in Bill's term) and energy. However, reinforcing Hodkinson's concern that routines and turning points may be indistinguishable, Rachel's later comments above raise the possibility of 'staying', while emphasising the importance of 'the feelings'. It raises the question of whether routines and turning points are adequately described through action, or whether they exist also, inter-relatedly, in emotional states. Bill's description of the energy 'to be the best' would support this suggestion. I do not find the idea of energy flow discussed in the various studies by Hodkinson and his colleagues. For the notion of turning points, Hodkinson draws on the work of Strauss (1962), who likewise does not identify the sense of impetus and energy amongst his various characterisations – positive and negative – of turning points. I will return to this aspect in my later consideration of career guidance. Career guidance should give hope, but can be received as 'depressing' (Foskett, 2009). Careers advisers need to be aware of the emotional impact of their work, which will impact on the acceptability of their advice.

7.6 'Meantime' travelling and 'meantime' jobs

Sean and Tony (in Section 7.3) had used travel to 'put it all off, making a decision'. Rachel continues the theme of participants who used periods of travel to postpone engaging with the fact that she 'didn't really know

what to do'. Rachel conveyed travel abroad as a deliberate plan, 'to go out and see the world'. An observer might have considered that Rachel had fulfilled some aspects of this plan, but she herself clearly did not share this view.

Rachel had made a lot of (apparent) decisions:

- to do a subject at university which was not in line with family expectations
- to travel and undertake casual work
- to train for foreign language teaching and take specific contracts abroad (year-long contracts in Poland, then Latvia, then six months in Siberia)
- to re-enter university for postgraduate (QCG) training.

Rachel and Tony both travelled extensively. Tony's travel served both to test career ideas (particularly teaching) while delaying specific career commitment. There was a sense of continuity in Tony's story; although his commitment to a specific career path took many years, he conveyed a sense of himself as a person gaining fulfilment, personal enrichment and self-knowledge through a sequence of experiences. Rachel's story offers a contrast with this. She was someone whom I struggled to understand until I used the Listening Guide technique of listening for different voices. I heard at least three voices mingled in her conversation with me: a 'restless traveller' voice, an internalised voice reflecting her perception of her father's opinions, and a tentative, future-oriented voice. The first voice, that of a restless traveller, was neither satisfied with her travelling nor settled in place. Rachel's story was woven through with place:

> I really couldn't settle … I didn't really know where I wanted to be …
>
> I went abroad again …
>
> I came back and I was in exactly the same situation again …
>
> I was in quite a rut …
>
> I sort of see myself as being somewhere else …
>
> I don't really feel that it's a home … it's just a place where I live …
>
> … anywhere I am is just 'where I am now' …

> I've never really seen anywhere as a place for life …
>
> I've always been quite restless …

Rachel's stories of travelling were interspersed with periods when she 'ended up' back at her parental home. The phrase 'ended up' was used over and again, very negatively, by Rachel. It felt to me to be a phrase that I should examine when it was in the voice of a careers adviser. 'Ending up' seemed to me a very passive expression, reminiscent of the 'going with the flow' of Stefan's early career, but whereas for Stefan 'the flow always brought me to the right shores', for Rachel the ending point was repeatedly in proximity to her father and his views. I became very sensitised to the phrase 'ended up' and found it used by many participants. Occasionally it had a spatial sense and more frequently a temporal sense, but for Rachel it seemed to have considerable emotional weight as well, a sense of being trapped in a circuit from which she had not been able to move away. I listened to Rachel returning to her parental home, and a background she describes like this:

> … my background of my sister at Cambridge and my dad at Oxford and I went to (post-92 university) and that just wasn't – my dad never even sort of recognised that as a good degree, let alone something in English and History, not in science …

In chapter 4, I considered change and stability as intertwined aspects of human development. Rachel's story raised a different possibility of stability as entrapment. If it were possible to view a person's life 'objectively', I could raise questions about how someone could spend more than five years abroad, most of it in cultures different from western Europe, and for a significant time undertaking responsible work, and then not see themselves as changed from the person they were before these experiences. Tony had undertaken similar experiences and was well aware of how he had changed through them.

As I listened to Rachel, it appeared to me that where she always 'ended up' may have been, physically, at her family home, but more importantly it was in a place where the internalised voice of her father's expectations

intensified her own 'real sense of not achieving', and provided a stability/entrapment that overwhelmed any possibility of recognising herself as changed. Rachel offered confirmation of this interpretation when she described entry to her second spell at university, to undertake the postgraduate course in careers work. She did not choose the subject, then search for institutions; rather:

> I wanted to go to a good university, which means a traditional one, so I went off to Reading to do that course. But in terms of actually knowing where that was going to get me, I wasn't sure … I can't remember exactly what the thing was that made me actually think of doing it.

I find it helpful here to contemplate possible *I-positions* underlying Rachel's voices (Hermans, 2003; McIlveen and Patton, 2007). Rachel was acting from an *I-position* which was adopting or responding to her perceptions of her father's expectations. We cannot know if those were really his expectations, but for Rachel they were real. Hermans (1992: 29, emphasis in the original) explores this point:

> *I* construe another person or being as a position that *I* can occupy and that creates an alternative perspective on the world and myself. This perspective may or may not be congruent with the actual perspective of the actual other …

Throughout our discussion, Rachel told a story in which I heard her downplaying her own decisions, experience and actions in subservience to her father's voice in her. On just one occasion she offered her own contradiction to the dominance of his voice, remarking that she 'came from a family of scientists and was far more creative'. This suggests a construct that places 'scientific' at one pole and 'creative' at the other. With the scientific position came certainties and 'getting on'; with the creative position came uncertainty and 'ending up'.

As well as the first, restless traveller voice and the internalised father's voice, there was a third voice. It was a more tentative voice, but seemed to me to be a future-oriented voice. This third voice conveyed a number of interlinked strands, and considerable ambivalence. One strand had a more

purposeful sense of developing career skills and capabilities in 'the actual interview process', interest triggered by training in NLP and solution-focused brief counselling techniques, and finding ways to 'bring out … a more positive outlook from them' (i.e. clients). This proposal for developing an intrinsic interest in the work followed a comment from Rachel that 'I do really like … working with young people more on the … personal development side'. But mixed with this were prevarications: 'If I was to go further with careers …' and later 'I'm a little bit bored … it's not altogether challenging, this career, this job', and perhaps more tellingly still: 'careers – I'd like it to be more important to me'. This last comment, although ostensibly negative about careers work, suggests conversely that greater intrinsic interest, if the job role permitted, is a possibility.

Rachel had debated a move to careers work in FE or HE, and thought of pursuing a master's course in either the careers field or academic subjects related to her first degree. She was involved in an application for progression to a higher grade in her current work, and felt that achieving this (a judgement to be made by her line managers) would be a 'good confidence boost'. Ambivalence appeared in ways that surprised me. Rachel commented on 'thinking about what directions I could move in' and my rejoinder that there are settings other than careers in which her training can be used appeared – as I judged from a thoughtful silence – to have introduced an idea outside her current range of thinking.

Drawing together any kind of summary of Rachel's career feels a difficult task. I have quoted her own words extensively, because to attempt a description would appear to set firm something that needs to remain essentially fluid, shared with the reader for them to examine it from their own point of view. There are however characteristics that can be noted. Rachel had made pragmatic decisions, which appeared to be significantly motivated by the need to 'escape,' in both a physical and mental sense, from an uncomfortable place. Doing 'nothing' had not been an option, and the career orientation of her family might have instilled that in her habitus, but as with Tony, her past choices had delayed rather than

resolved her questions. Rachel's career felt like a personal, private journey, which had been driven on an emotional rather than a rational plane. In that respect it seemed the reverse of Tony's story. He had struggled to make sensible choices, such as teaching and translating, and his first report of deep emotional involvement was the positive experience of training for career guidance work. Rachel had made emotionally motivated choices (the 'good' university despite a lack of real understanding of where the qualification might lead) and remained in an emotionally troubled place, which I attribute in good part to the competing voices within her. While I sensed a tentative move towards a more positive sense of the possibility of intrinsic reward from work, this was not yet strong, and certainly the path to this other place was not clear. At the end of the first stage of my discussion with Rachel, it was not at all clear to me how she might describe her ways of working with clients.

Bill's story was full of meantime travel and meantime jobs, which he built into a self-learning journey, rich with turning points, release and energy. Other travellers, Frank and Louise, mentioned periods of living and working abroad in a more matter-of-fact way. Louise cast her three years abroad as a prolonged holiday: 'I felt that the au pair thing was a little holiday really, where I was able to travel and meet fun people and have sort of adventures'. Frank talked about his years abroad in the 'geography story' at the beginning of our discussion, but did not refer to it later, picking up his 'career' only from his entry to an Access course on his return to the UK.

7.7 Luck, chance and spookiness
There is a body of career theory which looks at the role of luck and happenstance in career development (Heppner, 2011; Mitchell et al., 1999; Snorradottir Clark, 2011). Such work typically proposes that one role of career guidance is to help clients be alert to and prepared for chance events, and to 'make their own luck'. Bright and Pryor (2005, 2008) have extended such thinking through the application of chaos theory to career

development. Such work focuses on purposive use of the idea of chance in careers activities.

Something different happened in the narratives from a few of my participants. Lorna is the extreme example: she attributed discovering careers adviser as a job to 'a complete stroke of luck', finding it 'completely by accident'. Lorna reported herself as undertaking at that time research into possible careers, based on self-knowledge gained in earlier work and using careers library resources. She was undertaking exactly the sort of thoughtful activity that she later described recommending to her clients; in this professional framing, if clients had found apparently suitable career ideas, this would have been framed as the hoped-for result from sensible action. In contrast, as I recounted earlier (Section 7.2), Lorna described someone following this sort of planning to become a careers adviser as very much out of the usual.

I was puzzled that Lorna attributed her choice to 'luck' rather than taking credit for her actions. I considered 'imposter syndrome' (Clance and Imes, 1978) as a possible explanation of Lorna's account of her own story. Imposter syndrome proposes that some people (the original research focused particularly on women) attribute successes to luck or to expenditure of exceptional effort, rather than to an 'internal, stable factor of ability' (Clance and Imes, 1978: 2). This might be a relevant field in relation to Lorna's own career development. Although she was noticeably proactive in following up leads 'on the off-chance', and recalled several successful experiences of doing so (I do not know about those that did not succeed), she conveyed a feeling of chanciness about these approaches. Whether or not it is relevant to herself, imposter syndrome offers little in the way of explanation of Lorna's view that planful action to become a careers adviser was 'odd'. One of Lorna's cases had studied psychology with a view to becoming a forensic psychologist, and it is difficult to understand why one psychology student is 'odd' while the other is to be applauded.

158

An alternative explanation could be the positive emotions associated with finding and embarking on an enjoyable course of training and subsequent career. Positive emotions could be associated with 'feeling lucky' and therefore rationalised backwards into 'luck'. Emotions and semantics are both highly personalised fields, from which it would be inappropriate to propose a general finding from one instance, particularly when that instance occurs in a narrative that is 'constructing and communicating meaning' (Chase, 1995: 1) in the context of an interview with a specific interlocutor, myself.

Luck in one sense has a meaning close to coincidence. Coincidence and spookiness featured in other stories. Louise's first encounter with career guidance, as a client, was with 'a careers adviser in a college of FE, which ironically is what I do now. How weird is that?'. Louise explained that the careers adviser encouraged her to 'think about what I'd like to do, not what I felt I could do', which led to her seeking work experience and subsequently training for careers work. Her role in FE was in one of the three major areas where careers advisers are employed, so the answer to her question, 'how weird is that?' could be that it is not weird at all. Philip's story was grounded in local community and specifically his local church. Although he took pride in his stability and rootedness in community, he used terms such as 'chance' and 'spooky' to describe the coincidences in place in this limited locality. Yet it is hard to see how things could be otherwise for a life consciously lived within narrow geographical boundaries.

This provides a complex picture of sensible action being redefined as luck, and relatively normal coincidence being 'spooky'. None of this reflective attribution to chance is framed in the same way as 'planned happenstance' theory (Mitchell et al., 1999) or chaos theory (Pryor and Bright, 2003), where chance is something to be anticipated. In this sense, which includes cultivating a disposition towards seizing chances and taking risks, several people made comments. Heather recalled what she recounted as a chancy move, but conveyed that resilience permits risk:

shall I? shan't I? ... And it was in the end, I just thought, well, you know, I can do anything. I can work in a shop …

Louise took this further, by leaving her employment in the Careers Service when she found her post tedious:

> Then I got quite bored and restless because at that point it was very much blanket interviewing. I felt I was just going in to schools, one after the other, and it was quite mundane to be honest. So I did three years, then I took a risk and I left without a job. I thought 'I'm so bored, and I want to do – I want to go and temp and do something different'.

7.8 Sticking to principles and being recognised

This sense of resilience is an important counterpart in the dilemmas recounted by some people when their sense of values was challenged. William was aware that the cost required in compliance if he wanted to gain promotion to more senior management roles was a compromise he was not prepared to make:

> It hasn't helped me progress in terms of going into management myself, but then, I am probably an independent spirit. I've got views I stick to, and values about working with young people which I hold very dear to me.

Heather recalled two different stages when her values had been compromised within her employment situation:

> I could have stayed with the YTS. It was my decision to leave … I didn't like the way she wanted us to spend the money on premises and different things and not on the kids' training. So I revolted at that point. I thought, quite briefly, I thought, well, I've only got myself to think about, haven't got any kids or anything, I'll get another job somewhere …

And later:

> It was really, well, it was the stage of walking out on the YTS, but it was – I am somebody who … is rather ruled by principles. I was in that situation last year. I very nearly just stomped out to do .. whatever, and I thought, this is silly, letting your heart rule your head. So when I thought about it, this is still what I want to do.

In neither case was this described to me as associated with the career dilemmas that I asked them to recall. Certainty of values, for William and

Heather, removed any sense of uncertainty over a course of action, even though a degree of compromise was acknowledged by them both.

William extended his certainty over his own career actions into a desire for those values, and his broader conception of his professional expertise, to be recognised. He had retained specialisation in careers work during a number of difficult transitions when careers work with young people had been placed within Connexions, and its status reduced in relation to intensive support work with 'at risk' young people (Watts, 2001). It was important to him that this specialisation was respected by colleagues and by schools: 'I've still been the person who's had the key sort of knowledge on areas like areas of occupation, and going into higher education … that's where my expertise is'.

Christine also talked about recognition, but seemed to be motivated to achieve recognition for herself as an individual rather than for the role she occupied. It was a strand in her story from her earlier teaching days: 'I was the only woman in an all-male department … I was never going to get recognised, so I needed to move somewhere in order to be able to stand in my own career in my own right'. As she progressed into a specialised role in the careers service, she felt this was achieved: 'actually in terms of what I wanted from my career was to be recognised for doing particular things, that was the first stage which I was recognised for actually achieving something'. Later, in relation to work in a developmental role, she commented 'to this day I'm still terribly proud of it'. There follows a reminder that these accounts arise within the specific context of Christine's perception of what is relevant to her conversation with me:

> I'm looking at things I'm particularly proud of, and I think that probably in my career was about the time that I did some of my proudest achievements.

In contrast to the stories in this section and the previous one, imbued with values, achievements and recognition, some participants had difficulty reconciling their personal values with their perceptions of the professional

role expected of them. Frank articulated this most clearly. It emerged as a theme in his description of his postgraduate course, and his colleagues on it:

> And the other students, I thought a lot of them – they didn't really get it, if that makes sense …
>
> … they'd probably had more interesting lives than I gave them credit for, but I just thought maybe I'd struggled a bit more to get there maybe than they had

Later, Frank explained the part of his caseload that he most enjoyed working with: 'working at the PRU and medical tuition. It's like small caseload and kids with lots more stuff going on …'. He contrasted this with work in mainstream schools, where he felt that the key role was just to make sure that each student had made an application for a post-16 opportunity, bringing unwelcome routine to his role:

> I'm sure I do, and everyone else, gets into their own way of doing things, and bad habits, and then we just, you know, drift, doing the same old interviews …

There are echoes here of Louise (Section 7.7) who left her post because she was 'bored' with blanket interviewing, but also a very clear contrast with many participants who conveyed ongoing challenge from and enjoyment of their work with individual clients. Heather provided a clear example: asked on a staff questionnaire to state the three best things about her job, she reported that she wrote 'the students are great, the students are great, the students are great'.

7.9 Conclusion

My participants' career stories reflect the complexity of human 'being' in an aspect of life – working and related learning – through which many people in the 21st century develop a significant element of their adult personal and social identity (Banks et al, 1992). This complexity cannot be captured through 'logical positivist methods that isolate simple factors and trace their effects' (Josselson, 1995: 29); indeed, I am not sure I could locate a 'simple factor' in any of these stories. This chapter has tried to identify a few broad themes that capture some of the distinctive qualities within particular career stories, whilst remembering that each person is a

complex of different voices. As we think about 'career' in these stories, I am aware of the peregrinatory nature of many careers, that is in marked contrast to the straighter path of the 'folk theory' of linear, meritocratic career (Bowman et al, 2005), or Strauss's (1962: 65) metaphor of career as 'like the idea of a ladder'.

I have tried to show respect for the whole person, while remembering that I have only become acquainted with those parts of that 'whole' which they have chosen to share, specifically with me. Stories varied considerably, but there is also unbalance in the reporting of the stories: firstly, people shared different volumes and qualities of their complex lives with me; that in turn was based in part on the quality of the relationship I achieved with each participant, and finally I remain responsible for the quality of attention that I paid to each element of each stories. Inevitably, some things 'grabbed' me, drawing a response from my own experiences, values and interests.

'Career', in the sense in which I have explained it throughout this thesis, is an aspect of living that occurs regardless of careers advice. Hiebert and Lerkkanen (2006: 167) propose that 'career paths develop over time, regardless of whether people are planful about the process or leave it to chance'. They follow this with the suggestion that those who are planful are 'more likely to achieve a meaningful and satisfying life'. None of the participants in this study made plans to become a careers adviser at a young age. The earliest stage at which any participant made such a plan was soon after graduation, when Heather made the decision to move away from Chemistry, her degree subject. She chose careers work from amongst a number of options for pursuing an interest, developed while at university, of working with people. All others followed other paths for several years before moving into training to become a careers adviser.

Some participants were able to articulate a self-learning path through which they had developed this career interest. This capability to reflect on

learning-from-experience, along with the capacity for agentic action (Richardson, 2012: 214), was characteristic of those who explained most cogently why they had entered and stayed within careers work. Richardson employs the term 'agentic action' in preference to 'agency', using it to encapsulate 'behaviour that is infused with intentional states encompassing intentions and aims as well as a broad constellation of hopes and fears, beliefs and desires, at both conscious and unconscious levels'. This is a helpful contrast in considering participants – Rachel and Frank come to mind – who are struggling to find a fully engaging role within careers work, in comparison to other participants – William and Tony are examples – who articulate clearly a sense of certainty, commitment and enjoyment in their professional work.

Neither Rachel nor Frank conveyed that their application for training emerged from 'agentic action' in Richardson's sense. It was an opportunity that arose, and it pragmatically satisfied an immediate need (Hodkinson, 2008). They are not distinctive in the pragmatism of the decision, but in the aspect that they have not – or, maybe, not yet – found it to be a decision that led into a period of confirmatory 'routine'. Both expressed ways in which they were uncomfortable with their current role – a contradictory 'routine' – and both had their eyes on other opportunities. However both also identified aspects of the careers adviser role which might support their socialisation into the 'routine'; for example, Frank might specialise in work with young people whom he perceived as sharing his experience of 'struggle' in their early years. As a reminder that career is 'personal and highly individualised' (Section 2.3), Sean had a similar career path, entering careers work from the same generalised interest in working with (young) people, and expressing very pragmatic reasons related to enhancing his earning potential. Yet he offered a contrast with Rachel and Frank, appearing more at ease with the role, more able to describe and explain how his work fitted within his own life and how it was useful to clients. Hodkinson et al (1996) comment that for their young research subjects a self-initiated turning point was unlikely while a routine continued to be confirmatory and permitted identity

development broadly in line with the individual's intentions. This seemed applicable in Sean's case, despite having his 'restless' eye open for other opportunities.

In this variety of career experiences and ways of explaining career, each story has included all elements of the five characteristics of career proposed in Section 2.3, that it is *personal*, *developmental*, *interpretative*, *shaped* and *situated*. The stories take us beyond that. Chance plays a significant part, as maybe does 'luck'; in Section 7.7 I have proposed that luck needs to be seen as a concept encompassing both events and emotional states, in anticipated futures and in reflexiveness. Equally important are the stories of how people react to chance events: anticipating them, seizing them, suffering them, gaining energy from them. In the *personal* aspect of career, people are relishing or resolving aspects of their identity: gaining recognition, living out their values, handling boredom, experiencing satisfactions, amongst many other facets. Compromise is endemic in career, at both conscious level in relation to values, work activities and income, and in subconscious processes of the *shaping* that leads to circumscription of perceived possibilities (Gottfredson, 1996, 2005).

The descriptive phrases in the previous two sentences relate to personal experiences. Experience and self-learning are integral parts of living (Hodkinson, 2008), and are continually monitored through 'reflexive awareness' (Giddens, 1991: 35). Many participants told stories that wove their experiences into present stories of the value and purpose of their work. A few did this less clearly, which could be attributable to their feeling a sense of discrepancy between their own identity and state of being and their perception of what was expected or possible in their work role. We must also remember that all these stories were created in a personal interaction, and participants needed to find a discursive mode that suited their understanding of what was appropriate in the relational situation. Some uncertainty (and some cogent stories) could be what people decided to offer, in that place and at that time, to me.

CHAPTER EIGHT: WHO HELPED CAREERS ADVISERS?

8.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the review of the personal career stories that participants recounted to me, focusing now on the last stage of the discussion. By this stage I had asked each participant to recall specific points in their career where they had faced dilemmas or choices, and to consider how they had tackled the career issue. Finally, I used probing questions to ask who had helped, and how. Mostly this received the anticipated response, but in two cases, Frank and Tony, the participants chose to pursue another line of thought. Tony had previously made considerable comment that was relevant to this question, and is reported here, and Frank had chosen throughout the discussion to offer limited information on his personal circumstances. In each case I desisted after two requests, in accord with my own underlying assumption that people will talk about what is most important to them, and will share what they are prepared to share, specifically within the context of the discussion with me.

Findings from this part of my discussions with participants were anticipated both to illuminate further the way that each person construed career, and to provide perspectives on the characteristics that people had found helpful in 'career helpers'. This also adds context for the next stage of the research, looking at how careers advisers themselves seek to help others (reported in Chapter 9). The second aspect relates to the employment and social aspects of 'field' which Careership theory adopts from Bourdieu's work. The helping role of people in the field is further explicated through Bosley et al.'s (2007: 116) delineation of the 'conceptual framework of valued career helpers' which they term 'the anatomy of credibility'.

8.2 'Significant others'

Nine participants were in a stable relationship at the time of their discussion with me, and a further two had been married for fairly long

periods but were living as single people at the time we met (both were in the most mature 55-60 age group). Two people, both in the youngest 30-35 age group, made no reference to any long-term relationship and were living a single lifestyle when I met with them.

Not surprisingly 'significant others' featured in many discussions, though not all. The exception was Christine, a married mother of two teenage children, who made no references at all to her partner despite discussing some emotionally challenging career situations.

From my social constructionist perspective, which takes relationality to be central in creating meaning in life events, I would anticipate that life partners would play a significant role. Stefan captured the essence of many such references. He described talking about his career issues 'obviously with my wife, but she's not a careers adviser, she is my wife!'. Six participants made specific reference to partners in relation to support for their own career development. In most instances this was as the obvious person with whom to share dilemmas and debates in life. Such partners (e.g. for Stefan, Bill, Lorna and William) were reported as people in responsible occupations who therefore had a general understanding of career possibilities and pressures. In two cases, partners provided contacts within their professional networks who gave career help to participants. In general, partners were mentioned and valued as sites of what I interpret as 'person knowledge, care and partiality' (Bosley et al., 2007: 130) rather than as playing a specific career guidance role.

Several discussions touched on aspects of managing life roles, particularly creating compatible two-career moves (Sean), and decisions about forming families, this being a catalyst for two men, Philip and Bill, in their decision to enhance their 'breadwinner' capability by embarking on professional training. Geographical moves (with her husband, for Lorna, and to join his intended wife, for Stefan) initiated the process of career change (to self-employment for Lorna, and into training for careers work for Stefan). Discussions in all these cases did not address career dilemmas as such,

and are not explored in detail here. Dual-career families and work-life interactions constitute an extensive research literature elsewhere (Hoobler et al., 2010; Moen, 2003; Parker and Arthur, 2004).

Lucy told a story of a much deeper level of emotional intervention by her husband. She faced a personal crisis at the point of returning for her second year of a teacher training course, driven by what she terms the 'mantra' of 'I've started so I'll finish', but deeply unhappy with teaching aspects of the course and teaching as a potential career.

> And I did literally try to make myself walk down the path, and .. just burst into tears. And so J called me back and said, you're not going. And at that point I needed somebody to tell me – I needed in fact him to say to me, you don't have to do this. Because I was doing it thinking 'I'm letting them down'.

This episode sits within a longer story of Lucy's involvement in her parenting role. At earlier stages, Lucy had conveyed her commitment, supported by her husband, to her role in what Richardson (2012) terms 'personal care work'. Questions of embarking upon what she calls a 'qualified profession' only arose when both children were well established at school, and the motivation for such work has been described earlier (Chapter 7.3). In a later section, I will return to Lucy's need to work things out for herself (Section 8.4).

8.3 Bosses, colleagues and friends

This section encompasses a shifting conglomeration of 'friendly' people. The group is not static: for example, colleagues and managers may become trusted friends (Richardson, 2012), and such friendships may endure after the working relationship has ended. Status alone does not make a colleague or manager a 'friend'.

The characteristics of valued and 'credible' helpers were delineated by Bosley et al. (2007). Their schema of the 'anatomy of credibility' distinguishes at the highest level between *helper-structure relationships*

where people help through 'structural knowledge, power and influence' with regard to the work environment, and *helper-receiver relationships*, characterised by personal knowledge and care as central factors. The support from partners, described in the previous section, fell within the helper-receiver stream of Bosley et al.'s model, characterised particularly by time and attention, encouragement and support, linked with close knowledge of the person.

8.3.1 Managers

Two participants made specific reference to help from a past manager, where helper-structure relationships played a central role. In both cases this was combined with significant elements from the helper-receiver relationship characteristics, leading to this help having a high level of credibility and being appreciated as 'positively partial' (Bosley et al., 2007: 132). Sean described his most significant and valued source of career support, other than his partner, as his team leader in his previous post. As well as detailed knowledge of the employment field, Sean mentioned the manager's listening skills, his being very supportive of Sean's desire to progress his career (even at the cost of the team leader himself losing a team member), and having 'a bit in common outside of work; I just had time for him'. Although constraints from higher in the management structure prevented the manager from using 'power or influence' to create a development opportunity for Sean with the current employer, he helped Sean with assessing alternative possibilities and targeting job applications.

Christine related similar help from her manager. Christine's employing organisation had lost – in her view, deliberately – the contract for the work which Christine managed, leaving staff demoralized:

> I thought, enough's enough. I've had three changes of job here. It's time I left this organisation.

Christine described her manager as being equally 'devastated that we lost the contract'; she goes on to explain the manager's attitude:

> She believed in every single member of her staff. She believed that every single one of us had something to offer, and a lot of us were

> looking for changes, and she made it her personal project to ensure that every one of us moved on to something we wanted to do.

Within the 'positive partiality' (Bosley at al., 2007: 131) shown by this manager, Christine was ready to accept critical assessment:

> (She) could talk very knowledgeably about my work, what she thought was good, what she thought my weaknesses were.

Many years later, at another time of potential career change, Christine again sought help from this former manager, who had remained a friend.

8.3.2 Colleagues

Colleagues is a very loose description, applying to the immediate employment, past co-workers, those who were fellow students on the postgraduate course, and those in associated fields, such as teachers. Sean described exchanging information with colleagues working for the same employer in other geographical areas, 'checking out ideas' and finding out how things 'work in other parts of the county, and different institutions'. This was conveyed as a reciprocal process. Heather also identified colleagues as sounding boards and as people who gave encouragement and boosted her confidence to make career moves. For Lorna, colleagues blur into friends. A friend working in a tutorial role for the Open University alerted Lorna to work possibilities, which Lorna proactively pursued, thus becoming a colleague of the 'friend'.

In all these cases, there was some element of what Bosley et al. (2007: 123) term 'insider knowledge' of the work environment, but the elements that Bosley et al. place within the helper-receiver relationship side of their schema became predominant with colleagues. All aspects of the elements in this arm of the schema came into play. I found that two elements which Bosley et al. (2007: 123) place in neighbouring arms, 'person knowledge' and 'encouragement and support' (an aspect of the 'care' arm) were so tightly interlinked as to make this distinction inapplicable. 'Encouragement and support', particularly with regard to confidence to pursue work possibilities, needed to be grounded (as for Christine, in the

previous section) in a realistic appraisal of capability and work motivation, i.e. 'person knowledge'.

Confidence issues were commonly mentioned; while confidence is generally framed as a problem issue because of lack of confidence, it can be problematic at the over-confident end of its continuum. Several people, mainly women, appreciated help with confidence in handling career dilemmas, despite considerable past career achievement and pro-activity in developing career opportunities. Lorna made specific reference to imposter syndrome (Clance and Imes, 1978), whereas others conveyed the idea that confidence-boosting encouragement from colleagues and friends was helpful in facing up to a career issue. This can only be registered as appreciated help; whether it actually changed the likelihood of action remains unknowable.

Bill's career path had been shaped in its earlier stages by a mixture of over-confidence and assumed entitlement. He described his current understanding of his younger self, an undergraduate at a polytechnic:

> I was in that frame of mind where I sort of felt, I shouldn't be here. I should be at university. This isn't really for me.

8.3.3 Friends

Friends received few mentions as career helpers, and messages are mixed. Bill described being much under the influence of a friend who was clearly an influential character, who shaped Bill's 'drop-out' years. Bill made a point of emphasising that, even with hindsight, this had not been entirely a negative experience, but conversely he conveyed a great sense of release and energy when freed from such influence. Several others mentioned friends as positive sources of help in general terms, but without specific description.

For other participants, friends were specifically an unlikely source of help. Lucy explained:

> I never expected anybody to sort of be particularly interested. You know … personally I didn't think they'd want to discuss it with me, and I didn't ever feel that personal friends would be able – be in a position to give me the advice, anyway, because it's not something they can make a decision on your behalf for you.

Lucy also described pressure from friends who shared doubts about teaching training but had decided to stick to the course, and who exerted pressure on her to stay. This serves as a reminder that people have their own agendas, and particularly that actions such as that taken by Lucy can lead others to uncomfortable self-questioning. They may feel 'failures' for not facing up to issues, just as strongly as Lucy felt herself a failure for leaving. There is considerable comment in career guidance policy literature about the possibility of institutions placing institutional interests ahead of the interests of individuals, but it is not unique to that situation.

8.4 Working it out for yourself

Lucy's departure from the course was actively supported by her husband. She conveyed limitations on his capacity to help further, describing herself as being alone with her problem:

> So all the rest of it, I thought I'm going to have to deal with on my own after that. So he did his bit, and then I spent about two months in a bit of a wilderness really, feeling like I'd completely failed.

Lucy is the person who is most clear that seeking guidance would be an unusual step:

> I work things out for myself because I never expected – I never had that experience of seeking guidance, or I never expected anybody to sort of be particularly interested.

Several participants had received formal career guidance help which led to the decision to consider careers work (Bill, Heather, Louise) and a greater number had informal exchanges with careers advisers through their former jobs or through friends (Christine, Sean, Philip, Stefan, Tony). In all these cases, they recalled that this was supplemented by personal research, taking the form of seeking work-shadowing, researching course centres and exploring funding routes. Sometimes this was referred to in quite formal terms: 'after my careers research, I narrowed it down …'

(Louise), and 'I did all the research; I got a Local Government Training Board training award' (Lorna).

Three others, Wendy, William and Lorna, described active engagement with research into career ideas, building on past experiences and interests and using careers reference sources to seek cognate careers. Frank made a comment suggesting a more intuitive approach to the decision, but still acknowledges an element of career research:

> I think I was just doing some research and I realised there is a job called careers adviser. What do I need to do to do it? You need to do this. And I thought that's what I'm going to do.

Rachel's research and decision was strongly influenced by undertaking a course at a 'good' university – 'good' within the remit of her father's appraisal of universities – and applied for the course with, she suggested, little idea of where it might lead.

8.5 Influenced by others

Two other influences were reported as significant, in one case by two, in the other by three participants.

8.5.1 Role models

Tony was strongly influenced by a colleague responsible for careers work in the school where he was, at the time, a languages teacher. Every reference to the colleague shows that he held her in very high regard: for commitment to and delivery of the professional work; for her ways of engaging other teachers in what was, for them, a minor aspect of their tutorial role; and for her commitment to self-development through training and engagement with external associations. This role model served to coalesce Tony's exploratory thinking about how to develop his own career preferences, and gave him chance to undertake tentative development under her tutelage. This was a relationship that lasted for several years, until Tony left the school to enter training for careers work.

Lorna's role model was a considerable contrast. She recalled a single meeting with an independent careers consultant who had been running her own business for years:

> I remember again visiting her premises, talking to her about what she did, and just thinking, oooh – you know, I could do that.

Shortly afterwards, faced with a geographical move that entailed leaving her job, Lorna recalled this as an influence in taking the route of independent work rather than seeking an employed post.

8.5.2 Counselling

Involvement with counselling services or training was mentioned by three people. Philip had trained as a therapist over many years and at the time of my discussion with him he was also running a practice on a part-time basis. Practice required him to receive both clinical supervision and to undergo counselling himself. He identified his counselling sessions as a place where he discussed work issues,

> in lots of ways it's really helpful to have somebody who's outside of the situation to be able to bounce things off, to get some feedback from, and, um, a lot to listen. And for me to reflect on that.

Heather had undertaken training as a counsellor, which she described as considerably enhancing her career guidance skills. During the year-long course, students had the chance to discuss their own issues or to role-play imaginary situations.

> [The tutor said] you can use your own stuff or you might find it useful to role play people that you're working with or whatever, or you can make things up. And we all thought, well, we'll start with our own stuff and then we'll get on to the other, you know. By the end of the year we were still on, we got nowhere near the other, it was all on our own stuff *[laughs]*. So .. that was a really good support group then, and certainly I used a lot of those people when it came to, you know, to making the next move.

Tony had used counselling following the death of a parent.

> I did go through a period of counselling … a lot of those things about personal happiness came up in that period of counselling, psychodynamic it was. Very helpful … personal happiness came up in that very much and so this idea I suppose that thinking about it,

you know, somebody dying, life's too short, um …. also just feeling
I didn't need to do a job that I wasn't motivated about.

All three instances reported the interwoven nature of career and personal issues, which both Heather and Philip explicitly linked to development of their own ways of working as a careers adviser with their clients. Although Tony, having received rather than trained for counselling, did not make that personal transfer, he had previously commented on the counselling training undertaken by the role model (Section 8.5.1) and had identified the more limited coverage of counselling skills in his postgraduate careers course as a valuable element.

8.6 Conclusion

Relationships pervade this chapter. Relationships are treated through differing conceptual lenses in Systems Theory Framework, in Bosley et al.'s 'valued career helpers' (Bosley et al., 2007) and in Careership theory with its roots in Bourdieu's notions of capital, dispositions, habitus and field.

Systems Theory Framework for careers (Patton and McMahon, 2006a) proposes to map the players (people and institutions) in the 'system' (or field) of the individual. It has the strength of including intrapersonal aspects of the individual (capacities, knowledge, physical capabilities) with the closer social system and the wider environmental-social system (Patton and McMahon, 2006a: 203). Systems Theory Framework offers valuable scope to provide visual 'maps', for both the individual alone and as dual-centred maps of individuals in a specific relationship. Patton and McMahon (2006a: 313) offer such a dual-centred map of the 'therapeutic relationship' within the overall bounds of a single organisational and societal setting. Such maps have considerable potential (as Patton and McMahon (1995, 2006a, 2006b) argue) for use as explanatory schema of systems of influence, both in the setting of the training of careers advisers, and in their professional practice as a tool for use with clients.

System Theory Framework's simple schema of concentric circles would make it accessible to clients seeking careers help in a way which Bosley et al.'s (2007) schema may not be, and Bourdieu's more abstract conceptualisation will rarely be. Bosley et al.'s schema allows careers advisers to consider both their own potential for fulfilling helper relationships in relation to the 'receiver' and/or the 'structure' (Bosley et al., 2007: 123), and to discriminate more finely between players in the client's field in terms of the nature of the help they may be suggested to offer, and therefore ways in which the client may be recommended to seek help from them.

Bourdieu's ideas and concepts, and their application to underpin Careership theory, view relationship through a lens that extends far beyond – and before – the helping interview. For Bourdieu, all the preceding relationships in a person's life have contributed in combination to produce the 'dispositions' that form that person's habitus, and therefore shape their potential for future action. Bourdieu pays particular attention to social class (Hodkinson et al., 1995), and this is evident amongst the participants in my study: Bill's feeling that being at polytechnic rather than university is 'beneath' him, and Frank's conviction that his early 'struggles' endow him with greater insight than those whom he perceives to have had an easier life. Hodkinson et al. (1995: 146) note Bourdieu's emphasis on class, but in their concern particularly with career and training issues, comment 'at least to the extent that we use his ideas here, they might equally apply to gender and ethnicity'. Gender is particularly significant in shaping Lucy's career, but it plays a part in Philip's and Bill's need to become breadwinners when faced with imminent fatherhood.

Relationship in the sense in which it is important for Bourdieu offers a basis from which careers advisers can explore the influences that shape the current practice and possible actions of themselves (in offering guidance) and their clients (in moving towards choices for their future). Wacquant (1992: 16) comments that for Bourdieu 'habitus consists of a set of historical relations "deposited" within individual bodies in the form of

mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action'. In citing those words, I am reminded that neither listening to the voices nor reading the transcripts of this research can capture what exists in my memory: the physical bearing – confident or otherwise – of Stefan, Bill and Frank. Their physical bearing – assured in two cases and self-effacing in the third – inevitably had some small influence in shaping my own conduct of the relationship of the research interviews.

Understanding the structuring nature of relationships is important for the researcher, and has potential use in professional training, helping careers advisers to develop their own personal schema for understanding their clients. It is less likely to be directly used in discussion with clients, but may underpin and pervade the exercise of professional practice.

However, relationships are not the whole story. Lorna's role model was only marginally a 'relationship', only a one-off meeting, but very influential. From that meeting, Lorna was able to construct a possible future role. Even those theories that address role models (Savickas, 2002) propose looking back for childhood role models. Chance plays a part, but the external influence does not work without fertile ground, the propensity to act in certain ways within the individual's habitus. The novelist Salley Vickers offers a view:

> People sometimes suggest that the book has had an impact on their own lives – leading them to cast off caution, break out, try new things, and be brave. … I can't pretend that it doesn't please me that a book about an elderly tight-lipped spinster virgin, who falls unsuitably in love, gets clobbered for it and only then begins to live fully, should have this strengthening impact. If it does have some such influence, then I don't want to take credit for it – my guess is that this kind of development is already nascent in the reader, who may even have alighted on this very book because of some unconscious pre-formed identification with its heroine's predicament …
>
> (Vickers, 2003: Introduction to the second edition of *Miss Garnet's Angel*)

The final theme of this chapter (in Section 8.4) has been the acknowledgement by participants of their engagement in career research for their own career, and the need for agentic action on assembling adequate information for what is acknowledged by all as a personal decision. Eleven of the participants conveyed the sense that this research led them to a decision that was in accord with their self-understanding developed through earlier experiences: they could explain their decision. Two were less clear on this: Rachel knew why she had entered training, but the reason was not tied closely to her current professional role; Frank conveyed an intuitive decision, which perhaps had been a step towards a career that would come, over time, to focus somewhat differently as a result of his current professional experience.

CHAPTER 9: CAREERS ADVISERS' DISCUSSIONS OF WORK WITH CLIENTS

9.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the descriptions by careers advisers of their work with clients. It picks up themes from Chapter 3, Career guidance, and considers how these are reflected in the ways that career advisers explain their role. The chapter starts with a review of the stories people chose to tell me. It moves on through a description of one universal aspect of how careers advisers worked with information, then more specifically considers the different ways in which each participant engaged with the 'field' of the client. Finally it looks at the role of clients within the career guidance process, and ways in which careers advisers engaged with their relationships and their capacity for 'agentic action' (Richardson, 2012: 214).

In the earlier stages of discussions, reported in Chapters 7 and 8, I had invited personal stories with no direction as to how they should be told. Following the refocusing break part way through the interview, my introductory question for the second section of the discussion invited participants to discuss two recent interviews with clients, indicating that I anticipated the style of a 'typical narrative' (Mishler, 1986: 92) which might include the setting, the elaboration of a problem, an action account, leading to an outcome. I occasionally needed to check or reflect back my understanding of the setting or problem to ensure that I had properly grasped the scene. My probing questions were addressed to the last two stages, particularly asking for elaboration of what they were attempting to do with and for the client (action account), and asking for their assessment of whether they had 'made a difference' or brought about a change in the client (outcome).

9.2 Big stories of professional identity

In meeting my request for descriptions of recent interviews, the majority of responses were 'small stories' in Watson's (2007) terminology, in that

they describe 'ongoing performance accomplished locally, in and through their everyday actions' (p.372). Such 'small stories' are Level 1 stories in the schema that follows, with the research participant recalling a client who was indeed recent, then recounting and reconsidering how they worked with that individual. A few did not fit this pattern. They stood out as soon as I became aware that they were descriptions of cases from long ago. In the two most notable cases, the careers adviser was no longer in touch with the client, whom they had seen several times over some extended period. These responses were fulfilling a need by the participant to tell me a bigger story of their professional life. Watson's (2007) work on how teachers develop their professional identities gave me a way of understanding what was happening. In her use of Bamberg's Positioning Analysis, she explores three levels:

> Level 1 positioning analyses how the characters are established within the story and answers the questions, "What is this story about?" and "Who are the characters and why are they positioned this way?". Level 2 examines the question of what the narrator is trying to accomplish with the story, the narrative strategies and the interactional effects — "Why is it told *this* way?", " Why here and why now?" Level 3 draws together the analysis to provide an answer to the question "Who am I vis-à-vis what society says I should be?" A claim which can transcend the current local context.
> (Watson, 2007: 374)

Philip told me a story of a young adult client from Ireland, mentioning a drink problem, brushes with the law and an appearance in court, and financial problems. His engagement with the young man persisted through his period on an Access course and finally to a point just after entry to his preferred university to embark on a Law degree. William talked about a young woman who arrived in his office in a college when she could not be accepted into her college class because of a bleeding head injury. The story involved an abusive parent, other community agencies, and William's help to the point many months later when she established a viable independent status in employment and safe accommodation. William used to see her in her shop job, but in discussing her with me, realised he had not done so for a while, and that she must have moved on.

Neither of these stories includes the account of a specific interview session, nor was either of them recent. They both address the Level 3 question in Watson's text above, telling intertwined stories of 'Who am I …' as an individual, and 'Who, as a careers adviser, am I and how do I wish my role to be seen?' In both cases there is emphasis on the relation with the client: William provided drinks, gave time and medical care, checked the client was comfortable to talk with him rather than other staff; Philip recalled ups-and-downs with someone who perhaps had not 'entirely kicked his habits' but concludes, 'it was really rewarding to see somebody who'd obviously had a pretty rough life to at least get to university'. In both cases, these are stories of identification for the careers advisers – creating identities of themselves, in the context of the contingent relationship with me, as people who 'change lives' and help create 'second chances' (phrases which they used at other points in the discussion with me). In so far as the stories are told within the relationship with me, they partly operate at Watson's level 2, in relation to the interaction, but participants quite frequently made reference to my research context and what I would report, so I could have been construed as a channel of communication for their Level 3 message to a wider public. That message draws deeply upon the innermost self (Riessman, 2008) which I believe to include a worldview and the deeply held values, as discussed in Section 7.8, on which people would not compromise, although that resulted in compromise of other possible benefits – in both Philip's and William's cases, the potential for advancement to better-paid managerial posts. Both reflect the first theme in Chapter 3, that career guidance throughout its history has addressed philanthropic and social justice concerns.

9.3 Composite opportunity information

In contrast to these less usual responses to my enquiry, my second area of focus, as noted earlier, is a universal aspect of how the participants described their work. This section reports a way of working which repeatedly emerged from these discussions of professional practice: the distinctive way that opportunity information is used within guidance

interviewing. I have used the term 'composite' in the sense of pulling-together or integrating information. The particular facility with which careers advisers engage with career information is illuminating within a policy context where career information resources have sometimes been seen as the crucial, and arguably sufficient, provision for those entering into or developing their career. Watts (2010) reports that only 40% of school-leavers in England have had a face-to-face interview with an adviser, with the remainder presumably left to access information resources and non-expert help.

Careers advisers described working with clients as they interfaced with the opportunity structures of learning and work, in all their forms. In every case described to me, such information was a key constituent of the helping process. The need for accurate labour market information (LMI) is universally accepted in the theory, policy and practice relating to career guidance. LMI is the aspect of careers work that could be perceived as deliverable by internet-based tools, with saving on professional labour costs. While most practitioners would argue that their work extends far beyond the delivery of LMI, citing issues like confidence-building and personal support, I found with all the participants a particular quality to their handling of LMI itself. Information sources, written or digital, can provide a certain quality of factual information. For this to be useful to clients, they need to find pathways through the information. The straightforward ladder-climbing concept of the folk theory of career (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1996) might be adequately supported by factual, unmediated information sources. None of the clients that were discussed with me were in a position where that alone would meet their need.

The particular quality that these careers advisers brought to work with clients was a more complex process of interpreting LMI. In one example, Stefan's two clients were both eligible for a national redundancy support package. Conditions and constraints were numerous: timescales on the funding were out of step with training provision, being shorter than an educational year; eligible courses sat at odds with the availability of work

experience required for NVQ assessment; individuals could be supported on bespoke training, if they knew how to put a package together; some opportunities were directly funded, but others needed up-front payment with subsequent reimbursement. Another situation arose for Heather's client. As a degree student wanting to change from a teacher education course, she needed to negotiate various constraints: credit transfer within and beyond her institution; the national student loan system; the restrictions of the Teacher Development Agency if she were later to change her mind, and various application deadlines.

These are only two examples, but they illuminate the way that careers advisers were helping their clients on complex climbing frames, not the rungs of a single ladder. The need for complex marrying of elements from different systems had the potential to become endlessly frustrating for a person dealing with information one bit at a time. Alongside the complexities of opportunities and constraints, both Stefan and Heather kept a sharp eye open for how their clients coped with the processes and pressures of making decisions.

> Very often we work with 'there's an option here and another option there, which one is more important to you?' ... let's say spare time is an important issue for them so they don't want to spend their spare time in college because they have their football club …
> (*Stefan*)

> … sometimes it's a lot of shellshock and they … can't cope with it so they grab onto the nearest thing, so I'm always trying to prise people away from the nearest thing. But in the same way thinking, well, I'm not to know that that nearest thing isn't what is going to be the thing for them really.
> (*Heather*)

Participants did not themselves lay claim to a special skill in this respect. This aspect of 'knowing the ropes' was less a duty and more a positive enjoyment for almost all the participants in the study. It was a place where they were creative, resourceful, and indeed expert, in the interests of their clients. The professional knowledge that came into play here went well beyond propositional knowledge (Polanyi, 1967) and drew on often tacit understandings of learning and work settings. In his discussion of the

range of competences needed by careers advisers, Sultana (2009) discriminates between forms of knowledge: the 'savoir' of factual knowledge; the 'savoir faire' of moving around work-related issues such as writing CVs, and negotiating entry procedures; the 'savoir être', which draws upon personal values and attitudes that are helpful to their clients. Sultana (2009: 21) summarises how careers advisers use these aspects of knowledge:

> Knowing, doing and being are integrated in an inter-disciplinary and holistic manner, so that a competent person is one who, by definition, is capable of combining—whether explicitly or tacitly—the different aspects of the knowledge and skills she/he possesses in response to challenges and situations as they arise in particular contexts.

Labour market information might be perceived as the objective or 'savoir' field of knowing in career guidance, but participants in this study demonstrate that this is not sufficient. Clients need to be able to manage, not to be engulfed:

> It's quite easy just to want to give out information … I feel I ought to give out more than I know anybody can possibly take in, so I have to stop myself …   (Heather)

Career guidance interviewing is then essentially relational, even at the apparently straightforward level of providing opportunity information. Relationships depend upon gaining the trust of clients. These stories of helping relationships led me to recognise most examples as operating right across a relational continuum from the provision of factual information, which may already be accessible to clients on web sites, to help typified by the kind of concerned support given by friends and family, trusted people who bring emotional support and 'positive partiality' (Bosley et al, 2007). Each of these lacks what the other offers, both are important, and some careers advisers described their molar behavioural role in spanning the two aspects. William summarised this distinction. Looking back on his own professional development, he commented: 'I initially saw it as just about a career … supporting and helping people progress into … jobs'. Subsequently, he thought: 'strategies are very crucial in careers work, … relevant ways of handling

circumstances that perhaps are a little bit beyond your control … but first and foremost you're dealing with people'.

9.4 Opportunity structures and individual lives

Having identified within the sample the universality of this integrative way of handling LMI, I found a contrast in the underlying attitudes to how careers advisers mediated between opportunities and the individual life journey. In trying to create a useful typology hermeneutically from a range of different examples, I stand at risk of losing the subtlety of individual cases. Each individual case discussed with me was based in a unique relationship between helper and helped. The cases which participants chose to discuss were not selected at random; I have discussed earlier some aspects of how participants appeared to choose cases to discuss, and that needs to remain in mind as I attempt to interpret them. It seemed that several participants deliberately chose contrasting cases (Frank and Lorna are just two examples of participants who appeared to offer one 'successful' case and one where they felt dissatisfied with the outcome), so I need to be mindful in my interpretation that cases may have been chosen to meet a need in the participant, or to fulfil what they perceived to be my expectation.

Having offered that caveat, I found a clustering of differing attitudes in relation to learning and work opportunities. Participants seemed to engage broadly in three different styles: either delivering to their clients the 'realities' of opportunities; or working with clients to develop for themselves an understanding of opportunities and difficulties they might face; or engaging with enhancing the personal ways that clients approached available opportunities. This can be re-framed in Careership terms to portray careers advisers either as players, even quasi-gatekeepers, in the client's 'field', or as a companion helping them scrutinise the opportunities in or just beyond their 'horizons for action', or engaging with the dispositions that form the client's 'habitus'.

9.4.1 Players in the 'field'

Some participants described their actions as bringing clients to face an inflexible outer world. They provided a 'reality check':

> … they need a bit of a reality check, … and I certainly remember with S, saying, 'Look, here is the information. This is where you can access the information' … Go away and think about it'.
>
> <div align="right">(Christine)</div>

Louise spoke of a client who she felt needed to 'recognis(e) exactly where you are at' because 'she didn't see it', and then recalled that the client became 'not at all happy, not necessarily with me, but with what she was hearing'.

Although sympathetic to the emotional state of the client, in such instances the careers adviser spoke in the role of mediator for the 'real world', as a player in the opportunity 'field'. Sometimes I felt sorry for the clients. I am not at all sure that Louise's client would have untangled the message from the messenger, and might have left the interview feeling distinctly unhappy and upset. This is not to suggest that the information delivered by Louise was incorrect: the case was of an immigrant chemistry graduate seeking immediate entry, following divorce, to graduate level employment although she had not maintained any connection with chemistry during the fifteen years since graduating.

9.4.2 Companions in assessing the 'field'

A number of participants described their role in a way which I see as being a companion in getting to grips with complex opportunity structures. In Sean's description of two clients, this seemed to be characteristic of his approach. One client was a Polish student in Year 11 at school, with limited understanding of post-16 opportunities. Sean not only provided information (prospectuses etc) but also developed the broader concept that choice was a possibility: various colleges, various vocational specialisms within the young man's ambit of interest.

> … when all of a sudden, because I showed him a prospectus, showed him a course with a small little paragraph explaining the

course, he thought that was great and he thought he could go away, and you know .. So I kind of spent a bit more time exploring all the courses with him, looking at the course content and also talking to him a bit more about what I know about the courses and whether it was something that would actually interest him to be doing Monday to Friday …

He wasn't interested in doing data inputting and using the software. He was more interested in kind of fixing the computers and being the more technical. So we looked at another course, the Systems Support course which they do in Trowbridge. And I explained that course to him and he was – 'yes, that sounds just brilliant. That sounds just what I want to do.' But without doing that initial exploration, we wouldn't have got to that point. So with that in mind, we talked about the course, the entry requirements are a bit different and he may not get those, so there was a lot of encouragement to him from me to get to the college to talk to the tutors, about the course, about his predicted grades, about his career ambitions.

By demonstrating differences between several courses with similar titles, Sean encouraged and equipped the student to make discriminating use of college open days and course materials.

Sean's other client was a mature man with an enjoyable but seasonal occupation. Again Sean covered information on possible levels of entry to training, possible institutions, some funding sources, along with a review of likely labour market options at a time of economic recession. That labour market was not conveyed as a tough reality to be conformed with (though difficulties were not underplayed), but as a mesh of opportunities – and possible constraints – which could to an extent be shaped through personal effort and agency.

9.4.3 Engaging with 'habitus'

Some participants prioritised the forming of relationships, in contrast to the processes of agreeing an agenda or contract for the interview. William explained: '…you're not going to help kids move on if you just sit there and talk to them about what they could do'. William's discussion with me was infused with his client stories. He talked in some detail about four clients in total, using examples to convey messages about his approach to

his work through explanations of webs of relationships: himself with his clients, clients with their families, mediating for clients with teaching staff.

> The key thing for her, her circumstances were problematic … And I did find myself leading in a sense with her, almost mediating between her tutors and her and her mum. And it's not a comfortable position necessarily. And I'm not trained to be a mediator, but sometimes I have to pick up issues that are nothing to do with progression and progress, but they were going to have long-term impacts on what happened.
>
> We've had her at college for three years now, so she has been through ups and downs. We've had disciplinary meetings to deal with. I've had to attend them to support her.

William provided one of the memorable images from my interviews. In the context of a referral from a college lecturer, concerned that an able student might drop out because of conflict with her family, William met daughter and mother, clearly much at odds with each other: 'there was a big confrontation of some kind'. His story ends like this:

> However, what really counted as far as I'm concerned, is that when they said goodbye, I could see them walking off into the distance, animated in conversation. They turned – at one point Emily turned to her mum and gave her a hug. And I thought, now how do you measure that? You know, if we are about impact, that's impact. And if we change lives, that's how we change lives.'

I understand these styles of interaction to be cumulative rather than oppositional. Significant engagement with the client's dispositions does not preclude offering a 'reality check'. Tony described a sixth form student who was clutching at Art as a higher education option because she was struggling with her two traditional academic subjects. He brought her to confront the 'reality' by engaging with her in an imagined selection process of presenting her own art portfolio and herself critiquing portfolios of others.

> So the picture I gathered was of somebody who's - who's struggling in her academic A levels, who wants to go the Art route, but doesn't seem that interested in Art, well, is interested in it but there's nothing behind the words, as it were, at the moment …
>
> … the games up, as it were. But, we can still go somewhere with this art if it really is that there's an interest. So she said, 'Right, what do I have to do? What do I have to do?' *[Laughs]* I said, 'Well the

portfolio needs to really be strong. You need to – if you're spending extra time, you really need to be thinking about this'.

And again I asked her what she think happens at the interview, and she's sort of – it's almost, 'No, they don't look at my art, do they?' 'Yes, they do! Because you want to study art! They look at your portfolio'. And then, um, so then I took her through the skills you need to present your portfolio. You need to positively criticise another person's portfolio, to be able to stand up and talk about other people's work maturely. I just gave her some examples of what immature would be. And she laughed, and agreed that they were silly things, you wouldn't say those things …

So at that point we set some targets … Because I've seen her for the first time, want her to feel that she's been listened to and it's been useful, and we talk the truth. Now the real stuff was put on the desk a bit, and it's a bit painful but it's – we've called the bluff, we're going – potentially going to go places. We've set some realistic targets which in her case are small, manageable, SMART targets …

Through this vicarious experience, encompassing both cognitive and emotional aspects, he created a way for her to envision that possible future, and consider the potential difficulties.

This seemed to me an example of Hodkinson's (2008:14) appreciation of how careers advisers can work in synergy with other significant influences on a client's career:

The ability of a guidance practitioner to pull off such synergy depends partly upon the horizons for action of a particular client, but also upon the ability of that adviser to pick up as much as s/he can about the client's positions and dispositions early in a careers interview, and to build upon them. As someone who has never worked as a guidance professional, I find this skill breathtakingly impressive.

There is a clear inference in these words about the nature of the relationship which needs to be formed and the quality of interactive communication to be achieved, which are the topic of my next section.

9.5 Engaging clients

'Engaging' can be understood in two different senses. It can signify the activity of a client, engaging with the processes of conversation and reflection. It also conveys the emotional response of one person to another, finding them 'winning, attractive' (OED definition). Both meanings found

resonance as I listened to the stories of interviews, and both are potentially bi-directional in the interview relationship.

Career guidance theory proposes that career interviews should no longer be construed as a place where careers advisers assess and direct clients (McIlveen and Patton, 2007; Reid and West, 2010; Savickas, 2005). The voice of the client is central in telling their past and present story, and working to find the story of a possible and appealing future. Savickas (2005) emphasises his use of an opening question: 'How can I be useful today?' as a way of setting the scene for a more collaborative approach (Reid and West, 2010). It contrasts with the frequently used 'How can I help?' which accords agency to the helper. Collaboration is a two-way process, and the interview situation constitutes a relationship, albeit temporary in most cases. For the relationship to meet career development needs as they are now understood, the careers adviser needs a mindset of 'doing with' rather than 'doing to'. The client needs to engage with 'agentic action' (Richardson, 2012) in the project of charting a career path (Savickas, 2009; Young and Valach, 2000). Anticipating and creating opportunity for that form of client engagement is a professional task for the careers adviser.

Some clients were 'engaging' in both the senses I have proposed above. Lorna talked about a graduating student who was both proactive and realistic, fully engaging with the challenges of entering a competitive area of work. In the 'project' of developing her career (Savickas, 2009), she made repeated use of both the personal and the information resources that Lorna offered. Lorna's story focused on the warmth in the relationship, a warmth which Lorna perceived to be mutual.

> She's still in touch with me, she let me know she got the 2:1, and you know, all that. And, you know, she's made the contacts, she's started volunteering with NACRO and things like that, so I know I suppose that she's putting the action plan we came up with into practice.

> I believe the careers input made a difference definitely to her … But we did, sort of, get on very well. There was obviously a sort of warmth on both sides there, because not all the people keep in touch with me. So there's something there. And yes, I know she

found it valuable because we do Survey Monkey … and Amy's one was lovely, really lovely, and she emailed me to thank you as well.

This interview had taken place some months before my discussion with Lorna, and is another of the 'big stories' (Section 9.2) conveying wider messages about the role of a careers adviser. In this case it was a 'big story' about relationship and appreciation, which brought rewards for both careers adviser and client.

Participants described some clients as *holding back*, with such holding back taking a number of forms. Examples include holding back information that was potentially relevant (in one case, the clearly-sensitive reasons for leaving a recent job), and holding back from acknowledgement of external constraints (cases where people asserted that normal rigid entry requirements would not apply for them – trying to 'wish them away'). The second client discussed by Lorna offered a contrast with the warm interaction of her first, exhibiting a holding-back of relevant information:

> He kept talking about a professional being trained to do something, but obviously the police force hadn't been fulfilling enough. Because you could say, you're trained to do this .. whatever, but it hadn't been enough … I asked him why he'd left the police force but he didn't want to talk about that, and I don't know whether he might have been sacked or – haven't heard of any redundancies! Why he left, whether it was on his own accord, or not. But I didn't push that, because I could see he was reluctant, and his CV didn't explain that.

Some careers advisers had strategies to address this reluctance to engage. Others struggled and discussed interviews which they felt had ended unsatisfactorily. It is also important to remember that career guidance works in a wider social and economic context which contains elements that limit its potential impact. Hodkinson (2008: 14) reminds us:

> Careership (theory) also points to limitations of the impact of guidance. This is because no matter how well guidance is done there will be numerous other factors and forces involved in career construction that exert greater influence.

Bill acknowledged this point:

> If I'm saying what is it that I'm trying to do, the thing that cuts across all these three is I'm trying to get them to shift perspective,

even slightly, in order to be open to new experience. And when there doesn't seem to be much by way of new experience on offer, that's when it can be depressing, and think that's when people who talk of their past experience of careers advice can say it was a bit depressing.

Those with limited strategies for handling the reticence to engage tended either to fall back onto the 'reality check' – Christine's 'go away and think about it' (Section 9.4.1) – or to be left with a sense of dissatisfaction that they had not been able to do more: 'you can only point in the right direction and try and explain'.

9.5.1 Engaged

Participants who reported success paid considerable attention to their relationship with the client and to the client's habitus. Heather spent a long time with a young man whose proposed career change she felt was unrealistic and possibly 'grasping at straws'. After exploration of ways that he could gain first-hand experience of the proposed field, she probed on what he might learn about himself from doing so, then reported: 'and suddenly he said, well, there are probably quite a lot of other things I could look at as well'. Heather commented on the interview: 'It changed; it just completely changed'.

Bill described a young man undertaking a one-year sixth form course, convinced that he could then progress to A levels in the school, which Bill knew to be unlikely. He tried unsuccessfully to encourage consideration of vocational courses at college. Recognising the limitations of his own relationship with the student, Bill arranged a group session for this young man and his peers with three students from the previous year, who were now at college. Bill did not report this as a magic resolution. He recounted the impact of the older students in this way:

> It was these other students coming in and saying, right, I'm at college now … I'm really enjoying it. I did want to go into the sixth form, and thought I was going to go into the sixth form, and Mr F. said 'Absolutely no way'. So what I'm saying to you now is 'Wake up'. Yeah? Look, there are these alternatives, and actually they're

great, but if you really think that you're going to get into the sixth form, think again.

Bill adds his own comment:

That initially meant moving to an area of doubt which he didn't like. It was a kind of heavy message, and I was there to say, look, there are these other alternatives.

Bill understood that he could only 'talk at' (his words) a reluctant client, and that engaging other relationships had the power to create movement in a stuck situation.

Descriptions by participants of their achieving these breakthrough moments are characterised by the same sense of release and energy flow that some participants had referred to in their own careers. Examples from the transcripts include:

'It released creativity … it released that stuck feeling'

'There's a sense of optimism that she could really ignite, where we've found a spark that could ignite.'

'He was very excited by the end … he was really, really engaged in the idea of finding out some more.'

The mother and daughter hug described in Section 9.4.3 could be added to this list.

9.5.2 Disengaged

I indicated earlier that some careers advisers talked about interviews where a productive level of engagement was not achieved. Two interviews stood out as extreme examples, and deserve focus to try to explore what happened (or did not happen) and what else could have happened.

Rachel had interviewed a young man who had started and discontinued from Level 3 (A level or equivalent) courses on three occasions. He had arrived for an interview accompanied by his father, who had instigated the meeting. Rachel described first talking with the young man alone, expressing to me some general disquiet about the presence of parents in

interviews (in contrast to William's interview which resulted in a parent-child hug). I discern three themes that run through Rachel's discussion of the interview:

- a search for his *interests* as a base for developing career ideas; *interests* are a prominent matching construct in trait-and-factor matching models of career guidance;
- her awareness that there needs to be some *action* to gain *reaction*; talking with him about putting energy in, because then you get something out;
- a struggle to gain empathetic understanding of repeatedly *dropping out*; commenting 'Why didn't he just do it anyway, because he didn't have any better ideas? I don't know how you feel after you've dropped out of your third course'.

Underlying these themes, I hold an awareness of Rachel's own relationship with her father, which she brings with her to an interview where a young man is not meeting his father's aspirations.

Rachel seemed to be trying to use a model of career guidance which is heavily biased towards providing routes forward to develop someone's career-related interests, but was stonewalled by someone who seemed to have achieved considerable skill in asserting that 'nothing interested him'. This was exacerbated when the father finally joined the interview, and the young man retreated to a 'child' role of letting the 'adults' talk over him.

What else could have happened? In particular, what could I imagine that others might have done? Interest categories can be used not only to match outwards to related jobs but also to seek inwards. Rachel mentioned Holland's widely-used RIASEC hexagon of interest categories (Holland, 1997), and reported using it to look outward for related work interests. Holland's work includes descriptions of the categories that include emotive words, for example: introspective, adventurous, tense, cautious. By encouraging the client to select their preferred categories (as Rachel did), one can then work inward to the person, encouraging him to contrast

between the chosen categories, and seeking response to the appropriateness of the emotive words.

I think some careers advisers might have tried to create experiences as a form of *action* with the accompanying *reaction*. Laura offered such an example when she set up a work taster experience for a client who had been rejected for her preferred higher education option and was struggling to find alternatives. Some participants in this study would have been more skilled and more comfortable to explore the emotional impact of the *dropping out*. Those who come to mind are Philip and Heather, both of whom had counselling training and brought this to play in their guidance practice. Without such training, this emotional space could feel like a risky place to go.

Frank reported an interview with which he was deeply uncomfortable. Frank carries with him a personal story of growing up in a 'not very nice place' and through younger years that he referred to several times as a 'struggle'. Self-assured middle-class young people with comfortable lives were a group that he felt that he could not work with well. The interview he reported fitted into that mould. The client, a year 11 boy, expressed very confidently his proposed route through A levels, higher education and RAF pilot training. Frank thought that the young man was making it clear that Frank had nothing to offer him, and as 'a bit of an atmosphere' developed, Frank 'wound up the interview' because 'it wasn't doing either of us any favours'. And yet, he knew the young man should have had 'an opportunity to discuss things' and opined that 'that's wrong of me to do that really'.

My sense of Frank when I met him was of a person who was constructed by a past that had created dispositions, a habitus, that limited his capability to reach outside a particular perception of himself. I pondered what else could have happened in a careers interview for this self-assured, but arguably blinkered, student? Through the discussions I developed

vicarious relationships with the clients who were described, and my reflective notes during the first 'listening' (the one that includes my own reactions) often include my feelings for or about the client. On my notes about this discussion, I have written: inside myself I am crying out, 'there's another way to do this!'. Each time I read it, I'm taken through a process of thinking, is there another way? Can I imagine a better process? To answer myself, I can create an imaginary picture of Bill playing imaginative games with the student, perhaps playing with a pilot metaphor to place discussion right within the young man's interest area. Bill would have had the capability to play with ideas: suppose your career is like an aeroplane flight; what needs to be considered? The capability of the crew; the condition of the aircraft; the circumstances of weather and 'gatekeepers': air traffic control, regulatory authorities. The weather (strong head winds) affects the aircraft (more fuel needed) which affects the crew (the plane is harder to manoeuvre). This could open up a space for thinking – seriously, but playfully – about how career planning could progress. My imaginary approach would be an examples of opening up the process of career development to clients, the metacognitive 'learning outcomes of guidance' (Killeen and Kidd, 1991) discussed in Section 3.7.

9.6 Managing the interview process

Both Rachel and Frank were examples of people who applied an interview model to their clients. Frank was clear about this – 'started in the usual way' – but it was present in other accounts too. This interview model seemed to intervene between them and early engagement with their clients. It sits in contrast to the opening question of 'how can I be useful to you' (Reid and West, 2010; Savickas, 2005) which lays open a space for the client to shape, and to be heard on their own agenda from the outset.

In contrast, several participants made reference to their responsibility for the management of the interview process. This process responsibility included managing the volume and flow of information and ideas, so as to be sufficient and stimulating but not overwhelming. This needed to be regulated in accordance with emotional aspects of the interview.

Sometimes the emotional tempo rose within the interview, for example when ideas were challenged; at other times the client arrived at the interview in an emotionally heightened state.

One particular contributing factor for pre-existing emotional states, mentioned on many occasions, arose from a person losing their capability to stay with a long-held career choice. This might arise through external factors, such as failing to gain entry to or failing to progress on a course. Or it might arise internally, from growing awareness that the career choice, after all, was not 'right' for them. The emotional load was increased when the career choice appeared to have been influenced by family aspirations, so the normal emotional support framework was compromised by discontinuing the career route.

Amongst many examples are these four accounts by participants:

> … delve a bit deeper … what is it about what your mother, your father and your uncle do, that actually appeals? … so I don't think she had considered all the aspects of what being a nurse actually meant.

> … obviously it's something that's highly socially acceptable in many communities. I've talked to him about how he handles changing his situation at home, and taking them on …

> I found it quite a hard interview because she hadn't got over the medicine, so there was an element of her understanding her grief there. … it's her parents want her to do it, and they want her to do what they perceive as prestigious.

> And it seemed to be, how she was presenting it to me, that it was always a bit of a ropey choice, but she thought she'd go for that, partly sort of family pressures and things. … she seemed to have eventually, albeit very belatedly, thought … for herself

These become issues of identity, not just action and decision. People will have presented an outward identity based on their career plan, and the loss of the anchor for their learning-and-work identity means a loss of a way to explain themselves, or to 'go on' in Giddens' (1991) term. Identity is a combination of being and becoming (Riessman, 2008), usually in a provisional state of balance, but at these times overbalanced towards a

greater uncertainty through the need to 'become'. For some it will be compounded by the sense of failure, as Lucy's own career story (Section 8.2) confirms.

I conclude this section by returning to Frank. The first interview he recounted was presented as a disaster. The second was a contrast. It started in the same interview style: 'So did the usual, you know, same again. The first bit …. which was OK, even though she wasn't saying anything'. This client was described as 'quiet' and contrasted with the other who was 'hostile'. It progressed differently. When a career interest emerged, Frank offered a relevant prospectus:

> She sort of opened the prospectus really not confident, just like having a little look in …
> I didn't want to sit there and watch her looking at it. That's not very nice for her. And so I sort of started to look at the other one, and then you know didn't say anything, just let her get on with it.
> … and (she) just started to talk a bit more, and I was really pleased because I was actively sort of encouraging her to do this, by … not staring at her, just generally letting her have a bit of space. I was just pleased that it worked, because she started to smile and sort of talk a bit …

The subsequent discussion in my interview with Frank contains four probing questions from me seeking his understanding of how this interview 'worked', in both the sense of progressing and in the sense of being successful. The responses are repeat descriptions of what had happened, until Frank concludes 'It's hard to describe but I was not – I was trying not to do anything to encourage her to do something, I suppose'. Finally we left it as 'unspoken support'.

I have considered this passage in the interview, and listened to it, many times. One of the important points is that Frank abandons the standard interview format, which he had started with although he knew it was inappropriate. Earlier, in describing the 'usual', he had reported asking this non-attender at school: 'How's school going? Which I shouldn't start with that, because this particular person wasn't in school'. He acted instead in a way that felt authentic for himself, and which I am inclined to interpret as both focusing more on the relational aspects of the interview,

and on following the client's agenda rather than his own routine way of working. Perhaps I can draw from this the inkling of a lesson about a better way of conducting career interviews, and a clear lesson for myself that in qualitative, narrative research, some things have a sense of being real, and – like the 'real' world – full of interest but messy to understand (Riessman, 2008).

9.7 Conclusion

This chapter has offered insights into the ways that careers advisers work with clients, and through that lens, some idea of what happens in interviews. It was gratifying to me that I was told stories of interviews that were far from successful, alongside those that were reported as bringing about beneficial change in clients. I must, however, suspend judgement on why this happened. It may be a way of conveying the complexity of some of the work that careers advisers do – through both big and small stories (Watson, 2007). The complexity of careers advisers' work with clients creates a need for professional support, and it might be that I offered a safe space in which some therapeutic reflection could take place. Supervision and support are not readily available for careers advisers (Reid, 2007) and I could have provided an apparently knowledgeable and trustworthy figure with whom to rehearse the kinds of difficulties which might in some helping professions be handled within supervision sessions. Complexity of their work role might have been the trigger that led some people to dig deep for the underlying, perhaps more simple, narratives of professional identity as people who 'change lives' and create 'second chances' for their clients, in line with the philanthropic motivation common amongst careers advisers.

More than twenty-six client cases were discussed with me. I have made no attempt to put these interviews into category boxes, but have brought out the themes that have struck me in listening over and again to the descriptions. What I heard participants saying about their work with opportunity information complexities was universal, and described a highly skilled relational activity. It runs against a policy rhetoric that

proposes that labour market information is objective and straightforward, and that individuals can and should access it with limited intermediary help.

The following sections on the positioning of careers advisers within the opportunity 'field' of clients was more varied, and not necessarily consistent across the interviews described by a single careers adviser. The evidence contained within the participants' descriptions of their work with clients led me to categorise how careers advisers positioned themselves in the 'field' of their clients – from gatekeeper to engagement with habitus – and how successfully they 'engaged' with clients. When positioning and engagement were optimal, participants were aware that the change in 'horizons for action' that they facilitated in their clients was frequently associated with a sense of 'release' from being stuck, and a flow of positive energy.

When a participant reported building a relationship that permitted synergy with a particular client (Hodkinson, 2008), a characteristic outcome was a sense of energy and activity which might constitute or contribute to a 'turning point' (Bowman et al., 2005). A 'turning point' triggered within a careers interview as a result of such synergy may be felt by the person in their 'subjective' career (Watts, 1981) before it becomes visible in the 'objective' career as change of occupation, redundancy or other visible event. From these accounts describing clients, I developed the view that there is an emotional aspect to 'turning points' which is not adequately captured by describing them solely as ongoing learning, although personal learning was undoubtedly a part of the emotional trigger.

This chapter has explored much that I was able to hear and seek to interpret from the interview discussions. I ended the previous section of this chapter with a reflection that some things are told that cannot be fully understood. 'Understanding is always an interpretative endeavour' (Reid,

2003: 3). Narrative data collection works on the assumption that people have a story to tell. If the personal story is confused and contested, as perhaps with Frank, then his own first struggle towards understanding may not bear the weight of my further analysis. Reflecting further on the way in which I chose to interpret the interview narratives, I am left unable to judge whether taking my initial interpretations back to a participant like Frank would have extended the learning for us both, or re-inforced his doubts about his personal capabilities.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

The thesis started with reference to the dearth of research that examines careers advisers and their own careers, within a broader context of a comparatively small percentage of qualitative research in the career guidance domain. I linked this context to my own 'intellectual puzzle' (Mason, 2002) arising from the apparent ambivalence of careers advisers to seek careers advice when they themselves faced career dilemmas. My initial questioning led to an interest in whether this observation had resonances with the considerable recent comment in the literature that careers advice still draws unduly upon what are argued to be outdated modes of career thinking, based on positivist, matching paradigms (Bimrose, 2006; Law, 2003; Patton and McMahon, 2006b; Reid and West, 2010; Richardson, 2012; Savickas, 2004).

In seeking to understand this puzzle, I have taken the route of obtaining and listening deeply to the 'complex realities of people's lives' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 105), as careers advisers described to me their own careers and examples of their work with their clients. I retained my early research design in undertaking analysis of the data as a personal interpretive task rather than consensual activity with participants. This allowed me to search for multi-layered voices (Gilligan et al., 2006) and different *I-positions* (Hermans, 2003), but produces an account written from my single perspective and my social constructionist, contextualist worldview. If I had understood earlier the variance that I came to identify later between the phenomenographic approach and a social constructionist viewpoint, I might have engaged participants in the 'construction' of understanding and analysis. As it is, the accounts are all my own.

Drawing on the research interviews, I have formed some 'fuzzy generalisations', to adopt Bassey's (1992) term, about the ways that careers

advisers conceptualise career in both their personal and their professional lives. By working with a mindset that assumed that I might hear what I had not anticipated (Josselson, 1995), I have discovered ways that participants enact their career-lives and their professional work; these discoveries are offered as 'fuzzy propositions' (Bassey, 1992) for ways that research and professional training within the career field might be further developed.

10.2 Careers advisers' careers

Career is a complex and dynamic concept, powerfully situated at the intersection between the individual and society (Arthur et al., 1999; Collin and Watts, 1996; Watts, 1981). Complexity and movement were ubiquitous themes in careers advisers' own careers, as described in Chapter 7. All are messy stories of 'becoming' (Riessman, 2008), and all evidence Hodkinson's (2008: 10) assertion that 'pragmatic rationality is not a decision-making style, but an important way of highlighting how career decisions are always made'. The one instance that is claimed as planful decision-making, Stefan, appears to me to fit a story of chance plus self-learning leading to a pragmatically rational decision to train for careers work.

Participants described 'dispositions' in themselves which contributed to their socially formed habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Also, but not accessible through the audio-recordings and transcripts of the interviews, each one evinced a personal demeanour which I judged consistent with the dispositions and forms of capital which emerged form their stories. Such embodied elements can only be present in the research through my memory of the physical enactment of the interviews, but such memory has contributed to my interpretation of interviews. During the process of interpretation, the theory of Careership, rooted in the theoretical sociological thinking of Bourdieu, offered the theoretical space which could best encompass all the personal career stories that I heard.

Chance and luck play a part in career development. Some theories, such as Careership, postulate that the response to chance events emerges from habitus. Other current theories, those focused on the practice of career guidance, propose *anticipating* chance events, seeing them as happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999; McMahon and Patton, 2006b) or arising from chaos (Pryor and Bright, 2003), which people can position themselves to use to their advantage through enhanced opportunity readiness (Mitchell et al., 1999). Career guidance can help people achieve such readiness, and the resilience needed when chance brings unwelcome events.

There were instances in participants' stories when they looked back and with hindsight construed the fortunate outcomes from their own sensible and deliberate actions as 'luck'. This raised questions about why they conceptualised in this way, rather than taking credit for their actions. It occurred in these stories (Section 7.7), and it is not easy to explain.

Two other themes emerged from the personal career stories. The first is one of dynamic tension between the individual's values and work constraints. This is not an issue specific to career guidance (Kelly et al., 2002). In most cases where it arose, participants expressed strongly held beliefs rooted in a moral responsibility to work for clients' well-being rather than the targets or outcomes set by management in the light of policy and funding imperatives. In a small minority of cases, the tedium of being expected to deliver high volumes of interviews in a routine way was the reported issue. Of those who discussed 'boredom', none overtly related it to a sense of being constrained from effective working methods by management and process directives. Since people who reported this problem had later found satisfying careers work in other settings, this issue is open to question.

By whatever route the tension arose, careers advisers were prepared to take risks in order to stick to their principles. They conveyed, and in one

case enacted, the capacity to 'do something else' if necessary. Career resilience appeared strong in careers advisers.

The second theme draws upon descriptions of 'release' and 'energy' on an emotional level which accompanied a 'turning point' after a period of unsatisfying 'routine (Bowman et al., 2005; Hodinson, 2008; Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). I offered the opinion, in Sections 7.5 and 9.7, that something of value might be lost from the Careership theory if the notions of routines and turning points are laid aside in favour of a view of progression as a continual learning process. It is a theme to return to in considering career guidance practice in the next section.

10.3 Career guidance practice

The most conspicuous theme that emerges from Chapters 8 and 9 is the fundamental place of relationality in understanding and action about careers (Richardson, 2012). This is not a 'finding' as viewed from my social constructionist perspective; it is inevitably so (Gergen, 2009). The research findings arise from developing this fundamental understanding into an exploration of the ways that relationality is played out in careers work. Findings from this exploration need to be situated within an assumption that as individuals we exercise the capability (Richardson, 2012) or inevitability (Sartre, 1943/2003) of agentic action. Gergen (2009: 83) reminds us that: 'without a belief in individual agency, our institutions of moral responsibility would begin to crumble'.

Careers advisers work in a tradition of philanthropic endeavour. In their efforts to help clients, which my participants showed to be a central motivation in their work, they hold a moral responsibility to pursue high standards through seeking self-knowledge and self-development, what Mulvey (2011) terms 'existential CPD'. Mulvey (2011: 3) asserts continuing professional development to be a 'moral duty':
- because ethical practice is about doing the right thing
- and about making defensible choices in your professional practice

- and about being the kind of professional you want to be.

The model of the 'fully developed helper' (Egan, 1990: 26) contains aspects of looking inward ('self-knowledge'; a 'people-in-systems framework', the latter I read as being cognate to an acknowledgement of a worldview) as well as grappling with the external aspects, including bodies of theoretical work. This is reflected in Sultana's (2009) expectation that careers advisers operate through three aspects of 'knowing': savoir, savoir faire, and savoir être (also Mulvey, 2011).

This research has identified ways that the participants have operated in relation to and within the 'field' of their clients. I categorised this as being enacted at three cumulative levels (Section 9.4); whilst all have a function on appropriate occasions, the relational engagement with clients' positions and dispositions, their 'habitus', has the potential for greatest impact, and greatest value to clients. It should happen more often than my research suggests it currently does. My research proposes three aspects that could enhance careers advisers' abilities in this respect.

Firstly, careers advisers should engage, both directly and vicariously, with the relational frameworks of their clients. Careership offers the conceptual framing for how careers advisers can position themselves within the 'fields' of their clients. The sociological theory of Bourdieu that underpins such conceptual framing will often not be easily accessible to clients, who are understandably more interested in general in their next steps in career development rather than sociological theory. In efforts to engage clients with contextual thinking about their own career development, the diagram of the Systems Theory Framework of career development (Patton and McMahon, 2006a; McMahon and Patton, 2006b) brings relational aspects into a visual and tangible form, which could be used directly with clients. I elaborated in Section 2.5 how the framework diagram aligns closely to most aspects of Careership theory, although it is weaker at conveying processes over time.

Secondly, they could develop their already considerable language and imaginative skills to provide vicarious 'experience' within the interview (such as Tony's enactment of an art portfolio assessment). An example of an extension beyond the interview was to arrange, as Bill did, encounters with older peers. These approaches may be expedient when fuller work tasting or experience is a more difficult or long-term option.

The third aspect is to pay much greater attention to the learning that can be developed within the guidance *process* itself – process rather than instrumental outcomes (Killeen and Kidd, 1991; McCash, 2006). A considerable proportion of clients could grasp the basics of career theory if it were presented to them in suitable language and formats. It would contribute to metacognitive skills; Law (2010: 15) lists elements of 'learning-to-learn, learning-links and transfer-of-learning'. I share McCash's (2006: 446) view that to 'conceptualise students as career researchers is potentially liberating', in that it could support their agentic action in exploring life-wide roles (Richardson, 2012). It could go some way to allowing individuals to place their own priority on each role in their life (Savickas et al.'s (2009) life-design proposal, which otherwise feels dauntingly wide for careers advisers), rather than assuming a narrow focus on employment and work-related learning.

The preceding paragraphs propose a stretching agenda for the development of careers advisers' skills in delivery career guidance. This development agenda can be complemented by an agenda of celebration. Careers advisers have considerable skill sets that are taken-for-granted, and receive little explicit recognition. I heard participants describe a ubiquitous capability in the complex process of interpreting opportunity information to meet individual client circumstances and needs. That process is qualitatively different from storing and accessing accurate and up-to-date information, important as that is in underpinning its use. Allied to this, but used widely across all stages of interviews, was

considerable verbal facility, stretching language into playful, thoughtful and imaginary places.

Careers advisers are all too well aware of being challenged both implicitly and overtly by those who want to see an instrumental outcome of irregularly shaped 'pegs' pushed into often ill-matched 'holes'. Participants commented on this, and that they get more than their fair share of bad press. There is scope to articulate the value of what is special and taken-for-granted in everyday practice. I intend that one outcome from my research will be finding ways to do this in places where it may count.

10.4 Learning from the research process

Some learning from the research did not fit under neat 'career' and 'career guidance' labels. The traditional model of research suggests that one uses a methodology and that one achieves outcomes. Qualitative research often does not obey the traditional rules (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). In this case, the methodology entailed use of a particular method that has relevance to addressing one of my findings. That is explained in the next section. The final section reflects on the career theory that has appeared most relevant for me, and considers an aspect of theory development for the Careership model.

10.4.1 Professional training and development

Trainee careers advisers are encouraged to practise 'active listening skills'. The focus is on being alert to what is happening here-and-now in the interview: signs of hesitation, pleasurable reaction, voice and body posture at odds with the words spoken. Using the Listening Guide (Gilligan et al., 2003) has shown me that deep listening can stretch outward and backward from the current place and time. There is an echo of this idea in Savickas' proposal to listen for verbs, especially the first verb used (Savickas, 2005; Reid and West, 2010). The Listening Guide goes further, in encouraging recognition of and attention to the variety of

voices in each individual: voices arising from life roles, social and cultural assumptions, and sometimes through the relationships with other people who are influential in lives. Understanding of these voices, described as 'contrapuntal' in the Listening Guide (Gilligan et al., 2003), is developed through consideration of *I-positions* as proposed by Hermans (1992, 2003; also McIlveen and Patton, 2007). Hermans' work posits that the voices of different *I-positions* evolve from within ourselves or vicariously from influential others in our lives, reflecting a cognate position on the relationality that underpins a social constructionist approach and Careership theory.

The Listening Guide and Hermans' work offer a valuable additional resource for developing listening training. Its usefulness is not limited to training careers adviser for their direct work with clients. A doctoral study being conducted concurrently with my own sees Liz Bradley using the Listening Guide, particularly I-poems, as a reflexive tool to encourage careers advisers to examine their taken-for-granted attitudes, with a particular focus on working in multi-ethnic settings (Bradley, 2011). This is a further aspect of relationality – relating across boundaries – that has not been significant in my own study, but is of considerable importance in undertaking careers work in most parts of the country.

10.4.2 Theory development

Throughout this study I have engaged deeply with three theories of career: Careership (Hodkinson et al., 1996; Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997), the Theory of Career Construction (Savickas, 2002), and the Systems Theory Framework of career development (McMahon and Patton, 2006b). The final two have been developed elsewhere from theoretical positions into practical application (e.g. Patton and McMahon, 2006a; Savickas, 2005). Careership has not had significant development in application as an extension to explanation. I have explained earlier (Sections 7.5, 9.7 and 10.2) the relevance of key concepts such as dispositions, capital, habitus and field, both as explanatory theory for individual career progression, and as a way of conceptualising how careers advisers engage with the

habitus and position themselves in the field of each client. I concur with Hodkinson (2008) in finding pragmatic rationality to be the convincing explanation of how career decisions are made, often over time rather than at a point in time.

In earlier sections, I have explained that my research participants have raised for me, as for Hodkinson (2008), questions about the nature of routines and turning points, or their alternative conceptualisation as ongoing learning viewed as 'an integral part of living' (Hodkinson, 2008: 11). Neither concept as currently described is addressing the feelings of release, spark and energy that accompany, or maybe produce, turning points. Further attention needs to be paid to the *subjective* nature of turning points, as an extension to the *objective* character of how they are described in various iterations of Careership theory. I would postulate tentatively – a 'fuzzy proposition' (Bassey, 1992) – that this release relates to a change in personal disposition, in ways of thinking and particularly of thinking about oneself. It would then support Hodkinson's (2008) proposal that synergy ('Increased effectiveness, achievement, etc., produced as a result of combined action or co-operation', OED definition) arises from the careers advisers ability to engage with the client's positions and dispositions and 'to build upon them' (p.14). We do not yet know fully *how* this happens, but the participants were clear that it did happen, for themselves and for their clients. This requires two strands of further research. One strand needs to explore career change, sampling across the working population to engage with a range of socioeconomic settings, and career moves that show advancement, sideways transfer, or downshifting. For this, careers advisers would be considered as a section of the working population. The other strand needs to engage with careers advisers' professional perspectives, to engage with their views on the propositions about conceptualisations of turning points arising from this research. This research should explore reflectively or empirically their relation to clients and their career turning points. Particular areas of focus proposed for both strands of research include the objective and subjective nature of turning points (and whether mental changes are necessarily coincident with an

associated change of status), as well as attention to states of 'release' and energy flow in relation to periods of routine, to turning points, and to (self-)perceptible changes in disposition and habitus.

In Section 8.6 I quoted the novelist Salley Vickers, who referred to something 'already nascent in the reader' which was released by reading her book. Reflection on a literary source is a good end point. It reminds us that wisdom and theory are not exclusive to doctoral study, academia or professional practice. They are an aspect of human understanding, potential and imagination – of being human.

REFERENCES

ADAMSON, P. (2011) Like a Rolling Stone: Stoic Ethics (63) [podcast]. *History of Philosophy without any Gaps*. Available at http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/ (Accessed 04 March 2012)

AGAR, M. and HOBBS, J. R. (1982) Interpreting discourse: coherence and the analysis of ethnographic interviews. *Discourse Processes,* 5**,** 1-32.

AINSWORTH, S. and HARDY, C. (2008) The enterprising self: an unsuitable job for an older worker. *Organisation,* 15**,** 389-405.

ARTHUR, M. B., INKSON, K. and PRINGLE, J. K. (1999) *The new careers: individual action and economic change,* London, Sage.

ARTHUR, N. (2006) Infusing culture in constructivist approaches to career counselling. IN MCMAHON, M. and PATTON, W. (Eds.) *Career counselling: constructivist approaches.* Abingdon, Routledge.

ARTHUR, M. B., HALL, D. T. and LAWRENCE, B. S. (1989) *Handbook of Career Theory,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

ARTHUR, M. B., INKSON, K. and PRINGLE, J. K. (1999) *The new careers: individual action and economic change,* London, Sage.

ARTHUR, N. (2006) Infusing culture in constructivist approaches to career counselling. IN MCMAHON, M. and PATTON, W. (Eds.) *Career counselling: constructivist approaches.* Abingdon, Routledge.

ARTHUR, N. and MCMAHON, M. (2005) Multicultural career counseling: theoretical applications of the Systems Theory Framework. *Career Development Quarterly,* 53**,** 208-222.

ASHWORTH, P. and LUCAS, U. (2000) Achieving empathy and engagement: a practical approach to the design, conduct and reporting of phenomenographic research. *Studies in Higher Education,* 25**,** 295-308.

BAKHTIN, M. (1929/1984) *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (Trans. C. Emerson),* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

BAL, P. M., JANSEN, P. G. W., VAN DER VELDE, M. E. G., DE LANGE, A. H. and ROUSSEAU, D. M. (2010) The role of future time perspective in psychological contracts: a study among older workers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 76**,** 474-486.

BALL, S., MAGUIRE, M. and MACRAE, S. (2000) *Choice, Pathways and Transitions Post-16,* London, Routledge Falmer.

BANDURA, A. (1977) *Social Learning Theory,* Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall.

BANKS, M., BATES, I., BREAKWELL, G., BYNNER, J., EMLER, N., JAMIESON, L. and ROBERTS, K. (1992) *Careers and Identities,* Buckingham, Open University Press.

BANNISTER, D. and FRANSELLA, F. (1986) *Inquiring Man: the Psychology of Personal Constructs, 3rd ed.,* London, Croom Helm.

BARHAM, L. (2008) *Career management skills and the older workforce,* Cambridge, NICEC.

BARHAM, L. (2011) Career development in later working life: implications for career guidance with older workers. IN CEDEFOP (Ed.) *Working and ageing: Guidance and counselling for mature learners.* Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

BARHAM, L. and HAWTHORN, R. (2009) Age and stage: guidance for older adults. IN REID, H. (Ed.) *Constructing the future.* Stourbridge, Institute of Career Guidance.

BARHAM, L. and HAWTHORN, R. (2010) Helping older adults make career decisions. IN BOHLINGER, S. (Ed.) *Working and learning at old age: theory and evidence in an emerging European field of research.* Göttingen, Cuvillier Verlag.

BARLEY, S. R. (1989) Careers, identities, and institutions: the legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology. IN ARTHUR, M. B., HALL, D. T. & LAWRENCE, B. S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Career Theory.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

BASSOT, B. (2011) Equality: work in progrress or simply a 'pipe dream'? Insights from a social constructivist perspective. IN BARHAM, L. and IRVING, B. (Eds.) *Constructing the Future: Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice.* Stourbridge, Institute of Career Guidance.

BATES, I. (1990) No bleeding, whining minnies. *British Journal of Education and Work,* 3**,** 91-110.

BATES, I. and RISEBOROUGH, G. (Eds.) (1993) *Youth and inequality,* Buckingham, Open University Press.

BATESON, G. (1979) *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity,* New York, EP Dutton.

BAUGHAN, J. (2010) Ethical Connexions : the story of why Connexions personal advisers do the job they do. Unpublished EdD thesis. Bristol, University of the West of England.

BECKER, H. S. (1966) *Social problems: a modern approach,* New York, John Wiley.

BEN-ARI, A. T. (1995) It's the telling that makes the difference. IN JOSSELSON, R. and LIEBLICH, A. (Eds.) *Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives.* Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.

BENNETT, R. J., GLENNERSTER, H. and NEVISON, D. (1992) *Learning should pay,* Poole, BP Educational Services.

BERGER, P. L. and LUCKMANN, T. (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge,* London, Penguin Books Ltd.

BIMROSE, J. (2006) *The changing context of career practice: guidance, counselling or coaching?* Derby, University of Derby, Centre for Guidance Studies. Inaugural Professorial Lecture.

BIMROSE, J. (2010) What do clients need and really want? IN REID, H. (Ed.) *The Re-emergence of Career: Challenges and Opportunities.* Canterbury, Centre for Career and Personal Development, Canterbury Christ Church University.

BIMROSE, J. and BARNES, S. (2006) Is career guidance effective? Evidence from a longitudinal study in England. *Australian Journal of Career Development,* 15**,** 19-25.

BIMROSE, J., BARNES, S.-A. and HUGHES, D. (2005) Effective guidance one year on: evidence from longitudinal case studies in England. Warwick, Warwick Institute for Employment Research.

BIMROSE, J., BARNES, S.-A., HUGHES, D. and ORTON, M. (2004) *What is Effective Guidance? Evidence from Longitudinal Case Studies in England,* Warwick, Warwick Institute for Employment Research.

BLAUFUSS, K. (2007) De-linking text from fieldwork: exploring power imbalances in the narrative. *Narrative Inquiry,* 17**,** 13-26.

BLAXTER, L., HUGHES, C. and TIGHT, M. (1996) *How To Research,* Buckingham, Open University Press.

BLOOMER, M. and HODKINSON, P. (2000) Learning careers: continuity and change in young people's dispositions to learning. *British Educational Research Journal,* 26**,** 583-598.

BLUMSTEIN, A. and COHEN, J. (1979) Estimation of individual crime rates from arrest records. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology,* 70**,** 561-585.

BOSLEY, S., ARNOLD, J. and COHEN, L. (2007) The anatomy of credibility: a conceptual framework of valued career helper attributes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 70**,** 116-134.

BOSLEY, S. L. C., ARNOLD, J. and COHEN, L. (2009) How other people shape our careers: A typology drawn from career narratives. *Human Relations,* 62**,** 1487-1520.

BOURDIEU, P. (1987) *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* (trans. R. Nice). Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.

BOURDIEU, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice,* (trans. R. Nice). Cambridge, Polity Press.

BOURDIEU, P. and WACQUANT, L. J. D. (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology,* Cambridge, Polity Press.

BOWDEN, J. A. (2000) The nature of phenomenographic research. IN BOWDEN, J. A. and WALSH, E. (Eds.) *Phenomenography.* Melbourne, RMIT University Press.

BOWDEN, J. A. (2005) Reflections on the phenomenographic team research process. IN BOWDEN, J. A. and GREEN, P. (Eds.) *Doing developmental phenomenography.* Melbourne, RMIT University Press.

BOWDEN, J. A. and GREEN, P. (Eds.) (2005) *Doing developmental phenomenography,* Melbourne, RMIT University Press.

BOWDEN, J. A. and WALSH, E. (Eds.) (2000) *Phenomenography,* Melbourne, RMIT University Press.

BOWMAN, H., HODKINSON, P. and COLLEY, H. (2005) *Employability and career progression for fulltime UK Masters students.* Leeds, University of Leeds, Lifelong Learning Institute.

BRADLEY, E. (2011) The emergence of a tool to aid reflective practice and assist practitioners unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. IN BARHAM, L. and IRVING, B. (Eds.) *Constructing the Future: Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice.* Stourbridge, Institute of Career Guidance.

BRIGHT, J. E. H. and PRYOR, R. G. L. (2005) The chaos theory of careers: a user's guide. *Career Development Quarterly,* 53**,** 291-305.

BRIGHT, J. E. H. and PRYOR, R. G. L. (2008) Shiftwork: a chaos theory of careers agenda for change in career counselling. *Australian Journal of Career Development,* 17**,** 63-72.

 BRITISH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (2011) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research,* London, BERA. Available at: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications (Accessed 23 March 2012).

BROWN, C. (2002) Career counseling practitioners: reflections on theory, research, and practice. *Journal of Career Development,* 29**,** 109-127.

BRUNER, J. (1986) *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds,* Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.

BUTTERWORTH, J. (2011) The only certainty in particle physics is its benefit to us all. *The Guardian, Comment and Debate.* 13 December 2011.

BYATT, A. S. (1999) Best Stories: Narrate or Die. *The New York Times Magazine, 18 April.* New York. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/1999/04/18/magazine/best-story-narrate-or-die.html?pagewanted=all (Accessed 14 December 2011).

CAPRA, F. (1982) *The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture,* London, Wildwood House.

CAREERS ENGLAND (2012) Policy Commentary 15B: the Coalition's Emerging Policies on Career Guidance [online]. Available from: http://www.careersengland.org.uk/papers.php?page=commentaries (Accessed 26 May 2012)

CAREERS PROFESSION TASK FORCE (2010) *Towards a Strong Careers Profession: An Independent Report to the Department for Education,* Runcorn, Department for Education.

CEDEFOP (2009) *Professionalising career guidance: practitioner competences and qualification routes in Europe,* Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

CHAMBERLAYNE, P., BORNAT, J. and WENGRAF, T. (Eds.) (2000) *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples,* London, Routledge.

CHASE, S. E. (1995) Taking narrative seriously: consequences for method and theory in interview studies. IN JOSSELSON, R. and LIEBLICH, A. (Eds.) *Interpreting Experience: the Narrative Study of Lives.* Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.

CHERRY, N. (2005) Phenomenography as seen by an action researcher. IN BOWDEN, J. A. and GREEN, P. (Eds.) *Doing Developmental Phenomenography.* Melbourne, RMIT University Press.

CLANCE, P. R. and IMES, S. A. (1978) The impostor syndrome amongst high achieving women: dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy Theory, Research and Practice,* 15**,** 241-247.

CLANDININ, D. J. (2006) Narrative inquiry: a methodology for studying lived experience. *Research Studies in Music Education,* 27**,** 44-54.

CLANDININ, D. J. and MURPHY, M. S. (2009) Comments on Coulter and Smith: Relational Ontological Commitments in Narrative Research. *Educational Researcher,* 38**,** 598-602.

CLANDININ, D. J., PUSHOR, D. and MURRAY ORR, A. (2007) Navigating sites for narrative inquiry. *Journal of Teacher Education,* 58**,** 21-35.

CLARK, M. G. (2007) *Growth and generativity among men in middle and later life*. Loughborough, Unpublished PhD thesis, Business School, Loughborough University.

COCHRAN, L. (1997) *Career counselling: a narrative approach,* Thousand Oaks, Sage.

COHEN, L. (2006) Remembrance of things past: cultural process and practice in the analysis of career stories. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 69**,** 189-201.

COHEN, L. and MALLON, M. (2001) My brilliant career? Using stories as a methodological tool in careers research *International Studies of Management and Organization,* 31**,** 48-68.

COLLEY, H. (2006) Do we choose careers or do they choose us? Questions about career choices, transitions, and social inclusion. *Career Research and Development***,** 19-22.

COLLEY, H., LEWIN, C. and CHADDERTON, C. (2010) The impact of 14-19 reforms on the career guidance profession in England. Final Report. Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University.

COLLIN, A. (2007) Contributions and challenges to vocational psychology from other disciplines: examples from narrative and narratology. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance,* 7**,** 159-167.

COLLIN, A. and WATTS, A. G. (1996) The death and transfiguration of career - and of career guidance? *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* 24**,** 385-398.

COLLIN, A. and YOUNG, R. A. (1986) New directions for theories of career. *Human Relations,* 39**,** 837-853.

CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, M. (2008) *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience,* London, Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

DALL'ALBA, G. (1996) Reflections on phenomenography: an introduction. IN DALL'ALBA, G. and HASSELGREN, B. (Eds.) *Reflections on phenomenography: towards a methodology?* Göteborg, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

DALL'ALBA, G. and HASSELGREN, B. (1996) *Reflections on phenomenography: towards a methodology?,* Göteborg, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

DAWIS, R. V. (1994) The theory of work adjustment as convergent theory. IN SAVICKAS, M. L. and LENT, R. W. (Eds.) *Convergence in Career Development Theories: Implications for Science and Practice.* Palo Alto, CA, CPP Books.

DAWIS, R. V. (2005) The Minnesota theory of work adjustment. IN BROWN, S. D. and LENT, R. W. (Eds.) *Career Development and Counselling: Putting Theory and Research to Work.* Hoboken NJ, John Wiley and Sons.

DAWIS, R. V. and LOFQUIST, L. H. (1984) *A psychological theory of work adjustment: an individual differences model and its applications,* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

DEMEY, D., BERRINGTON, A., EVANDROU, M. and FALKINGHAM, J. (2011) The Changing Demography of Mid-life, from the 1980s to the 2000s. *Population Trends,* 145, Autumn. Available from: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?pageSize=50&newquery=parenthood (Accessed 27 April 2012)

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (2012a) Core purpose of Sure Start Children's Centres [online]. London, Department for Education. Available from: http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/a00191780/core-purpose-of-sure-start-childrens-centres (Accessed 11 May 2012)

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (2012b) Education Act 2011: the Duty To Secure Independent and Impartial Careers Guidance for Young People in Schools. Statutory Guidance for Head Teachers, School Staff, Governing Bodies and Local Authorities. London, Department for Education.

DOUCET, A. and MAUTHNER, N. S. (2008) What can be known and how? Narrated subjects and the Listening Guide. *Qualitative Research,* 8**,** 399-409.

EBENEZER, J., CHACKO, S., KAYA, O. N., KOYA, S. K. and EBENEZER, D. L. (2010) The effects of Common Knowledge Construction Model sequence of lessons on science achievement and relational conceptual change. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching,* 47**,** 25-46.

EGAN, G. (1990) *The Skilled Helper: a Systematic Approach to Effective Helping (4th ed.),* Pacific Grove CA, Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

EL-SAWAD, A., ARNOLD, J. and COHEN, L. (2004) 'Doublethink': the prevalance and function of contradiction in accounts of organizational life. *Human Relations,* 57**,** 1179-1203.

ELLIOTT, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change,* Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

ERDAL, J. (2004) *Ghosting,* Edinburgh, Canongate Books.

ERIKSON, E. H. (1997) *The life cycle completed,* New York, Norton.

ETHERINGTON, K. (2004) *Becoming a reflexive researcher: using our selves in research,* London, Jessica Kingsley.

FESTINGER, L. (1957) *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance,* Evanston, IL, Row Peterson.

FORD, G. (1999) *Youthstart Mentoring Action Project (MAP): Project and Evaluation Report,* Stourbridge, Institute of Careers Guidance.

FOSKETT, R. (2009) *High skilled workers opting out of higher education? ESRC* Teaching and Learning Research Programme Symposium, Warwick University, 18 March.

FRANCIS, H. (1996) Advancing phenomenography - questions of method. IN DALL'ALBA, G. and HASSELGREN, B. (Eds.) *Reflections on phenomenography: towards a methodology?* Goteborg, Acta Universitatis Gothenburgensis.

GERGEN, K. J. (2009) *An Invitation to Social Construction* (2nd ed.), London, Sage.

GIDDENS, A. (1991) *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age,* Cambridge, Polity Press.

GILLIGAN, C., SPENCER, R., WEINBERG, M. K. and BERTSCH, T. (2006) On the 'Listening Guide': a voice-centered relational model. IN CAMIC, P. M., RHODES, J. E. and YARDLEY, L. (Eds.) *Qualitative Research in Psychology: Expanding Perspectives in Methodology and Design.* Washington DC, American Psychological Association.

GINZBERG, E., GINSBURG, S. W., AXELRAD, S. and HERMA, J. L. (1951) *Occupational choice,* New York, Columbia University Press.

GOTTFREDSON, L. S. (1981). Circumscription and compromise: A developmental theory of occupational aspirations. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 28,* 545-579.

GOTTFREDSON, L. S. (1996) Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise. IN BROWN, D., BROOKS, L. and ASSOCIATES (Eds.) *Career Choice and Development, 3rd ed.* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

GOTTFREDSON, L. S. (2002) Gottfredson's theory of circumscription, compromise and self-creation. IN BROWN, D. and ASSOCIATES (Eds.) *Career Choice and Development, 4th ed.* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

GOTTFREDSON, L. S. (2005) Applying Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise in career guidance and counseling. IN BROWN, S. D. and LENT, R. W. (Eds.) *Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work.* Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley and Sons

GRANT, E. M. and JOHNSTON, J. A. (2006) Career narratives. IN MCMAHON, M. and PATTON, W. (Eds.) *Career counselling: constructivist approaches.* Abingdon, Routledge.

GREEN, P. (2005) A rigorous journey into phenomenography: from a naturalistic inquirer viewpoint. IN BOWDEN, J. A. and GREEN, P. (Eds.) *Doing Developmental Phenomenography.* Melbourne, RMIT University Press.

HACKETT, G., LENT, R. W. and GREENHAUS, J. (1991) Advances in vocational theory and research: a 20-year retrospective. *Jounal of Vocational Behavior,* 38**,** 3-8.

HALL, D. T. (2002) *Careers in and out of organizations,* Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

HANCOCK, A. N. (2006) *'Back to the future': career development of male adult returners to further education*. PhD Thesis, University of Central England.

HELLA, E. (2007) Variation in Finnish religious education teachers' understandings of Lutheranism: a phenomenographic study. IN TIRRI, K. and UBANI, M. (Eds.) *Giftedness and Holistic Education.Yearbook 2007 of the Department of Practical Theology.* Helsinki, University of Helsinki.

HEPPNER, P. P. (2011) The 2010 Leona Tyler address: from the homogeneous hills of North Dakota to my kaleidoscopic world today: worldview, happenstance, choice, and defining moments in my career. *The Counseling Psychologist,* 39**,** 642-668.

HERMANS, H. J. M. (1992) Telling and retelling one's self-narrative: a contextual approach to life-span development. *Human Development,* 35**,** 361-375.

HERMANS, H. J. M. (2003) The construction and reconstruction of a dialogical self. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology,* 16**,** 89-130.

HERMANS, H. J., KEMPEN, H. J. G. and VAN LOON, R. J. P. (1992) The dialogical self: beyond individualism and rationalism. *American Psychologist,* 47**,** 23-33.

HIEBERT, B. and LERKKANEN, J. (2006) Training and qualification of staff members. IN VUORINEN, R. and SAUKKONEN, S. (Eds.) *Guidance Services in Higher Education: Strategies, Design and Implementation.* Jyvaskyla, Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyvaskyla.

HILTON, T. L. (1962/1968) Career decision-making. IN HOPSON, B. and HAYES, J. (Eds.) *The Theory and Practice of Vocational Guidance: a Selection of Readings.* London, Pergamon Press.

HITCHCOCK, G. and HUGHES, D. (1989) *Research and the Teacher: a Qualitative Introduction to School-based Research,* London, Routledge.

HODKINSON, P. (2008) *Understanding Career Decision-making and Progression: Careership Revisited*. John Killeen Memorial Lecture. London, 16 October.

HODKINSON, P. and SPARKES, A. C. (1997) Careership: a sociological theory of career decision making. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 18**,** 29-44.

HODKINSON, P., BOWMAN, H. and COLLEY, H. (2006) Conceptualising transitions from education to employment as career development and/or learning. IN REID, H. and BIMROSE, J. (Eds.) *Constructing the Future: Transforming Career Guidance.* Stourbridge, Institute of Career Guidance.

HODKINSON, P., SPARKES, A. C. and HODKINSON, H. (1996) *Triumphs and tears: young people, markets and the transition from school to work,* London, David Fulton.

HOFFBRAND, J. and BARHAM, L. (1998) *A New Look at Advocacy: a Resource Pack for Careers Services,* Cambridge, NICEC/CfBT for DfEE.

HOLLAND, J. L. (1994) Separate but unequal is better. IN SAVICKAS, M. L. and LENT, R. W. (Eds.) *Convergence in Career Development Theories: Implications for Science and Practice.* Palo Alto, CA, CPP Books.

HOLLAND, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments (3rd* ed.). Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

HOLLWAY, W. and JEFFERSON, T. (2000) *Doing qualitative research differently: free association, narrative and the interview method,* London, Sage.

HONDERICH, T. (Ed.) (2005) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, new edition,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

HOOBLER, J. M., HU, J. and WILSON, M. (2010) Do Workers Who Experience Conflict between the Work and Family Domains Hit a "Glass Ceiling?": A Meta-Analytic Examination. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 77,* 481-494.

HÖPFL, H. and ATKINSON, P. H. (2000) The future of women's career. IN COLLIN, A. and YOUNG, R. A. (Eds.) *The Future of Career.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

HOPSON, B. and HAYES, J. (Eds.) (1968) *The theory and practice of vocational guidance: a selection of readings,* Oxford, Pergamon Press.

HUGHES, E. C. (1937) Institutional office and the person. *American Journal of Sociology, 43,* 404-413.

HUSSERL, E. (1913/1982) *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy. First book, General introduction to a pure phenomenology*, translated by F. Kersten. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic.

HUTTON, W. (1995) *The State We're In,* London, Jonathan Cape.

INSTITUTE OF CAREER GUIDANCE (no date) *Code of Ethics.* Available from: http://www.icg-uk.org/About/code_of_ethics (Accessed 17 December 2012).

JOHANSSON, B. S. (1996) What are the statements about and from where do they come? IN DALL'ALBA, G. and HASSELGREN, B. (Eds.) *Reflections on Phenomenography: Towards a Methodology.* Goteborg, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

JOHNSON, M. K. and MORTIMER, J. T. (2002) Career choice and development from a sociological perspective. IN BROWN, D. and ASSOCIATES (Eds.) *Career Choice and Development, 4th ed.* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

JOSSELSON, R. (1995) Imagining the real: empathy, narrative and the dialogic self. IN JOSSELSON, R. and LIEBLICH, A. (Eds.) *Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives.* Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.

KAHN, C. H. (1981) *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: an edition of the fragments with translation and commentary*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

KELLY, E., LEYDEN, P. and GLOBAL BUSINESS NETWORK (2002) *What's Next? Exploring the New Terrain for Business,* Chichester, John Wiley and Sons.

KELLY, G. A. (1955) *The Psychology of Personal Constructs,* New York, Norton.

KILLEEN, J. and KIDD, J. (1991) Learning outcomes of guidance: a review of recent research. Sheffield, Employment Department Group.

KOSSEK, E. E., RUDERMAN, M. N., BRADDY, P. W. and HANUM, K. M. (2012) Work–nonwork boundary management profiles: a person-centered approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 81**,** 112-128.

KRIESHOK, T. S., BLACK, M. D. and MCKAY, R. A. (2009) Career decision making: the limits of rationality and the abundance of non-conscious processes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 75**,** 275-290.

KRUMBOLTZ, J. D. (1979) A social learning theory of career decision-making. IN MITCHELL, A. M., JONES, G. B. and KRUMBOLTZ, J. D. (Eds.) *Social Learning and Career Decision-making.* Cranston, RI, Carroll Press.

KRUMBOLTZ, J. D. (1994) Improving career development theory from a social learning perspective. IN SAVICKAS, M. L. and LENT, R. W. (Eds.) *Convergence in Career Development Theories: Implications for Science and Practice.* Palo Alto, Consulting Psychologists Press.

KUHN, T. S. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

KULKA, R. A. (1982) Idiosyncracy and circumstance: choices and constraints in the research process. IN MCGRATH, J., E., MARTIN, J. and KULKA, R. A. (Eds.) *Judgement Calls in Research.* London, Sage.

KVALE, S. and BRINKMANN, S. (2009) *Interviews: learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing (2nd ed),* London, Sage.

KYVSGAARD, B. (2003) *The criminal career: the Danish longitudinal study,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

LAVE, J. and WENGER, E. (1991) *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

LAW, B. (1996) A career-learning theory. IN WATTS, A. G., LAW, B., KILLEEN, J., KIDD, J., and HAWTHORN, R. (Ed.) *Rethinking careers education and guidance: theory, policy and practice.* London, Routledge.

LAW, B. (2003) Guidance: too many lists, not enough stories. IN EDWARDS, A. (Ed.) *Challenging biographies: re-locating the theory and practice of careers work.* Canterbury, Canterbury Christ Church University College.

LAW, B. (2010) Re-thinking careers-work partnerships. IN REID, H. (Ed.) *The Re-emergence of Career: Challenges and Opportunities.* Canterbury, Canterbury Christ Church University.

LAW, B. and WATTS, A. G. (1977) *Schools, careers and community,* London, Church Information Office.

LAW, S. (2007) *Philosophy,* London, Dorling Kindersley Ltd.

LEUNG, S. A. (2008) The Big Five career theories. IN ATHANASOU, J. A. and VAN ESBROECK, R. (Eds.) *International handbook of career guidance.* Dordrecht, Netherlands, Springer.

LINDER, C. and MARSHALL, D. (2003) Reflection and phenomenography: towards theoretical and educational development possibilities. *Learning and Instruction,* 13**,** 271-284.

LYDDON, W. J. (1989) Root metaphor theory: a philosophical framework for counselling and psychotherapy. *Journal of Counselling and Development,* 67**,** 442-448.

MACFARLANE, R. (2003) *Mountains of the Mind: a History of a Fascination,* London, Granta Books.

MAHONEY, M. J. and LYDDON, W. J. (1988) Recent developments in cognitive approaches to counseling and psychotherapy. *The Counseling Psychologist,* 16**,** 190-234.

MARTON, F. (1986) Phenomenography: a research approach to investigating different understandings of reality. *Journal of Thought,* 21**,** 28-49.

MARTON, F. (1996) Cognosco ergo sum - Reflections on reflections. IN DALL'ALBA, G. and HASSELGREN, B. (Eds.) *Reflections on Phenomenography: Toward a Methodology?* Goteborg, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

MASON, J. (2002) *Qualitative researching (2nd ed.),* London, Sage.

McCASH, P. (2006) We're all career researchers now: breaking open career education and DOTS. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* 34**,** 429-449.

McCASH, P. (2008) *Career studies handbook: career development learning in practice,* York, Higher Education Academy.

McGOWAN, A., WATTS, A.G. and ANDREWS, D. (2009) *Local Variations: a Follow-Up Study of New Arrangements for Connexions/Careers/IAG Services for Young People in England.* Reading: CfBT Education Trust.

McILVEEN, P. and PATTON, W. (2007) Dialogical self: author and narrator of career life themes. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance,* 7**,** 67-80.

McKENDRICK, A. (2009) Encouraging students to engage with career theory - a small-scale research project. Paper presented at *International Symposium on Career Studies*, University of Reading, 22-23 September.

McMAHON, M. and PATTON, W. (Eds.) (2006a) *Career counselling: constructivist approaches,* Abingdon, Routledge.

McMAHON, M. and PATTON, W. (2006b) The Systems Theory Framework: a conceptual and practical map for career counselling. IN MCMAHON, M. and PATTON, W. (Eds.) *Career counselling: constructivist approaches.* Abingdon, Routledge.

MEIJERS, F. and LENGELLE, R. (2012) Narratives at work: the development of career identity. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* 40**,** 157-176.

MERRILL, B. and WEST, L. (2009) *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research,* London, Sage.

MISHLER, E. G. (1986) *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative,* Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.

MITCHELL, K. E., LEVIN, A. S. and KRUMBOLTZ, J. D. (1999) Planned happenstance: constructing unexpected career opportunities. *Journal of Counselling and Development,* 77**,** 115-124.

MOEN, P. (Ed.) (2003) *It's About Time: Couples and Careers,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

MOYNAGH, M. and WORSLEY, R. (2005) *Working in the Twenty-First Century,* Leeds, Economic and Social Research Council.

MULVEY, M. R. (2011) *How to be a good professional: Existential CPD.* Presentation to ESRC Seminar on Careers: Professional Associations and Professionalism, March 2011. University of Glamorgan. Available from: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/semcomprfs (Accessed 12 April 2012)

NEWCOMB, T. M., TURNER, R., HH. and CONVERSE, P. E. (1965) *Social psychology: the study of human interaction,* London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

NICHOLSON, N. and WEST, M. (1989) Transitions, work histories, and careers. IN ARTHUR, M. B., HALL, D. T. and LAWRENCE, B. S. (Eds.) *Handbook of career theory.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

NILES, S. G., HERR, E. L. and HARTUNG, P. J. (2002) Adult career concerns in contemporary society. IN NILES, S. G. (Ed.) *Adult Career Development: Concepts, Issues and Practices,* 3rd ed. Tulsa, OK, National Career Development Association.

NYKANEN, S., KARJALAINEN, M., VUORINEN, R. and POYLIU, L. (2007) The development of a regional guidance network as a system. IN KASURINEN, H. and LAUNIKARI, M. (Eds.) *CHANCES – Developing career guidance to prevent social exclusion of young people.* Opetushallitus, Finland.

O'CONNOR, W. and BOREHAM, R. (2002) *Investigating Low Level Labour Market Participation among Lone parents in London: a Review of the Methods,* London, Department for Work and Pensions. Available from: www.research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/IH104.pdf *(Accessed 18 April 2012).*

OFFER, M. (1995) Personal construct theory: a complete programme for careers education and guidance? *Careers Education and Guidance,* 45**,** 21-24.

OGILVIE-GORDON, M. M. (1908) *A handbook of employments specially prepared for the use of boys and girls on entering the trades, industries, and professions,* Aberdeen, Scotland, Rosemont Press.

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (2004) *Career guidance and public policy: bridging the gap.* Paris, OECD.

OSIPOW, S. H. (1968) *Theories of career development,* New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts.

OSIPOW, S. H. (1990) Convergence in theories of career choice and development: review and prospect. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 36**,** 122-131.

OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (OED) [online] (2011). Available from www.oed.com (Accessed on multiple occasions).

PAGE, R., NEWTON, B., HAWTHORN, R., HUNT, W. and HILLAGE, J. (2007) An evaluation of the Ufi/learndirect telephone guidance trial. Nottingham, Department for Education and Skills.

PALERMO, O. A., COHEN, L., LOAN CLARKE, J. and MELLAHI, K. (2010) Implications of new public management and modernization on control: the case of an English regional probation service *The International Journal of Public Sector Management,* 23**,** 535-548.

PANEL ON FAIR ACCESS TO THE PROFESSIONS (2009) Unleashing aspiration: the final report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions. London, Cabinet Office, Panel on Fair Access to the Professions.

PARKER, D. (2007) *The Self in Moral Space. Life Narrative and the Good,* Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press.

PARKER, P. and ARTHUR, M. B. (2004) Giving voice to the dual-career couple. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* 32**,** 3-23.

PARSONS, F. (1909) *Choosing a vocation,* Boston, Houghton-Mifflin.

PATTON, W. and MCMAHON, M. (1999) *Career development and systems theory: a new relationship,* Pacific Grove, CA, Brooks/Cole.

PATTON, W. and McMAHON, M. (2006a) *Career Development and Systems Theory: Connecting Theory and Practice,* Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

PATTON, W. and McMAHON, M. (2006b) Constructivism: what does it mean for career counselling? IN McMAHON, M. and PATTON, W. (Eds.) *Career counselling: constructivist approaches.* Abingdon, Routledge.

PAVALKO, E. K., HARDING, C. M. and PESCOSOLIDO, B. A. (2007) Mental illness careers in an era of change. *Social Problems,* 54**,** 504-522.

PEAVY, R. V. (1992) A constructivist model of training for career counselors. *Journal of Career Development,* 18**,** 215-228.

PECK, D. (2004) *Careers services: history, policy and practice in the United Kingdom,* London, RoutledgeFalmer.

PEPPER, S. C. (1942) *World hypotheses: a study in evidence,* Berkeley, University of California Press.

PHILLIPS, S. D. (1994) Choice and change: convergence from the decision-making perspective. IN SAVICKAS, M. L. and LENT, R. W. (Eds.) *Convergence in Career Development Theories: Implications for Science and practice.* Palo Alto, CPP Books.

PLANT, P. (2001) Quality in careers guidance [online]. Paris, OECD. Available from: http://www.oecd.org/document/35/0,3746,en_2649_39263294_1940323 1_1_1_1,00.html (Accessed 16 April 2012)

PLATT, J. (1981) On interviewing one's peers. *British Journal of Sociology,* 32**,** 79-91.

POLANYI, M. (1967) *The Tacit Dimension,* New York, Anchor Books.

RAMSLAND, J. (1984) Edith Onians: child-saver and apostle of the Victorian vocational guidance movement, 1866-1955. Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society. Conference (13th : 1984 : St. Hilda's College, University of Melbourne).

RAMSLAND, J. (1994) Edith Onians: Australian advocate of social reform. *Australian Social Work,* 47**,** 15ff.

REAY, D. (2004) 'It's all becoming a habitus': beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 25**,** 431-444.

REID, H. (2003) *Placing self in the research activity: in praise of fuzziness.* Paper presented at the Crossing Boundaries in Research. Canterbury Christ Church University, 25 September.

REID, H. L. (2006) Usefulness and truthfulness: outlining the limitations and upholding the benefits of constructivist approaches to career counselling. IN McMAHON, M. and PATTON, W. (Eds.) *Career counselling: constructivist approaches.* London, Routledge.

REID, H. (2007) The shaping of discourse positions in the development of support and supervision for personal advisers in England. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* 35**,** 55-77.

REID, H. and WEST, L. (2010) "Telling tales": using narrative in career guidance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 78**,** 174-183.

REID, H. and WEST, L. (2011) Struggling for space: narrative methods and the crisis of professionalism in career guidance in England. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* 39, 396-410.

RICHARDSON, M. S. (2012) Counseling for work and relationship. *The Counseling Psychologist,* 40**,** 190-242.

RIESSMAN, C. K. (2008) *Narrative methods for the Human Sciences,* London, Sage.

ROBERTS, K. (1968) The entry into employment: an approach towards a general theory. *Sociological Review,* 16**,** 165-184.

ROBERTS, K. (1971) *From school to work: a study of the Youth Employment Service,* Newton Abbott, David and Charles.

ROBERTS, K. (1995) Recurrent guidance for recurrent transitions. *Career Guidance Today,* Winter 1995.

ROBERTS, K. (2006) The career pathways of young adults in the former USSR. *Journal of Education and Work,* 19**,** 415-432.

ROBERTS, K. (2009) Opportunity structures then and now. *Journal of Education and Work,* 22**,** 355-368.

RODGER, A. (1952/1968) *The Seven Point Plan,* London, National Institute for Industrial Psychology. Reprinted in Hopson, B. and Hayes, J. (eds) (1968) *The Theory and Practice of Vocational Guidance.* Oxford, Pergamon Press.

RODGER, A. (1961) *Occupational versatility and planned procrastination: inaugural lecture,* London, Birkbeck College.

ROGERS, C. (1951) *Client-centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory,* London, Constable.

SARTRE, J.-P. (1943/2003) *Being and Nothingness: an Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (trans. H.E.Barnes), Abingdon, Routledge.

SAVICKAS, M. L. (2001a) Toward a comprehensive theory of career development: dispositions, concerns, and narratives. IN LEONG, F. T. L. and BARAK, A. (Eds.) *Contemporary models in vocational psychology: a volume in honor of Samuel H. Osipow.* Mahwah, N.J., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

SAVICKAS, M. L. (2001b) The next decade in vocational psychology: mission and objectives. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 59**,** 284-290.

SAVICKAS, M. L. (2002) Career construction: a developmental theory of vocational behavior. *Career Choice and Development, 4th ed.* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

SAVICKAS, M. L. (2004) Vocational psychology, overview. IN SPIELBERGER, C. (Ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Applied Psychology.* Amsterdam, Elsevier.

SAVICKAS, M. L. (2005) The theory and practice of career construction. IN BROWN, S. D. and LENT, R. W. (Eds.) *Career development and counseling: putting theory and research to work.* Hoboken, NJ, Wiley.

SAVICKAS, M. L. (2009) The self in vocational psychology: object, subject, and project. *Unpublished paper presented at the International Career Studies Symposium.* University of Reading, 22-23 September.

SAVICKAS, M. L. (2010a) Career studies as self-making and life designing. *Career Research and Development,* 23**,** 15-17.

SAVICKAS, M. L. (2010b) Career as Story: Using Life Themes in Counselling. *Cannexus 2010 Proceedings [online].* Ottawa, Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC). Available from http://www.cannexus.ca/CX/?q=en/node/139 (Accessed 14 March 2010)

SAVICKAS, M. L. and BAKER, D. B. (2005) The history of vocational psychology: antecedents, origin and early developments. IN WALSH, W. B. and SAVICKAS, M. L. (Eds.) *Handbook of vocational psychology.* Mahwah, N.J., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

SAVICKAS, M. L. and LENT, R. W. (1994) A convergence project for career psychology. IN SAVICKAS, M. L. and LENT, R. W. (Eds.) *Convergence in career development theories: implications for science and practice.* Palo Alto, CA, CPP Books.

SAVICKAS, M. L., NOTA, L., ROSSIER, J., DAUWALDER, J.-P., DUARTE, M. E., GUICHARD, J., SORESI, S., VAN ESBROECK, R. and VAN VIANEN, A. E. M. (2009) Life designing: a paradigm for career construction in the 21st century. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 75**,** 239-250.

SCIENCE MUSEUM (2004) Making the modern world. Available from http://www.makingthemodernworld.org.uk/stories/the_age_of_the_mass/05.ST.06/?scene=3 (Accessed 09 July 2009)

SHAW, C. (1930) *The Jack-Roller: a delinquent boy's own story,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

SHAW, C. (1931) *The natural history of a delinquent career,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

SMILES, S. (1859) *Self-help,* London, John Murray.

SNORRADOTTIR CLARK, A. (2011) The ICAN career development model: a post modern framework for understanding career development. *Career Convergence [online]* Available from: http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/career_convergence (Accessed 01 April 2011)

SONNENFELD, J. and KOTTER, J. P. (1982) The maturation of career theory. *Human Relations,* 35**,** 19-46.

SPOKANE, A. R. (1994) The resolution of incongruence and the dynamics of person-environment fit. IN SAVICKAS, M. L. and LENT, R. W. (Eds.) *Convergence in Career Development Theories: Implications for Science and Practice.* Palo Alto, CA, CPP Books.

STAKE, R. E. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research,* London, Sage.

STEAD, G. B., PERRY, J. C., MUNKA, L. M., BONNETT, H. R., SHIBAN, A. P. and CARE, E. (2011) Qualitative research in career development: content analysis from 1990 to 2009. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance,* [online first] [Accessed 22 January 2012]

STOREY, J. A. (2000) 'Fracture lines' in the career environment. IN COLLIN, A. & YOUNG, R. A. (Eds.) *The Future of Career.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

STRAUSS, A. (1962) Transformations of identity. IN ROSE, A. M. (Ed.) *Human Behaviour and Social Processes: an Interactionist Approach.* London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

SULTANA, R. G. (2003) *Review of career guidance policies in 11 acceding and candidate countries: synthesis report,* Torino, European Training Foundation.

SULTANA, R. G. (2004) *Guidance policies in the knowledge society: trends, challenges and responses across Europe,* Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

SULTANA, R. G. (2008) Career guidance policies: global dynamics, local resonances. *11th Annual Lecture, International Centre for Guidance Studies.* Derby, University of Derby.

SUPER, D. E. (1953/1968) A theory of vocational development. First printed in *American Psychologist* 8(4) pp.185-190; reprinted in B. Hopson and J. Hayes (eds) (1968) *The theory and practice of vocational guidance: a selection of readings.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

SUPER, D. E. (1957) *The psychology of careers,* New York, Harper and Row.

SUPER, D. E. (1980) A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 16**,** 282-298.

SUPER, D. E. (1990) A life-span, life space approach to career development. IN BROWN, D., BROOKS, L. and Associates (Eds.) *Career Choice and Development (2nd ed).* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

SWANSON, J. L. and FOUAD, N. A. (2010) *Career Theory and Practice: Learning Through Case Studies,* Thousand Oaks, Sage.

TANNEN, D. (1986) *That's Not What I Meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Your Relations with Others,* New York, William Morrow.

TANNEN, D. (1992) *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation,* London, Virago.

TAYLOR, S. (2006) Narrative as construction and discursive resource. *Narrative Inquiry,* 16**,** 94-102.

TERKEL, S. (1974) *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do,* New York, Pantheon/Random House.

THOMPSON, P. (1978) *The Voice of the Past: Oral History,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

TIEDEMAN, D. V. (1961/1968) Decision and vocational development: a paradigm and its implications. IN HOPSON, B. and HAYES, J. (Eds.) *The Theory and Practice of Vocational Development: a Selection of Readings.* London, Pergamon Press.

TRIGWELL, K. (2000) A phenomenographic interview on phenomenography. IN BOWDEN, J. A. and WALSH, E. (Eds.) *Phenomenography.* Melbourne, RMIT University Press.

TRIGWELL, K. (2006) Phenomenography: an approach to research in geography education. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education,* 30**,** 367-372.

UK GOVERNMENT (2012) National Careers Service [online]. Available from: https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/planning/Pages/default.aspx (Accessed 08 June 2012).

University of the West of England (UWE) (2011) *Professional Doctorate in Education.* Available from: http://courses.uwe.ac.uk/X90012/2012 (Accessed 17 December 2012).

VAN VIANEN, A. E. M. (2007) Adaptable careers. Conference Powerpoint presentation at *Vocational psychology and career guidance practice: an international partnership.* Padova, University of Padova, 03 September.

VILHJALMSDOTTIR, G. and ARNKELSSON, G. (2003) The interplay between habitus, social variables and occupational preferences. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance,* 3**,** 137-150.

WALSH, E. (2000) Phenomenographic analysis of interview transcripts. IN BOWDEN, J. A. and WALSH, E. (Eds.) *Phenomenography.* Melbourne, RMIT Publishing

WATSON, C. (2007) Small stories, positioning analysis, and the doing of professional identities in learning to teach. *Narrative Inquiry,* 17**,** 371-389.

WATTS, A. G. (1981) Career patterns. IN WATTS, A. G., SUPER, D. E. and KIDD, J. (Eds.) *Career development in Britain: some contributions to theory and practice.* Cambridge, Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC).

WATTS, A. G. (1991) The impact of the 'New Right': policy challenges confronting career guidance in England and Wales. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* 19**,** 230-245.

WATTS, A. G. (1996) Socio-political ideologies in guidance. IN WATTS, A. G., LAW, B., KILLEEN, J., KIDD, J. and HAWTHORN, R. (Eds.) *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance.* London, Routledge.

WATTS, A. G. (1998) The role of career guidance in societies in transition. *Educational and Vocational Guidance - Bulletin,* 61**,** 36-43.

WATTS, A. G. (2001) Career guidance and social exclusion: a cautionary tale. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* 29**,** 157-176.

WATTS, A. G. (2010) Career information, advice and guidance in the UK: the state of the nation. IN REID, H. (Ed.) *The Re-emergence of Career: Challenges and Opportunities.* Canterbury, Canterbury Christ Church University.

WATTS, A. G., LAW, B., KILLEEN, J., KIDD, J. and HAWTHORN, R. (Eds.) (1996) *Rethinking careers education and guidance: theory, policy and practice,* London, Routledge.

WATTS, A. G., SUPER, D. E. and KIDD, J. (Eds.) (1981) *Career development in Britain: some contributions to theory and practice,* Cambridge, Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC).

WEST, L. (2003) Challenging auto/biographies: careers and guidance in a 5 to 9 world. IN EDWARDS, A. (Ed.) *Challenging biographies: re-locating the theory and practice of careers work.* Canterbury, Canterbury Christ Church University College.

WILLIS, P. (1977) *Learning to labour: how working class kids get working class jobs,* Farnborough, Saxon House.

WINTER, D. (2012) Narrative techniques in reflective practice. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling,* 28**,** 21-27.

YOUNG, R. A. and COLLIN, A. (2004) Introduction: constructivism and social constructionism in the career field. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 64**,** 373-388.

YOUNG, R. A. and VALACH, L. (2000) Reconceptualising career theory and research: an action-theoretical approach. IN COLLIN, A. and YOUNG, R. A. (Eds.) *The Future of Career.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

ZEMBLYAS, M. (2006) Work-based learning, power and subjectivity: creating space for a Foucauldian research ethic. *Journal of Education and Work,* 19**,** 291-303.

ZUNKER, V. G. (2002) *Career Counselling: Applied Concepts of Life Planning,* 6th ed, Pacific Grove, CA, Brooks/Cole-Thomson Learning.

LYN BARHAM
8 Lansdown Crescent • Bath • BA1 5EX
01225 428039 • lynbarham@gmail.com

October 2009

Research project

A study of the ways in which careers advisers conceptualise the notion of career

I am undertaking this research project as a major part of my work towards a Doctorate in Education (EdD) degree at the University of West of England (UWE). I am seeking people who are willing to take part in my research, by being interviewed about your own experiences, as a qualified careers adviser, in managing questions and transitions that have arisen in your own career, and in working with clients. I hope through this research to add to the profession's understanding of its own ways of delivering professional services, particularly at a time of significant change both in the policy affecting career guidance delivery in the UK and in the theoretical frameworks through which careers advisers understand their work.

Your involvement with this research would be through an interview with two parts. First I will encourage you to tell me the 'story' of your career. My interest will be particularly in the points at which you faced dilemmas or had the desire or need for a transition, and I may encourage you to explore these in some detail. This could include both past and current career issues. Then I will ask you to talk with me about the way that you work with your clients. This interview will be recorded and transcribed. If you wish to see the transcript, I will send you a copy, and you are welcome to discuss and correct the transcript and add any further comments.

The recording and transcription remains confidential to myself and to those appointed by UWE to supervise and examine my research. I will take the utmost care to ensure that your name and agency are not identified directly or by implication, including on occasions when I directly quote your own words. I will invite you to choose a pseudonym by which you will be known within the research findings and report.

The findings from my research will be published as a thesis, and may also be presented in academic papers and in conference sessions. I will advise you of such publications and events and provide details to you in advance.

There are no anticipated risks in participation in this research, but should any arise, I will take care to ensure that you are supported in appropriate ways. You would have the right to withdraw from this research activity at any time and without explanation; should you do so, all materials that relate to you would be promptly destroyed.

I am very happy to answer any questions that you might like to pose before deciding whether to take part.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Please read the Informed Consent Information below. By signing and dating this form, you indicate that you understand the nature of your participation in this research, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

1. I agree to participate in the research conducted by Lyn Barham as part of her EdD progamme within the University of West of England, Bristol.

2. I understand that I have been asked to participate in this research because of my training and experience as a careers adviser in the UK.

3. I understand that the purpose of the research is to learn more about the ways in which careers advisers manage their own career progressions and issues, and how they work with clients, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how careers advisers conceptualise their professional work and their services to clients.

4. I acknowledge that my participation in this research will consist of an interview conducted by Lyn Barham. This interview will be recorded and transcribed. I will then receive a copy of the transcription and will be offered the opportunity to discuss and correct the transcription.

5. I am confident in the assurances provided that the information I share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that anonymity will be assured by my choosing a pseudonym through which my contribution will be identified within the research project, and that my present and past employers will not be identified.

6. I also understand that the analysis of the interview data will be included in a doctoral thesis, and aspects may be presented for publication in academic journals and professional publications or at professional conferences.

7. It has been made clear to me that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.

8. I am aware that if I have questions or concerns about this research which are not satisfactorily answered by Lyn Barham, I can raise such issues with her EdD supervisory team at the University of West of England.

Signed _____   Date _____

Annex 2: Scripts for elicitation of participant responses

Introductory discussion

Initial conversation, prior to starting the digital recorder, included a reminder of the following topics, as already notified in writing (in all cases by email):

- confidentiality
- right to withdraw
- choice of a pseudonym
- reminder of the two-part interview structure, with a break from recording between the two parts
- reiteration of the intention to start the interview with 'stories'
- introduction to the digital recorder, including demonstrating how they personally could stop the recording at any time.

The name story

The invitation to each participant to recount their name story followed the script below. There were only minor changes to wording, except for one case when the participant interrupted to embark on their story before I had reached the final ('liking – disliking') phrase.

> What I'm going to ask you to do first is to tell me the story of your name, *(real first name stated, with some emphasis)*: how you got your name, and how you have lived with it throughout your life, liking it, disliking it …

The geography story

As I introduced the geographical story, I frequently needed to acknowledge something that had been said previously, in the response to the 'name story' question. One example where that was not needed is given in Section 4.6 (page 95); another follows:

> Now I'm going to ask you another story. The next story is about the geographical story of your life. Obviously you were born somewhere and there have probably been moves which end you up where you are. So can you take me on that geographical story?

Quite often my opening words include a general reference, such as:

> Now my second story – you've just touched on it – is the geographical story of your life.

Sometimes the reference reflects, and shows I have attended to, detail in the name story. This is how I phrased the question with Bill:

> You've actually touched in to the second story I'm going to ask you to tell, which is the geographical story. It appears that you started in (county) and you've mentioned (town in another county), so take

me on the geographical story of where you've spent time in your life.

The final request to 'take me on the geographical story' was used consistently in all cases except with Philip, who interrupted before that point:

> And that slightly touches onto the next story I'm going to ask, which is the geographical story of your life. Obviously you were born somewhere, and there may have been moves since, and here you are now –

> [Interrupts] Ah, this is a very interesting question ….

At this point Philip proceeds to tell me that if we were in another part of the building, he could point to the hospital across the road where he was born.

The 'career in careers' story

By this stage of the interview, I had a greater need to reflect previous discussion. The core of the invitation to tell the final story (see Section 7.1) was structured around the words:

> … tell the story of your 'career in careers' from the first inkling of the idea of becoming a careers adviser through to the present day.

Descriptions of work with clients

During the break in recording, participants were asked to recall two recent interviews. I offered materials for jotting notes if they felt this would be useful. The wording for the beginning of the second stage of the interview is given in Section 5.2 (page 112), as follows:

> Could you describe this interview, starting from what you saw to be the presenting situation, how you tried to help, and what difference you think you may have made for your client.

This initial wording allowed me to use prompts during the following discussion such as:

> what were you trying to achieve?

> what difference do you think you made for him/her?