Women at the School Gates:

A Narrative Study of the Career Paths of Three Women

by

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Abstract

This interpretive study explores 'career', as experienced and narrated by three female participants who combine senior professional roles with motherhood. The theme of the public versus the personal permeates the thesis, through the exploration of the challenges and constraints faced by the women as they seek to balance the competing demands of career and daily life, and through reflexive consideration of the author's relationships with the women because the participants were drawn from existing friendship groups.

The research is framed within auto/biographical methodology and uses narrative methods to explore the elements that have influenced each woman's career and the meanings that she attributes to her career story. Materials were gathered through loosely structured interviews and themes were identified and selected via a proforma approach. This led to a highly iterative, inductive analytical process, also informed by reflexive discussion of the author's position within the thesis. The complex ethical issues explored in the study included the extent to which the research represented collusion or collision between researcher and participants, the extent to which prior knowledge of the participants should be used, and notions of leaving the field.

The study demonstrated the need to question assumptions concerning the way in which women conceptualise and articulate career, as the transcripts indicated unease with, or even denial of, the concept of 'career'. Where there was discussion, it was in first-paradigm terminology, with a focus on organisational hierarchies and planned ascent of a career ladder rather than on career as a work of self-construction. The research also found that the emotions expressed around career were overwhelmingly negative, arising particularly from an inability to achieve a satisfactory balance between working and personal lives. A further, distinctive element of the work is its methodological innovation within the study of career. Uniquely, the thesis presents material gathered and viewed through the lens of friendship via an auto/biographical approach and finds that no single career theory can adequately represent the experiences narrated by these participants. This signals a gap between theory and lived experience.

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Contents

Abstract 3
Acknowledgements 5
Chapter 1 Introduction 11
'Career' 12
Scene-Setting 13
The Significance of Bourdieu's Work 18
Motherhood 20
'Career' Literature 21
The Research 22
Outline of Thesis 25
Chapter 2 Literature Review 27
Introduction 27
Definitions of 'Career' 27
The Theoretical Landscape 28
'Established' Career Theories 29
The Paradigm Shift 31
Theories of Women's Careers 32
Accountancy 37
Education 38
Medicine 39
Theoretical Framework 41
Field 43
Habitus 44
Capital 46
Bourdieu and Auto/biography 47
Motherhood 48
Emotion and Career 54
Summary of Chapter 55
Chapter 3 Methodology, Methods and Collection of Research Materials 57
Introduction 57
Epistemology and Ontology 59
Underpinning Methodology: Auto/biography 60
Narrative Methods 62
Selection of Participants, Ethical Considerations and Collection of Materials 66
Research Ethics 70

Analysis of Research Materials 72
Leaving the Field 73
Summary of Chapter 73
Chapter 4 Friendship 77
'Friendship as Method' 79
Friendship within this project 82
Summary of Chapter 83
Chapter 5: 'Anna' 'Does Work Define Who I Am and What I Do?' 85
Introduction 85
Pen Portrait 85
The Friendship 86
Collection of the Research Materials 88
Analysis of the Research Materials 92
The Thematic Content of the Transcripts 93
Framing and Concept of 'Career' 94
Influence of Family 96
The Decision to Train as a Tax Accountant 101
Recognition and Reward 102
Women at Home and at Work 106
The Corporate Environment 107
Glitz, Glamour and Clearing Up 109
The Division of Labour within the Family 111
Work-life Balance 112
Analytical Reflections 115
Summary of Chapter 117
Chapter 6: 'Beth' 'I'm the Woman Who Cries at Work' 119
Introduction 119
Pen Portrait 119
The Friendship 120
Gathering the Research Materials 122
The Thematic Content of Beth's Career Narrative 126
Construction of 'Career' 126
Hierarchies within the Teaching Profession and (Career) Hierarchy at Home 129
Principles and Emotion 131
Weakness and Empowerment 133
Career and Gender 136
Motherhood 139

Beth's Analysis and Explanation of her Career 141
Analytical Reflections 142
Summary of Chapter 145
Chapter 7: 'Angela' 'I Never Thought of Myself as Having a Career' 147
Introduction 147
Pen Portrait 147
Participation in the Study 147
The Friendship 149
Conceptualisation of Career 152
The Thematic Content of the Transcripts 156
The Decision to Study Medicine 156
Motherhood and Family 160
The Influence of Gender 167
Analytical Reflections 168
Summary of Chapter 170
Chapter 8 Exploration of the Research Questions 171
The Research Questions 172
Question 1: What factors have influenced each woman's career? 172
Question 2: Have [these factors] changed over time? 176
Question 3: What meanings do the women attribute to their career paths? 180
Question 4: How Far Does the Literature Reflect these Women's Career Profiles? 182
Summary of Chapter 184
Chapter 9 Contribution to the Field, Reflections on the Research and Conclusions 185
'Career' 185
Emotion 187
Methodological Contribution 189
Summary of Contribution 192
Reflections on the Study 192
Evaluation of Collection of Research Materials 197
Future Areas of Work 197
Concluding Thoughts: 'For our kids, it won't be so linear' (Anna, Transcript 2) 200
References 203
Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet 219
Appendix 2: Sample Transcript 221
Appendix 3: Initial Notes on Proforma 237
Appendix 4: Sample Worked Proforma 239

Chapter 1 Introduction

"The world is both out there and inside us" (Reid and West 2019, p.237)

If the world is experienced externally and internally, as Reid and West (2019) suggest, so, too, is career. Savickas (2011) proposes that career is both objective and subjective, with some parts visible to the outside world whilst others are personal and known only to the individual. Both elements are explored in this thesis, with the overarching aim of contributing to the existing body of knowledge on career. More specifically, and as explained fully in Chapter 3, the research is an interpretive study located within the constructivist paradigm; it uses auto/biographical methodology and narrative methods to explore the career stories of three women who work in senior professional roles. A key point to note from the beginning of this thesis is that, when they agreed to join the research, the participants were drawn from existing friendship networks. The title of the thesis references 'the school gates', to highlight the fact that the women are following careers in conjunction with motherhood, and it is as a direct consequence of motherhood that I have formed friendships with them, having met as a result of our respective children. The notion of women being present at school gates also points to certain cultural expectations of motherhood, which are explored in the thesis. The friendships strongly influenced the conduct and outcomes of the research and, as the study progressed, a further focus of exploration emerged strongly from the methodological positioning of auto/biography (Merrill and West 2009; Speedy 2008; Stanley 1992), with friendship as method (Tillmann-Healy 2003) within the field of career. This strand came to assume such importance to the study that it is covered in a separate chapter (Chapter 4). It is also explored throughout case study chapters (5, 6 and 7) that focus on the individual career stories narrated by the participants. In addition to highlighting the public and the private aspects of career, the quotation used at the start of the chapter also helps to introduce auto/biographical methodology, as it explains how we use our own stories to make sense of those of our participants, and others' stories to make sense of our own (Reid and West 2019).

This introductory chapter sets the context for the research, explains how my interest in career and, subsequently, women's careers developed, then describes the rationale for the work. The next section introduces the methodological framework within which the research is located and gives an outline of the frameworks used for explanatory and meaning-making purposes. The structure of the remaining chapters of the thesis is provided at the end of the chapter.

As a final point of context at the start of the thesis, the research questions used to explore the topic of women's careers are as follows:

- What factors have influenced each woman's career?
- Have these changed over time? If so, how?
- What meanings do the women attribute to their career paths?
- How far does the literature reflect these women's career profiles?

'Career'

From the outset of the study, it was important to establish a definition of 'career' itself. In this research, it is taken to be 'the evolving sequence of a person's work experience over time' (Arthur, et al 1989, p.8). This definition, drawing on the earlier work of Super (1980, 1957), is sufficiently broad to encompass the range of activities and experiences that might form part of a career in the early part of the twenty-first century. A further point of recommendation is that it did not give primacy to any type of activity over another and was, therefore, capable of reflecting the various experiences that an individual might characterise as forming part of career. It also specifically references the highly personal nature of a career and recognises that its component parts might be sequential rather than hierarchical. All these are important factors when considering women's careers which, historically, have often encompassed paid work in tandem with significant domestic or other caring commitments, leading to labour market experiences that are 'distinctive and unequal', even within developed countries (Bimrose et al 2014, p.556). The chosen definition also supports the evaluation of a woman's career in its own right and does not force it to be configured through a male lens. Further literature on the definition of 'career' is explored and critiqued in the Literature Review, Chapter 2.

Career is located in the shared space between public and private life; that space is explicitly recognised in the title of the study, where 'the school gates' are referenced. That reference reflects the context for the study, which is that all three participants are following senior careers in conjunction with motherhood. The research was not, however, designed as a study of motherhood. When the narratives were recorded, each participant had at least one child who was in the early years of secondary school. Motherhood was thus a common factor in their lives and my own, though the experience was personal to each of us. In Chapter 2, there is a critical evaluation of relevant literature within this field and it is further taken up in case studies later in the thesis. I also

consider my own career within the study: this is done throughout the thesis, via reflexive responses to the participants' career stories and not as a separate case study. This is an accepted approach to auto/biographical study (L. West 2019, personal communication 21 May; West 1996; Stanley 1992) and goes beyond subjectively placing oneself within the study.

This research explores the particularities of each individual's career, using audio recorded material gathered through two loosely structured narrative interviews per participant, plus limited subsequent material from e-mail correspondence. Via a case study approach (Flyvbjerg 2011), themes particular to each woman are explored, alongside a consideration of the meanings attributed by each woman to the construction of her career. After the case study chapters, the research questions are explored in greater depth and the focus moves from the particular to see what might be common, before exploring potential gaps in the existing literature. Finally, three principal ways in which the thesis contributes to the field are identified: conception of career; the impact of emotion on career; and methodological innovation.

The next section gives the background to the study and provides further contextual information.

Scene-Setting

I am a woman in my early fifties and live in suburban Greater London with my husband and teenage daughter. As a school leaver, I went straight to university where I read History. My subsequent career has been varied and has incorporated (sometimes simultaneously): paid work within organisational boundaries; more flexible work via consultancy; voluntary work; periods of full-time study; and caring, as I did not work when my daughter was younger. The most recent phase of my career was taken up with study as I completed a Masters degree to qualify as a careers counsellor; I then took up a position as a full-time, funded doctoral student at the same institution. As part of that funding, I taught at various levels within the university. The variety that is thus evident within the different phases of my career is unusual in the social circles in which I have moved since the birth of my daughter, where most women appear to have a more consistent working pattern and a small minority have chosen not to undertake paid work at all.

From the decision to pursue a career (or not), the interface between career and wider 'life as lived', in all its richness and nuance, is of significant interest in my work as a career counsellor, and as a researcher. It was as a result of that interest that my MA dissertation (Stead 2014) was a narrative,

single-participant study of a woman's career path. That participant was a (different) friend and the study had offered some insights into the challenging methodological territory of working with friends, alongside the analysis of a career characterised by frequent changes of direction, beginning with professional sport and moving through academic success, the corporate sector, manual work and, finally, the professions. It was as a result of that research that the proposal for the current study was developed, though other influential factors were also discernible. The literature on 'career', consulted as part of my own learning and then to inform and develop my teaching, emphasises the fragmentation, insecurity, uncertainty and even liquidity said to characterise contemporary careers and indeed wider life (Pryor and Bright 2011; Bauman 2000). This was not a recognisable picture whenever 'career' had been discussed in the friendship circles referenced above, where the women had either continued to develop long-established career patterns (professional or otherwise) or had opted out of paid employment to bring up their children. Where they had opted for paid work, few of them had changed employers, and nobody had changed occupational sector. It could not be assumed that decisions had been made solely on financial grounds; similarly, it appeared wrong to assume that the apparent stability necessarily reflected complete career well-being. Those, then, were the initial factors that led to this exploration of the influences and continuing motivations that were having an impact on some women's careers.

In accordance with auto/biographical methodology (Merrill and West 2009), here the influence of personal factors must be acknowledged. When I began my MA in 2012, there had been a gap of almost thirty years since I had taken my first degree. The decision to return to university in my late forties, with a child under the age of ten, led to conflicting demands upon my time. As a student, I was aware that I probably had greater opportunity to work flexibly than many of my friends who were in paid employment within single organisations. There was also an awareness that my experience of motherhood was impacting on my working life (and vice versa), hence I developed a strong interest in exploring the intersection between wider life and career, as illustrated in the fictionalised vignette that follows.

I am in the University library late one afternoon, trying to work my way through several journal articles, when a text from my daughter arrives. 'When will you be home?' it reads. I ignore it. Five minutes later, she resends the message. My response is complex. I feel cross that she is interrupting my work and not talking to her father, who is at home with her. Guilty, feeling that maybe I ought to be at home. And also pleased, that she still wants to spend time with me despite the onset of adolescence. After a further ten minutes, I pack up and go home, even though I had planned to stay longer and am annoyed with myself. In the supermarket the following morning, I bump into a woman I know through school events. She is a lawyer and is dressed for a day in court, but is doing the family's grocery shopping after dropping her daughter at school for early morning hockey. She looks exhausted but, after we have exchanged news about our children, she asks about my research then laughingly suggests herself as an interviewee. "I'll tell you about career!" she says, with feeling. "How am I supposed to manage all this juggling? Why on earth do we think we can do and have it all?"

This piece gives further clues to the context of the study, though it should be noted that the woman in the supermarket is not actually one of the participants in this study. The encounter is between two women who have met through their daughters, in this case because they attend the same school: their paths would probably not have crossed had motherhood not intervened. As usual, the first point of discussion is the children then, because of the prior relationship and my known research interests, the other woman introduces the topic of career. My friend usually presents an unflustered, competent face to the world, however clearly there is a deeper 'story' beyond that outward presentation because she is less guarded in this particular interaction. Further, the outburst on this day is the product of temporal factors, as explained in the literature by Andrews et al (2013) and Plummer (2001): narratives are the products of particular times and particular spaces. On the day when we meet, her frustrations are to the fore. Perhaps she has had a difficult morning with her teenage children or had a row with her husband; perhaps the forthcoming court hearing is an unusually complex or distressing case; on a more personal level, perhaps she has missed her daily run or cannot find time to visit her elderly mother. This day could be typical or highly unusual. What is not unusual, in her life or mine, is the context within which we are meeting.

The vignette introduces some of the underpinning methodological and explanatory frameworks used in the thesis. There is auto/biography, via the juxta positioning of my story with my friend's: we are joined, but also separate, and each woman's story influences the other's (Merrill and West 2009). She is talking to me about her career because we have an existing relationship as friends and there is

a potential blurring of the lines between friendship and research (Tillmann 2015b; Tillmann-Healy 2003). In the interaction we are trading cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), by conforming to certain behaviours and expectations that constitute the familiar and the acceptable. Bourdieu's work is used throughout the thesis as a way of connecting and explaining the fragments of the women's stories and is introduced in more depth later in this chapter. The vignette also introduces something of the complexity of managing career and life, including important material that appears later in the thesis, notably negotiation within the wider family, ideas about what might constitute appropriate motherhood for women of a particular socio-economic group, and the constant desire to 'juggle' competing demands so that career goals may be met alongside harmony within family life. My friend's offer to participate in the study (long after it had begun and participants had been recruited) also reflected the desire, expressed repeatedly by people I met over the course of the project – women or men, friends or strangers – to tell their career stories. The process of narrative is discussed fully in Chapter 4 of the thesis, but it seems clear that the simple act of being heard carries powerful resonance.

At this point, it is helpful to consider the broader, national picture of women at work. In the United Kingdom, the number of women in paid employment in the formal economy stands at 72.1% of the total population of women aged between 16 and 64 years old. Whilst numerically there are still more men in work, that number is proportionately decreasing and now represents 80.1% of all men between 16 and 64 years old (Office for National Statistics 2019). Women are, however, far more likely to work part time than men: according to a House of Commons Briefing Paper (2019), 41% are employed part time, compared to 13% of men. These data point to the shifting socio-economic landscape of work in the UK. These are, however, only headline figures. As Bimrose (2015, p.140) suggests 'it is only individual stories that can provide insights to the individual experiences that lie behind... statistics', hence the value of subjective studies such as this work.

The overall purpose of the research is, then, to extend and deepen the understanding of women's careers and is achieved through an exploration of the particularities – the lived experiences - of the participants' careers, in the specific contexts within which they are located. This exploration of context is a critical component of auto/biographical methodology (Reid and West 2019; Merrill and West 2009); the setting within which the work is located, and its contribution to the overall rationale for the study, are explained below.

After the birth of my daughter, I met a number of women, initially through a number of organised groups for new mothers and then at the school gates, who had continued to follow senior careers whilst simultaneously shouldering significant domestic and familial responsibilities. Nobody was in a situation where her husband took the role of primary carer of their children: both spouses in each marriage worked full-time. Some of the women accessed full-time, externally provided childcare or substantial levels of domestic help, whether paid or from family members, but others did not. Regardless of the help that they were able to draw upon, it was clear that the women experienced conflicting priorities as they tried to meet their commitments. This could lead to frustration and unhappiness, and was the subject of many conversations, yet the pursuit of career also permitted the women to retain a life beyond that of being a mother. It seemed apparent that different motivations had led them to continue in paid work in conjunction with motherhood and that it was not simply a matter of financial imperative. The detail of an individual's career was, however, rarely discussed within the relevant social circles, which were usually random groupings based on geographical location and the chronology of the births of the children. Further, stereotypical images of working mothers, widely available in the media or in popular fiction (Pearson 2018, 2003), included images of 'superwomen' who - apparently effortlessly - managed the needs of multiple children and pursued senior careers whilst also running immaculate homes and serving on school committees. Then there were also – apparently less competent – women who struggled to get to work on time or to make it to school functions and who were permanently tired. These seemed to be extreme representations so this research sought to explore how the participants would describe and explain their own careers.

The participants in this study are, as indicated earlier in the chapter, drawn from existing friendship networks (though are not a defined friendship group). One is a tax accountant, another an education consultant and the third a medical practitioner. They are middle-class women, aged at the time between forty-five and fifty years old, married with children and in stable employment in London as senior professionals in their respective fields. As such, they did not appear to have any overt career difficulties and, indeed, it is important to acknowledge from the outset that their lives carry a degree of privilege arising from factors such as favourable economic circumstances and stable home lives. The starting point for this study was, however, a desire to disassemble those careers to explore what might lie within or beneath the headline messages of career stability and apparent success. In her narrative, the second participant, 'Beth', used the image of a swan on water to describe her life: apparently gliding serenely, but actually paddling furiously to stay afloat. This metaphor gives further expression to the purpose of a study like this and reflects the interesting

but often occluded territory where the women's careers intersect with wider 'life as lived', a theme that runs throughout the thesis.

The research thus carries a deliberate focus on individual careers and seeks to illuminate and understand this aspect of human experience, via an analysis of 'rich and thick' detail (Geertz 1973). The number of participants is deliberately small, to secure the necessary depth of material for analysis. The aim of the study is not to establish generalities, or to generate theory, but instead to place an exploration of the women's stories, and illumination of the meanings that the women attach to their careers, at the centre of the research.

As explained above, the work is located within auto/biographical methodology. This means that I undertake a reflexive exploration of the interplay and relationship between my own story and those of the participants, however there is no requirement that, as the author, my story should form a defined case study. Whilst there was no specific need for any autobiographical content (Merrill and West 2009), in Chapter 9 I have chosen to offer my reflections on the study. There I discuss the interplay of my own life and career with the stories told by the participants. The (/) within the term auto/biography serves both to join and to separate the author from the research; it fully acknowledges that this is a subjective study and highlights the interpretive nature of the work, which places meaning making at the centre of the exploration undertaken. A central aim of auto/biographical research is to work towards open-ended possibilities, not closed concepts (Reid and West 2019). In order to achieve that aim, narrative methods were chosen, and the analysis focussed on the women's career stories to understand their lived experience. The analysis of the vignette earlier in this chapter noted that people were often keen to provide their narratives; each individual will have personal reasons for telling their story and that includes the participants in this study. This is explored fully in Chapter 3 and in the individual case studies in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, so is not rehearsed here, but it is important to recognise the subjectivity of the individual stories generated by those narrative methods, and the relationships that shaped them.

The Significance of Bourdieu's Work

The subjectivity described above runs throughout the study and it is important to place the lives in context to provide some points of anchor for the subsequent analysis. Clues as to the participants' own contexts were present throughout their career narratives; the work of Bourdieu provided a means of connecting those fragments. The research questions do not specifically address the

application of Bourdieu's thinking to career, and no claim is made to offer a systematic review or application of his work. Instead, the research draws upon certain concepts able to offer 'explanatory power' by deciphering the meaning of disparate threads of the individual transcripts. These are described briefly below and critiqued more deeply in Chapter 2, Literature Review, especially the application of his work to women's lives.

Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (1984) offers a lens through which to analyse an individual's disposition: ways of thinking, acting, feeling and being. Further, it provides a way of explaining how the past and the future affect the present and, in conjunction with the concept of 'field', or social space, enables links to be made between the individual and her social environment. In so doing, it acknowledges that life events are influenced by individual and social factors. Habitus acknowledges that past experiences and upbringing influence present situations; further, via conditioning, individuals internalise the objective choices that they make. This is helpful in relation to the research question in this study about the women's career influences.

Habitus may also be used to explore issues of social class. Rather than a Marxist emphasis on class as characterised by a structural, objectively constructed group in relation to economic means of production (Marx 2018), Bourdieu instead suggested that individuals carry an awareness of their positions within social space. Heterogeneity is therefore evident, boundaries are fluid and the emphasis falls on practices rather than inert class locations derived from occupational labels. Class is lived and experienced through individual subjectivities and individuals are not always conscious of classed actions that they are taking. Given the methodology within which this study is located, Bourdieu's explanation of class appealed because it was capable of reflecting the nuances of lives as lived and did not impose a rigid structural approach.

Another aspect of Bourdieu's work is 'field'. In the context of this study, career might be viewed as one aspect of the field within which an individual plays. In French, Bourdieu uses the term *le champs*, which translates as 'battlefield' or 'field of knowledge', rather than the more pastoral *le pré*, 'meadow'. Thomson (2012) suggests the analogy of a football field, specifically a bounded area, with players located in specific slots and affected by physical conditions. The field would also incorporate additional aspects of social space, such as the socio-economic and cultural context. It is a structured

space, but individuals have to accept the rules and 'play the game' if they are to thrive. Again, this suggested a good fit with the methodological approach in this study.

Capital is a third aspect of Bourdieu's thinking that, together with habitus and field, forms what Thomson (2012) describes as a 'Gordian Knot'. In other words, the three concepts are difficult to define, precisely, or to disentangle. Bourdieu (1984) identified four types of capital: economic; cultural; social/familial; and symbolic. The field depends on capital to maintain its boundaries, but also generates more to protect those who are already inside. Bourdieu suggested that the accumulation of capital bestows advantage: an individual who begins with capital is therefore positioned to succeed. Connections between different types of capital were discernible such that, for example, economic capital links to educational advantage. These connections are the products of mutual influence and ongoing co-construction and, therefore, boundaries are blurred such that it is difficult to see where the field stops.

Motherhood

The position of motherhood within the research is also an important contextual factor. In Chapter 2 there is an exploration of literature within the field and, to avoid repetition, that is not included here. Throughout the current chapter, there is reference to the fact that the participants are all mothers and the auto/biographical prompts arising from my own experience were discussed above, particularly the experience of combining motherhood with career. Setting aside the notion of motherhood as an institution, the experience is highly personal, as Adrienne Rich noted in her important work (Rich 1986) and it would not have been appropriate to suggest that my own experience matched that of any of the participants. Indeed, an obvious difference has already been noted, in that the participants had followed continuous employment since becoming mothers whereas my own career was more fractured. From the outset of the study, it was not therefore appropriate to assume what role motherhood had played in the career stories of the other women, and thus it was not explicitly addressed in the research questions. This was in keeping with the methodological choices, as it was important to avoid any superimposition on the women's career narratives. Motherhood is a key contextual factor in the study, but not the specific focus of the work which is, instead, the factors that each participating woman identifies as having influenced her career story and the meaning that she attributes to – or the sense that she makes of – her career. From the inception of the project, the questions were deliberately formulated in very broad terms,

in keeping with the chosen narrative methods. It must also be noted that this exploratory study did not start from a counselling or guidance premise that the participants had career difficulties that they were seeking to resolve, though the findings can be used to inform career counselling interactions with women.

'Career' Literature

Bourdieu's work provides the theoretical underpinning that helps to locate the participants' narratives within context, and the position that the thesis takes on motherhood was explained above. The next area to introduce is the theoretical literature around career. At the beginning of the chapter, the chosen definition of 'career' was introduced. To recap, this is 'the evolving sequence of a person's work experience over time' (Arthur et al 1989, p.8), chosen - from a contested field - for its capacity to include all possible components that might make up a woman's career, including a fractured and diverse one such as my own. In the wider literature there are many theories that seek to explain career, more than it is possible to review within a single thesis. A further point to note is that, at the beginning of the project, the participants' narratives were not known, hence the literature that was reviewed prior to the interviews was either connected to methodology and methods (and is reviewed and evaluated in Chapter 3) or mainly generic in nature (critiqued in Chapter 2) and used to begin the work of locating the study within the field. The participants in this study are women and this was not a project with a focus on strategies for career guidance: those factors offered the first pointers as to what should be consulted in advance.

The early stages of the project reviewed the work of career theorists who suggested explanations for specific conditions pertaining to women's careers. Women do not, however, form a homogeneous group, even when they are apparently from similar social, economic and/or cultural settings. In this context, Bimrose et al (2014) noted that a wide focus is required to understand the complexities of the factors that impact on women's careers. The development of contemporary career theory specific to women has its roots in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Part of the contextual background to these works was the so-called paradigm shift, arising from the changing social, economic and political climate of the late twentieth century, and characterised by the decline of bounded organisations, notions of career hierarchy, stability and linear development (O'Doherty and Roberts 2000) and the attendant rise of the self-construction of career (Savickas 2011), or the life-designing paradigm (Savickas et al 2009). In the light of this, there was a recognition that the

established career theories did not offer adequate explanations of career trajectory and influences, particularly those of women. Whilst traditionally women's careers were seen and evaluated in relation to those of men (Gilligan 1979), paradoxically, theory was posited upon a whole range of careers being available to an individual who would apply personal interests when choosing an occupation. For many women, this seems contestable.

In response to the changing circumstances described above, a number of theories focussing on women's careers were developed from the 1980s onwards. Researchers such as Hackett and Betz (1981), Astin (1984), Betz and Fitzgerald (1987), Richardson (1993, 2012), Schultheiss (2009), Patton and McMahon (2014), Bimrose and colleagues (2001, 2004, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2018) and Mainiero and Sullivan (2006) have explored the particular circumstances pertaining to women and suggested patterns of behaviour in career. These, and other, theories are critiqued in the next chapter of the thesis.

The participants in this study are individual women, and the research is located within specific temporal and contextual boundaries, hence it is difficult to argue that any single theory offers a full explanation of their career stories. In the case studies, provided in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, and in the Exploration of Research Questions (Chapter 8), I return to these theories and draw on other literature consulted as part of the iterative process of analysis.

The Research

The sections above discussed the context and rationale for the study, then introduced the key frameworks used to illuminate and explore the research questions. The rationale for choosing the topic of women's careers was described and the methodology and methods for the work were introduced. Friendship plays a crucial role in the study and Chapter 4 is devoted to an exploration of the impact that the choice of participants had on the research. It introduces the complexities of the ethical landscape, including decisions made around the themes for analysis. Again, this is in keeping with the need for continued reflexivity within auto/biographical research (Merrill and West 2009, Speedy 2008).

When first planning this project in 2014, my first steps were tentative. I knew that I wanted to conduct a narrative study, however the topic of women's careers is large and complex, even when applied to specific types of participant. It was, therefore, necessary to set a focus for the research. Here, it must be acknowledged that an exploration of men's career paths would also have offered interesting materials, and for a time a broader, mixed-gender design was considered. Given the need for depth, however, that idea was discounted as the breadth of material would have blurred the focus required to produce analysis to an appropriate level.

For the same reason, women who had apparently opted out of the labour market were not included, though several have been keen to tell their stories, indicating that a future study could usefully illuminate that territory. Participants were therefore recruited who had continued to follow their careers in conjunction with motherhood. Within my social circles, there were different friendship groupings: participants were not selected from one specific group, though the chosen women did know each other slightly. This was an opportunistic sample (Brady 2006), and deliberately small-scale to give the optimum circumstances for depth of material. I had a pool of women to approach as participants and initially had a uniformly positive response, though ultimately the third participant was changed, after a requested withdrawal. Pen portraits of the women are now given. The names given here, and elsewhere in the thesis, are pseudonyms agreed with the participants.

'Anna' is a tax accountant, employed as a director by a large, global professional services firm in London. Born and brought up in the south east of England, she started her training when she left school after A' levels, preferring to go to work rather than attend university. Her career has included a period working 'in-house' for an investment bank, but most of her working life has been spent within large multi-national firms. Since gaining professional qualifications in her early twenties, she has made steady career progress and is now employed in a senior role by a well-known global firm. She is fifty-one years old, married to an accountant and has two teenage children.

'Beth' is an education consultant, working for two outer London boroughs, via employment through a Community Interest Company[1]. She was brought up in the south of England, took a degree in Primary Education and English, then worked in schools as a classroom teacher, an interim deputy head teacher and a literacy specialist before moving into consultancy in 2007. Her work now

[1] A not-for-profit company established to serve community interests.

encompasses the primary and secondary age ranges. She is forty-five years old and married to a primary school head teacher. They have one teenage daughter.

'Angela' is a doctor working as a general practitioner (GP) in inner London, where she was born and subsequently attended medical school. She is the senior partner in a large health centre, is very active within a national professional society and has recently completed further study in pursuit of long-standing academic interests complementary to medical practice. She is forty-seven years old and is married to a fellow GP. They have three children, two of whom were away at university at the time of the research. Their youngest child is still at secondary school and lives at home.

I interviewed Anna first, transcribed her narrative and started to draft a case study, then followed the same pattern with Beth and Angela in turn. In parallel with this work for my own research, I myself became a research participant, joining a workshop group established to explore notions of professionalism, for a colleague's doctorate. That series of workshops became an important part of this research study, because it offered the opportunity to explore and reflect upon my own career via different creative media such as poetry, art and film. Later, I tried collage and, in so doing, used a range of visual materials as a means of exploring biography without a reliance on the written or spoken word (Chant 2019). Reflections on my own career took shape and shifted as I moved between my story and those of my participants. This was illustrative of the joining and separation that takes place within auto/biographical research (Merrill and West 2009). The prior friend-relationships with each of the participants also became important here because of the need for the recognition, and then some separation, of the dual roles of research and friendship (Tillmann-Healy 2003). Later in the project I began to characterise this as 'collision or collusion'; the Gestalt of the interactions with each participant is explored in the case studies and in Chapter 8, which draws together responses to the research questions. I grew to understand that, in the research process, I was analysing stories and not the women themselves. Gradually I recognised that the participants had chosen what to tell me as much as I had chosen how I would analyse the narratives. For both them, and me, the research was centred upon the re-presentation of a story at a moment in time (Sandelowski 1991). The research relationship was subject to shifting dynamics and that led to the recognition that the study would not lead to neat outcomes, free from loose ends or the inherent messiness of lives and careers.

The analysis of the materials followed inductive principles, moving backwards and forwards between the participants' narratives, literature and, to some extent, my own story. Although this might

sound akin to the principles of Grounded Theory (Glaser 1992), that type of analysis would not have been appropriate for interpretive research. As West (1996) noted, the coding and counting required for the application of Grounded Theory is more suited to research in the positivist tradition than this constructivist study. By contrast, here analysis was conducted thematically via use of a proforma developed by Merrill and West (2009). A worked sample proforma is provided as Appendix 3. After production of a proforma, I wrote a case study of each participant's narrative and those chapters then formed the basis of the exploration of the research questions, presented in Chapter 8, that forms a fuller response to the research questions.

Outline of Thesis

This chapter has introduced the study and set out the overarching rationale for it, then laid out the underpinning frameworks that have enabled the research questions to be explored and illuminated. A summary of the following chapters of the thesis is now provided.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review gives a critique of the reading that undertaken before the collection of research materials via interviews with the participants. The chapter also includes work reviewed as a result of the initial analysis of the narratives including, in brief, the specific career fields of accountancy, education and medicine.

Chapter 3 is the Methodology chapter and covers the story of the research process from inception to production of the thesis. It explores the choices made and explains why other possibilities were not followed.

Chapter 4 explores friendship, a key contextual issue in the study. Firstly, the construct of friendship is discussed, then the chapter turns to the use of 'friendship as method' (Tillmann-Healy 2003) as a methodological construct for analysing the decision to work with friends as participants. Within the field of career, the juxta positioning of auto/biography with friendship as method appears unique. Building on material in Chapter 3, the ethical complexity of the project is also explored.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are case studies drawn from the narratives offered by Anna, Beth and Angela. Each participant's story is *re-presented* via my interpretation of the materials. The chapters include thematic analysis, but comparisons are not suggested between the individual stories: insights into the career experiences of three different women are offered.

Chapter 8 returns to the research questions and considers what, taken together, the three case studies offer by way of illumination. I explore how theories relating to career, and other themes

that arise from the narratives, may describe and explain the materials generated in the research, particularly in relation to career influences. As part of this, the participants' ideas about 'career' as a concept are analysed. This was not one of the original research questions but developed as a theme throughout the narratives.

Chapter 9 highlights the contribution that the thesis makes to the body of knowledge on career, specifically in relation to the conceptualisation of 'career' itself; the role that emotion can play within career; and methodological issues arising from collision/collusion within the research and the introduction of friendship as method (Tillman-Healy 2003) to the career field. The second part of the chapter offers retrospective thoughts on the research, including auto/biographical responses to the material. Finally, concluding thoughts are offered, including ways in which the work could be taken forward in further studies.

In addition, appendices are provided, as follows:

Appendix 1 Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 2 Sample Proforma

Appendix 3 Initial Notes on Proforma

Appendix 4 Sample Worked Proforma

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a critical evaluation of relevant literature, in order to locate this study in the wider research field, explore its significance and help to frame the contribution that the thesis makes. At the heart of the work is the desire to offer a trustworthy analysis of the participants' narratives, as advocated by Riessman (2008). Selection of literature is an important component of that 'trustworthiness'. In interpretive work such as this, questions of how – then where – to set boundaries around the work are challenging. The participants' narratives sit at the centre of the study and the re-presentation of those career stories has been derived from an iterative approach, moving between the narratives, analysis and literature. This is consistent with the requirements of an interpretive study. This is not a situation where a complete review of the literature could be carried out before the research materials were collected, because of the epistemological position taken that knowledge is created through talking to people and engaging with their lived, subjective experiences. The coupling of that epistemology with narrative methods gave space for those subjective experiences to emerge. However, to provide a foundation for the study, career development literature, focussing in particular on the careers of women, was explored at the start of the research. It was not possible or desirable to predict in advance what the career stories might disclose, hence the literature reviewed in advance was mainly contextual in character. Clear factors at the beginning of the project were that the participants were women and that they worked in specific professional areas. This chapter is therefore focused on literature concerned with women's careers; the fields where the careers are located (accountancy, education and medicine) are then explored. Material relevant to the theoretical underpinning of the thesis is then critically examined, principally the work of Bourdieu. Finally, literature on the experience of motherhood, and broader issues relating to work-life balance, is reviewed. Material relevant to the methodological framework is critically analysed in Chapters 3 and 4 where, firstly, the methodology is explained and, then, the place of friendship within the study is explored.

Definitions of 'Career'

As noted in Chapter 1, 'career' is a contested term and this study uses the definition 'the evolving sequence of a person's work experience over time' (Arthur, Hall and Lawrence 1989, p.8), chosen for

its capacity to incorporate the range of different activities that could form part of a career. Defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2019) as a person's course or progress through life, career is often considered solely in terms of paid employment, despite contemporary views that seek to widen the focus to include unpaid, caring or community activities (Richardson 2012). The notion of progression is often implied, together with elements of choice. Inkson (2004) suggests that 'career' may be defined through metaphors, including those of journey, story or inheritance; those metaphors are commonly used, including in the narratives gathered in this study.

The inherent complexity of career has consequences that affect individual lives, outside the world of academia where theoretical ideas and constructs are debated. Baruch and Vardi (2016) propose that there is also a dark side to 'career', in that it can be a source of disillusionment and psychological dissonance. In their view, much of the literature makes a normative assumption that career uniformly carries positive benefits and they argue for a more balanced and realistic analysis that better reflects the lived experience of many workers.

The next sections critically analyse the theoretical landscape of career. This requires the consideration of literature dating back to the middle decades of the twentieth century. As Sampson (2009) stresses, it is important to draw on so-called established or first-paradigm theory in tandem with more contemporary ideas: there is a need to integrate modern and postmodern theory because of the influential role that the former still plays in contemporary considerations of career. This is especially true of career guidance strategies but is also relevant to work on career influences.

The Theoretical Landscape

Bourdieu (1990) highlighted that the derivation of the word 'theory' is the Greek *theorein,* meaning 'to see'. Career theory proposes different ways of viewing, interpreting and explaining the actions and activities that an individual might carry out as part of 'career' and, as such, is used to make sense of how individuals describe their working lives. In responding to the research questions about career influences and meanings, there is an extensive body of theoretical work to draw upon. Although women's careers are now routinely researched and theorized as a separate category, that has not always been the case and, indeed, (and as noted above) the 'established' career theories, based upon analyses of male careers, still occupy a powerful position within the literature. Despite

those gendered origins, they are relevant to this study because they have informed more recent theoretical work, are recognisable in much contemporary career guidance practice and have been adopted in the common parlance of career, such as when it is described in hierarchical terms.

Since the 1980s, however, a body of work has developed that places women's careers at the centre of academic enquiry. The context for this was the entrance of increased numbers of women to the workforce, notably after the second world war, followed by the paradigm shift (Jarvis 2003) that arose from the changing social, economic and political climate of the later years of the century. In parallel came the attendant rise of what Savickas describes as the self-construction of career (Savickas 2011). Although women were participating more fully in the labour market, the constraints and consequent challenges faced by many of them formed the basis for the developing body of theoretical work, albeit from differing perspectives discussed more fully below.

In addition to the historical background to the study of career, the picture is further complicated by the multiple theoretical stances, arising from different epistemological positions and drawn from a range of academic disciplines, that seek to explain career. Many of those theoretical propositions offer a dual perspective on career, in that explanations for career behaviour are offered in tandem with proposals for appropriate interventions on the part of a career counsellor. This project does not specifically seek to examine career interventions, so this review mainly highlights career theory rather than what Kidd describes as 'career counselling theory' (Kidd 2006), though sometimes it is impossible to separate the two components.

'Established' Career Theories

Trait-factor theories, such as those proposed by Rodger (1952) or Holland (1985) are rooted in psychology and stress the links between individual clients and work opportunities, such that 'congruence' is established between the individual's profile and the characteristics of the career. The idea is that an individual will therefore be best placed to find an occupation that is a good 'match' to his or her skills or competences, based on an accurate understanding thereof and the ability to apply that understanding to the labour market. When applied to women's situations, these theories have limitations. Some of the occupational categories proposed by Holland's model were unlikely to be available to women, as a result of gender inequalities in the workplace. A further issue

arose from the constraining influence of the wider responsibilities carried by many women, which were not recognised because the theories were produced to explain male career patterns at a certain point in historical time.

For Super (1957, updated 1980), the psychology of career choice was also paramount because it was explainable in terms of ongoing development and movement as people worked their way through progressive life stages. Super modelled five life stages, often depicted as in a life-career rainbow diagram, and the model identifies work as one of many roles that an individual might adopt during his or her life. A key critique of the model is that it assumes a smooth progression through those various roles that is unlikely to be found in 'real life': for example, mid-life is conceptualised as equating to career maintenance, thereby presupposing a degree of career stability that is not always possible. Super did recognise this criticism in later versions of the theory, although arguably the scope of development led to a loss of coherence due to fragmentation of the original concept. He noted that he had proposed a 'segmental theory' (Super 1980, p.199). The stage model for women did include the possibility of a double track career pattern, reflecting simultaneous career and homemaking roles, however the completion of sequential developmental tasks was a prerequisite. Patton critiques the stage model, in that the approach was 'based on male career planning uninterrupted by marriage and childbearing' (Patton 2013b, p.9).

As can be seen, there are problems when applying these theories to women's career experiences because they were formulated from analyses of men's career patterns. This does not, however, suggest that the theories are completely irrelevant to the current study. For example, trait-factor theory (Holland 1985, Rodger 1952) continues to be highly influential and the idea of matching a person to a congruent occupational role is still a powerful underpinning for career counselling, notwithstanding its failure to take account of structural factors.

Both of these theories have roots in the positivist psychological tradition of Western industrialised nations and, collectively, they are part of a paradigm characterised by bounded organisations, notions of career hierarchy, stability and linear development (O'Doherty and Roberts, 2000). They are also all posited on the notion that clients present with problems that can be resolved by judicious application of reason and order. In the years since the established theories were proposed, however, the social, political and economic climate has changed profoundly, leading to

claims that career theory has faced a 'paradigm shift' (Savickas et al 2009). Castells (2010, p. xvii) describes the socio-economic changes in terms of the growth of the 'network society', and asserts that society has experienced 'troubled times', characterised by factors including: the global financial crisis of 2008; the growth of religious fundamentalism; and increasing social and cultural marginalisation or even exclusion. In parallel, technological developments - such as in telecommunications or the internet - have transformed the way in which society communicates, because traditional boundaries are no longer meaningful and unmediated information is available to any member of society who is able to access the internet. This affects career theory and practice because, in any given setting, clients now present from a diverse range of ethnic or cultural backgrounds, with a consequently broader range of influences or queries, and may not be best served by the established US-Eurocentric models of guidance (McMahon et al 2012). As has been discussed earlier in this chapter, those models were derived from male career patterns.

The Paradigm Shift

The advent of the paradigm shift (Jarvis 2003) has led to an expansion of the epistemological base of career theory, moving from a reliance on positivism to the embracing of postmodern and social constructionist ideas (Blustein 2017), wherein the assumption is made that knowledge is created in relationships and through responses to cultural stimuli. In response, a body of theory was developed by Savickas (2011), McMahon and Watson (2011) and Nota and Rossier (2015) that placed career narratives at the centre of inquiry with the aim of understanding the complexities of careers within the fluid context described in the paragraphs above. At the heart of this second paradigm is a focus on individual meaning-making in conjunction with consideration of the context within which the careers are being developed. The new approaches are not accepted without criticism, however. For Guichard et al (2011), an individual, subjective approach to career does not adequately reflect objective factors such as labour markets. Further, career decisions may also be circumscribed by cultural factors such as interventions by family or the broader community, so an individual may not be able to exercise the individual agency promoted by the new approaches.

In one of the most prominent of the second paradigm theories, career construction theory, Savickas (2011) explores the means by which careers are constructed and proposes a system for counselling. In this, he advocates the use of storytelling to tease out the themes of the why, what and how of an individual's career. Via careful questioning, the narrative builds self-awareness, employing questions about the client's role models, favourite books, hobbies and sayings. Clients are also asked to

recollect episodes from earlier in life and headlines are assigned to each one. These are then examined and interpreted and, particularly through the headlines, key themes are identified. Savickas (2005) asserts that, in careers, people need to do what they have been rehearsing all their lives; according to his theory, career narratives are built and then deconstructed, with the aim of illuminating the disparate narratives within. This narrative process will inevitably be subjective, but Savickas (2008) asserts that life, as lived, is subjective. In a later work (Savickas 2013, p.173), he explains that 'clients know the answers, and the counselor's questions help clients acknowledge what they know'. That knowledge is their own personal meaning.

A further counterpoint to established, first-paradigm theories has been provided by Krumboltz (2009), with his theory of happenstance. This theory acknowledges the unplanned and perhaps random factors that can influence career. Whilst accepting that it is possible that such factors may be attributable to luck or fate, he proposes that it is possible to recognise and exploit them. The notion of Planned Happenstance suggests that it is possible to manage what perhaps seem like haphazard opportunities, provided that the individual has adequate career management skills and can cope with periods of uncertainty. Similarly, in chaos theory (Pryor and Bright 2011), non-linear patterns of behaviour in career are acknowledged, including the unpredictable and the changeable. These theories are able to reflect and explain the inherent messiness of many career narratives in what Bauman (2000) had earlier described as 'liquid modernity'.

Theories of Women's Careers

As the women in this study are all mothers, the suggestion that women travel a so-called 'double track' (Super 1980), covering both homemaking and career, is of interest and it is now appropriate to discuss the literature relating to women, career and family. Theoretical texts illustrating the breadth of the field have been selected.

Women do not constitute a minority or a homogeneous group in the workplace, however, as writers such as Bimrose et al (2014) suggest, they do face specific challenges that are not adequately reflected in many career theories. Earlier, and more broadly, Gilligan (1979) had found that life cycle theories were based on male patterns and did not, therefore, take account of the experience of women. There is a need to represent the subjective voices of women, and here the present study

makes a contribution because it is from an exploration of the particularities of individual cases that we are able to find what might be common across a larger group in similar circumstances. It is thus possible to illuminate the broader landscape through a consideration of specific stories. The following sections offer a critical review of key theories that have been proposed to explain women's career patterns.

In 1981 (then reformatted in 1996), Gottfredson sought to explain the 'occupational aspirations' experienced by both women and men via a theory of circumscription and compromise. In so doing, she attempted to reconcile psychology with sociology, and it should be noted that she was influenced by the earlier work of Holland and Super. She was interested in the development and content of career aspirations and proposed that career choice involved the implementation of 'self-concept'. Career satisfaction then derived from the extent to which an individual was able to match up career and self-concept. For Gottfredson, career choice was always the result of a narrowing and subsequent elimination of options; gender was one factor causing circumscription because it led women to reject certain roles or occupations on the grounds that they were not suitable for their gender. The fact that women were often in low-paid, low-status jobs was attributable to the compatibility of those occupations with correspondingly low self-concepts. This suggests that Gottfredson was making the assumption that an individual is capable of the development and subsequent articulation of a self-concept; the cognitive map of occupations that was drawn up was also seen to be somewhat inflexible and a further critique regretted the lack of recognition of any dynamic of career development (Pryor and Taylor 1989).

In the mid-1980s, Astin (1984) attempted to extend the debate, in proposing a sociopsychological model of career. This was an attempt to integrate the individual and the structural in explaining career choice. Her model was stated to be explicitly applicable to both genders. She identified motivation, work expectations, sex role and structural opportunities as the constructs upon which career is built, and proposed that a person's motivation for work behaviour (career choice) is based upon the need to blend those four elements with the reality of what is available to an individual at a given time. Drawing on Freud, Astin's starting point had been that work forms one of the key characteristics of being human, and that work motivation is the same for men and women. Although the model did attempt to broaden the theoretical understanding of women's careers, once again a typically hierarchical and linear male career pattern from the mid twentieth century was

used as the starting point. Almost immediately, the model was subject to strong criticism from Fitzgerald and Betz (1984) because of a lack of acknowledgement of previous work within the field of vocational psychology, the perceived repetition of stereotypical differences between men and women, and what they described as the general reinforcement of the status quo.

Moving from a psychosocial approach, sociocognitive theories were developed. Studies by Hackett and Betz (1981), Lent et al (1984), and Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) focused upon how self-efficacy, expected outcomes and career goals might reciprocally interact with individual, environmental, behavioural and learning factors: in other words, whether career goals were realistic and achievable in the light of a person's self-concept. The theories were developed to ensure that none of the important variables faced by women were ignored and personal factors, such as marriage and childbearing, were included alongside educational variables such as level of qualification. The aim was to reflect individual difference whilst also acknowledging social structure, and therefore to include recognition of the context within which women were making career choices. According to Blustein (2015), sociocognitive theories represented transitional ground between the established theories discussed earlier in this chapter and what Swanson (2013) describes as emerging theories such as life design (Savickas et al 2009) or chaos theory (Pryor and Bright 2011). This was because of the emphasis placed on contextual factors.

Taking a completely different approach, the sociologist Hakim (2000) proposed preference theory, in which, controversially, she suggested that women were home-centred, work-centred or adaptive and would make lifestyle choices accordingly. These categorisations had been developed to reflect a conflict between production and reproduction and Hakim sought to explain the success of patriarchy. For example, she asserted that if public policy actively promoted and supported a homemaking role for women, that group of women would expand to its maximum size. The theory has been subject to sustained criticism (Leahy and Doughney 2014; Lewis and Simpson 2013; Bimrose 2002) because it proposed a simplistic typology in which the assumption was made that women had free choice. It did not take account of the constrained context within which work choices were often made by women, assumed a rigid delineation between the public and private spheres, and ignored what women might aspire to do by, instead, concentrating on what was expected or prevented.

Taking up this theme of the public and the private, in 1993 Richardson argued that 'career' was a middle-class concept, largely irrelevant to the many people who were ignored in or excluded from

the existing career literature because of gender, social class, culture or family background. This implies that she referred to a middle-class *male* concept. She claimed that the extant literature also ignored voluntary or unpaid tasks which, she argued, were nonetheless included in individuals' conceptions of work and career. Developing this theme, a later publication (Richardson 2012) proposed that lives were constructed via four social contexts: market work, personal care work, market work relationships and personal relationships. Market work referred to what people did for pay, plus educational activity in preparation for paid work, and market work relationships were those with mentors and colleagues. Richardson explained that this type of work was increasingly seen as 'the only work of value' (2012, p.197), whilst personal care work and personal relationships were often gendered and marginalised as they were (and still are) overwhelmingly the province of women. Economic production was privileged over the social sphere of caring (in its widest sense). As long as care work was predominantly carried out by women, she argued, then their careers would be seen in supporting roles to men. Richardson traced her assertions back to the work of Parsons and Bales (1956), in which society was said to be constituted by two separate and gendered domains: paid employment (male) and work to support the male and the family (female). From that point onwards, the caring domain had not been viewed as 'proper' work. For Richardson, market work trajectories were inevitably influenced by the degree to which women were also required to undertake care work, such as childcare or looking after ageing parents. Her theory stressed the personal ownership of careers, in that individuals developed as active agents following their own course via agentic, intentional actions. Career was therefore not simply an aspect of the self, but also a consequence of developmental actions. We might therefore ask ourselves whether we each had a career or were in one. This focus on intentionality suggests a degree of career planning that seems contestable in many occupational areas and certainly for many women who manage competing demands within the separate spheres of private life and career. Byars-Winston welcomed Richardson's 'provocative' (2012, p.255) broadening of career dimensions, however argued that it should be expanded to better reflect the experiences of women in marginalised communities and to incorporate factors such as dignity in career.

Since the turn of the twenty first century, a body of work has been produced by authors led by Blustein (2001) and Schultheiss (2003), which argues for the consideration of relational perspectives in career theory and practice. This means that the web of relationships and other influences that affect an individual's career decision-making should be recognised and systematically integrated in career counselling and in wider discussions of 'career'. Schultheiss focussed on motherhood as a key area within the relational paradigm and suggested that women were often forced to choose

whether they wished to 'mother or matter' (2009, p.25). Noting that much career development theory had failed to define motherhood as a career, she suggested nonetheless that the occupational world was 'patriarchally structured', yet the economic structures of modern economies were 'built upon the invisible, nurturing work of women' (p.27). The notion of a stark contrast between mothering or mattering is a compartmentalised representation of women's lives, where the domestic and public spheres will meld to varying degrees depending on individual circumstances. Schultheiss' (2009) account of women's career development makes a bold statement and emphasises the stark choices for many women, albeit it lacks nuance. The links between mothering experiences and vocational identity are not fully developed, although other studies have explored them. Waller and Swisher (2006), for example, found that throughout their lives (career and otherwise), women carried a mental map of family responsibilities.

The metatheoretical framework, systems theory, was devised originally by Collin (2006) and then developed further by Patton and McMahon (2014) to be compatible with the constructivist paradigm. It acknowledges that, as careers will be influenced by multiple factors, an individual's life construction should be placed at the centre of the career development process. For example, women in particular might define themselves within a collective context rather than individualistically, possibly because of multiple life roles and responsibilities, or cultural factors. Career is therefore inseparable from life and, whilst the individual sits at the centre of the career choice/development process, it is also important to take account of the external factors that set the context within which career decisions will be taken.

In collaboration with several colleagues, Bimrose, has published a significant body of work addressing the career challenges faced by women (2019, 2015, 2014, 2012, 2008, 2004, 2001). The context to this work was that, whilst women did experience disadvantage within the labour market, it was important to broaden the focus so that the intersection of gender with other variables, such as race or socio-economic class, could be explored. Women carried out a disproportionate amount of domestic work and were over-represented within part time and stereotypically 'female' job roles. For Bimrose, it is important to develop specific concepts that are capable of addressing the specificities and complexities of women's careers. This requires an explicit recognition of the contexts within which individual women work and an acknowledgement of the inherent messiness of life and career (Bimrose et al 2014). No integrated theory of women's work behaviour is proposed; this is considered to be an undesirable, reductive approach.

To conclude this section, in this summary of theory and models relating to women's careers, a US study published in 2006 by Mainiero and Sullivan sought to explain how women managed their careers over time. The research began from a desire to understand why women were leaving the corporate sphere and uses the metaphor of a kaleidoscope, where different coloured glass chips come to the fore when the instrument was turned. When translated to career, the authors claim that factors of influence change over time and form different patterns depending on priorities and circumstance. One decision can therefore affect all other parameters. The career attributes most desired by individuals are said to be authenticity, balance and challenge. The underlying rationale for this work – an explanation for the desertion of corporate America – was very different to the starting point for this study, where the participants have remained in stable occupational positions, however as an illustrative concept it has merit in seeking to explain how the shape of a career can shift over time.

Having reviewed the broad theoretical landscape, the next part of the chapter addresses literature specific to the place of women within the fields of accountancy, education and medicine as those are the areas in which the participants work. The occupational literature is not the focus of the study but provides an additional lens for analysis of the participants' narratives.

Accountancy

In Chapter 5, a case study is presented on Anna's career narrative in which she discusses her life as a tax accountant. A review of the literature indicates that accountancy is a field that women enter in significant numbers, such that the profession is said to have become increasingly 'feminised' (Whiting et al 2015). This does not, however, mean that equality has been achieved, because women are significantly underrepresented at the highest levels of the profession (Hambly 2012, Gammie et al 2007) with statistics indicating that in 2019 only 18.7% of partners in the top 75 UK firms were women, despite more women than men entering the profession (Accountancy Daily 2019). A number of studies have sought to explain why women are not promoted to partner level in greater numbers and, in particular, to explore whether stereotypical biases are prevalent. (One such bias would be that men are providers and breadwinners and women nurturers and in charge of the domestic sphere.) In 2008 Dambrin and Lambert found that motherhood was a driver for the scarcity of women at the top of the largest professional auditing firms, echoing Gammie (2007), who

had found that, within the accounting profession, the traditional male role connotations aligned more closely with the role of a business partner. Accounting was not deemed to have a family-friendly occupational niche, unlike medicine where general practice was felt to complement the wider roles that women might also take on (Crompton and Lyonette 2011).

The culture of the profession was also found to be detrimental to women's career progression, in that a 'good' accountant was supposed to prioritise work at all times (Lewis et al 2007). The profession had developed in that way over many years and a link between the ability to work long hours and promotion prospects could be traced. Moreover, part time work – often sought by women to enable them to continue working in tandem with caring commitments - was often 'career limiting' (Crompton and Lyonette 2011, p.245), so the situation was compounded.

Here, it should be noted that these are not women at the margins of society. Accountancy is a high-status field, with correspondingly high salaries throughout the different levels of the profession. This should not, however, mask the fact that women are underrepresented at the highest level and Lyonette and Crompton (2008) concluded that women were simply choosing not to put themselves forward. As noted above, the reasons for that were complex and linked to the historical development of the profession. Although sustained efforts had been made to promote equality of opportunity, and overt discrimination was becoming rare, the 2008 study pointed to the influence of the so-called 'old boys' network' and its exclusionary characteristics. Gammie and Whiting (2013) found that criticism could still be levelled at accountancy firms for disadvantaging women. Thus, it would seem that the feminisation of the profession (Whiting et al 2015) related more to the gender balance on entry (typically as a new graduate or higher-level apprentice) than to the accommodation of a woman's desire to balance domestic and work commitments.

Education

'Beth', the participant whose narrative is re-presented in Chapter 6, worked as a teacher in primary schools before turning to educational consultancy. In training as a teacher, she chose to enter a profession where women formed the majority of the workforce. According to a report published by the UK's Department for Education, in 2018 women formed 83% of the workforce within primary schools and 73% of primary headteachers were women (Department for Education 2018). The

percentage of women in leadership was growing, however men were still more likely to assume those roles, as the statistics indicate. The decision to train as a teacher could have arisen from a vocational impetus to contribute to society (Skinner et al 2019), or to make a difference (Hughes 2019), however the professional landscape was increasingly coloured by initiatives such as performance indicators, enhanced accountability or directive curriculum changes. Ball identified an 'epidemic of reform' (2003, p.215) and that remained evident in the current climate.

As will be discussed later, Beth's career had not taken the more conventional, hierarchical route to headship though, as a consultant, she was working at an equivalent level within the education profession. After a period as a deputy head, she chose to leave school-based work. A study of deputy heads by Oplatka and Tamir (2009) noted that a woman's decision not to pursue headship could be made for positive reasons and was not necessarily reflective of gender bias within the profession. Research by Gunter et al (2015) focussed on the role played by consultants within the British education system. The increasing use of contract staff had signalled a move from an appointed, salaried workforce; thus, the role of a consultant had been normalised, in that the private sector was now delivering the public agenda. As is discussed in her case study chapter, Beth finds herself at the centre of neoliberal privatisation, in that she sells consultancy services to schools that are acting as businesses. Since the mid-1980s, schools such as academies or free schools had been able to operate independently of public administration and democratic processes (Gunter et al 2015).

Gubler et al (2017), in a study conducted in Switzerland, examined occupational inheritance within teaching. Occupational inheritance, or legacy, is one of Inkson's metaphors for career (2004) and seeks to describe a key career factor: why children follow their parents into occupations. The Swiss study aimed to challenge the assumption that an untroubled career path would then follow and found that the children of non-teachers went on to have more stable teaching careers than those whose parents had also taught.

Medicine

Angela, the third participant in the study, works as a general practitioner. For the past twenty-five years, the number of women entering medical school in the United Kingdom has outstripped men

(BMJ 2018) so they are not a minority group within the medical profession. Indeed, echoing Gammie and Whiting's (2013) study of accountancy, it has been suggested that medicine is an increasingly feminised profession (Khan 2012). Angela works as a general practitioner in a large primary health centre in inner London. As a woman, she is working within what Crompton and Lyonette (2011) identified as the most family-friendly area of medical practice. This is because, unlike in accountancy as discussed above, working hours can be arranged to suit other commitments without necessarily endangering future career prospects. The situation is different within other medical fields with, for example, women being underrepresented in academic medicine, though there is no consensus on the reasons for that (Edmunds et al 2016). A study by Lambert et al (2016), however, did concur with Crompton and Lyonette's findings that British women doctors considered domestic circumstances and working hours as key criteria for choice of speciality: as indicated above, general practice is able to offer appropriate flexibility whilst still providing high salaries and opportunities to progress in a career.

West (2001) published a study of general practitioners in London and, although the research is almost twenty years old, it carries a strong resonance to this study because it is an interdisciplinary narrative work, with a focus on context as well as the individual stories told. Both male and female doctors were interviewed at a time when medical practice was subject to greater scrutiny following a series of public scandals such as the Shipman case. (In 2000, Dr Harold Shipman, a British GP, was found guilty of murdering fifteen patients under his care but, according to a public inquiry, was likely to have unlawfully killed more than two hundred (Baker 2004).) West (2001) explored notions of professionalism alongside factors such as the emotional landscape of the profession. This was a deliberately small-scale, in-depth project and did not aim to provide generalised outcomes but, rather, to offer insights to the culture and practice of medicine for those participants. The inner-city context is akin to Angela's working environment, albeit that there have been striking changes in the intervening years such as an increased use of technology within medical practice. Narrative and the arts are more widely used within medical education and primary care (Lake et al 2015, Launer 2002) and, as West (2001) predicted, there has been growing recognition of the role that cultural and emotional understandings can play in medical practice.

Theoretical Framework

Having reviewed strands of literature related to career, I now turn to the broader theoretical framework used in the study. Chapter 1 gave a brief outline of the use of the work of Bourdieu (1986, 1990, 1997, 1998, 2001), to provide a language to approach the analysis of the research materials. That decision is explained more fully in this chapter, followed by the principal concepts of field, habitus and capital and their useful application to the work as constructs to assist with interpretation and understanding. This is not a thesis about Bourdieu *per se* and, whilst I draw directly upon his own work, a number of other texts were used to assist with explanation and interpretation. It should also be noted that the interpretation and application of Bourdieu's work (1986, 1990, 1997, 1998, 2001) is the subject of continuing academic debate; particularly relevant to this thesis is the extent to which a Bourdieuian lens can be applied to women's lives and that is discussed below.

The research was not established to draw upon a specific body of theory: that was in keeping with decisions taken when first designing and planning this interpretive project. It was important to keep the interview process as open as possible, so that participants were not questioned according to specific lines of inquiry defined by narrow theoretical constructs. In a similar vein, it was not appropriate to analyse the narratives against a pre-ordained framework that could come to assume self-fulfilling characteristics. To meet the methodological structure of the project, it was crucial that the women should be able to talk about their careers, free from the weight of superimposed definitions or theoretical premises. As discussed in the Introduction and revisited in the individual case studies (chapters 5, 6 and 7), a decision was made that no prior definition of 'career' would be offered to the participants; that also extended to theory. Initial readings suggested a theoretical foundation, but further evaluation was necessary once the analysis commenced. This was consistent with the epistemological approach taken throughout the study.

In the earliest stages of the project, and particularly when the research materials were being collected, that stance was methodologically sustainable. Once the narratives had been recorded, however, it became clear that the project required a theoretical framework capable of supporting complex analysis. Appropriate explanatory power was needed for the career and personal

narratives that the women had provided, including some aspects that were perhaps initially occluded. Each narrative had been generated by the participant in conjunction with me, as the interviewer, and was a product of a particular moment in time and a particular location in social space. Seen through the lens of the present, the narrative carried the weight of the past with the promise of the future (Horsdal 2012). Issues of context were therefore beginning to assume a far deeper significance than had been evident at the beginning of the project. To add further nuance to that complexity, the prior friend-relationships with the women brought a range of taken-for-granted practices to impinge upon the interactions. This is explored in Chapter 4, which focuses on the place of friendship within the study.

The position of social class within the study is contextual rather than explicitly addressed to, or explored with, the participants. In this context, the comment that, for many people, class is 'embarrassing and unsettling' (Sayer 2005, p.1) is perhaps pertinent. Class was not specifically addressed in the design of the study; in hindsight, it was something within my habitus that was taken for granted. The participants were drawn from a particular middle-class social space and it became clear that underpinning theory capable of examining issues relating to social class was required. I was, however, wary of the 'political arithmetic' (Skeggs 2004, p.20) of class, with its preordained classifications. Similarly, there was a need to avoid the conception of class as a relationship of exploitation based on the division of labour. A further consideration was the need to draw upon theory that was capable of application to different disciplines, because 'career' is a multidisciplinary concept.

The considerations set out above suggested that the work of Bourdieu would be appropriate to the study. In drawing upon the concepts of field, habitus and capital that are at the centre of Bourdieu's work and, together, make up his explanation of social reproduction, I was able to interpret and come to a better understanding of the participants' narratives. The theoretical framework also helped to make sense of my own position within the research and offered prompts to interrogate the taken for granted in my own life and career, as well as in the narratives. Reflections on this are offered in Chapter 9. Finally, the theory prompted an examination of the shared social space occupied by the friendships present in this study.

Bourdieu does deploy the notion of class as a fundamental component of sociological analysis, however his is a nuanced approach and class is viewed as existing via the context of an individual's awareness of her position in social space (Bourdieu 1984). That space is metaphoric rather than literal, has fluid boundaries thanks to the emphasis on practices instead of inert class locations, and is derived from the amount of 'capital' that humans embody and carry.

Field

For Bourdieu, the concepts of field and habitus are inter-dependent. In using the term 'field', Bourdieu (1990) sought to avoid a structuralist interpretation of social space that did not reflect the possibility of individual agency. Thomson (2012) explains that the field is the place within which interactions happen. By examining the field, such interactions can be located in context and the derivation of that context examined. The field is not, however, a defined material place, though Thomson also suggests that the metaphor of a force field can be a helpful idea: whilst not a fixed structure, it protects insiders from outsiders whilst maintaining certain rules and hierarchical positions. The field is, therefore, a work of human construction with its own rules and a distinct logic of practice. Although not a system *per se* according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), the field is a complex location of social relations, functioning according to a set of logic or rules, and is characterised by competition for power and dominance (Moi 1999). Each field operates specific methods of inclusion and selection; individuals must accept the rules and play the game. By following practices acquired in the field, an individual will acquire general 'dispositions' and know how to behave within that field: certain behaviours will feel 'natural'. The field is the location for the accumulation of the four types of capital suggested by Bourdieu (economic, social, cultural and symbolic; expanded in what follows), but not everyone will have equal opportunities to gain those types of capital because some in the field have advantageous positions. In this sense, the field can be the site of struggle – and, as noted previously, Bourdieu used the term 'le champs', which translates as 'field of struggle'. It should also be noted that an individual can move in more than one field at a time. To summarise, then, 'a field is a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated' (Bourdieu 1998, p.40).

Habitus

Maton (2014, p.49) explains that 'Habitus is a concept that orients our ways of constructing objects of study, highlighting issues of significance and providing a means of thinking relationally about those issues'. For Bourdieu, the concept of habitus explains a person's actions in broader terms than can be described as 'rational calculation' (1990, p.76). Explaining his philosophical position, he says that he is a 'constructivist structuralist' or a 'structuralist constructivist'. He defines structuralism as the existence of objective structures, independent of the consciousness and desires of agents, but having the capacity to guide or constrain actions. In reconciling this dualism, he makes an explicit link between the subjective and the objective and defines the consequent relationship as 'dialectical' (Bourdieu 1990, p.126). He considers the separation of the individual from society, or agency from context, to be unhelpful when considering social relations: thinking is always structured according to social surroundings, as noted by Vilhjálmsdottir and Arnkelsson (2013). The subjective and the objective are closely intertwined within the concept of 'career' (Savickas 2011), so habitus is a helpful theoretical concept because it seeks to overcome any separation by encouraging the researcher to explore how an individual's ideas, practices and ways of being can shape thinking, acting and communication: in other words, the embodied culture. The researcher is therefore encouraged to move beyond the fragments of a story and the limitations of what is said, so that a more holistic picture can be drawn.

Despite its wide citation in academic works from a broad range of disciplines, habitus is, however, a 'slippery' concept' and is simultaneously 'revelatory and mystifying' (Maton 2014 p.48). Reay (2004, p.434) describes it as 'multi-layered', thanks to its derivation from individual dispositions plus the collective history of family and class. No habitus is identical to another; this is due to factors such as the interplay between a person's past and present, or the constant restructuring that ensues when people are subjected to different stimuli or prompts.

For an individual agent, habitus is usually unconscious, hence Bourdieu's rejection of the idea of 'rational calculation' (1990, p.76): 'the visible, that which is immediately given, conceals the invisible, which determines it' (Bourdieu 1990, p.127). Again, this links the objective, via 'the visible', with the subjective 'invisible', because what Bourdieu describes as 'the truth of the interaction' (Bourdieu

1990, p.127) is not contained in what is available to be observed. Similarly, when thinking about the workings of an individual's mind, Bourdieu (1990) asserts that, when agents construct visions of the world, they do so under structural constraints. Habitus is, thus, the product of the internalisation of the structures of the social world, to produce the perception of what is 'natural' to a person.

Weininger (2005, p.85) identifies the causal connection between social class location and the concept of habitus, established by means of the relationship between habitus and 'style of life' practices. Within the habitus, class is lived and experienced through individual subjectivities. Habitus connects the past and the future with the present; individuals are not constrained by structure, however neither are they free to construct their own biographies. Class is lived intuitively and subjectively, but family background is crucially important because perceptions of the world are shaped by the family's place within the social structure (Bourdieu 1984). In moving from a Marxist analysis of the direct correlation of class to the relationship to the means of production, Bourdieu's model is therefore applicable to the middle classes. This is an important consideration for this thesis, concerned as it is with the careers of three middle class professionals. It should, however, be noted that for the economically disadvantaged, class is more likely simply to be lived, without the luxury of the subjectivity to which Bourdieu referred (1984).

The three professionals in the study are also women, so it is pertinent to discuss the extent to which Bourdieuian theory is applicable to gender. For Moi (1999), the place of gender within Bourdieu's work is 'undertheorised' (1999, p.268). Skeggs (2004) notes that the works 'Outline of a Theory of Practice' (Bourdieu 1997) and the essay 'Logic of Practice' (Bourdieu 1990) do address gender relations, and that in 'Distinction' (1984) Bourdieu addressed the gendering of taste. Reay (2004) noted that, within the theory, gender is generally subsumed by the focus on social class and that, where Bourdieu did write specifically on the subject, for example in 'Masculine Domination' (2001), it was not based on contemporary considerations because it was drawn from empirical studies conducted in Algeria in the 1960s. Notwithstanding these critiques, the conceptual framework is sufficiently elaborate to provide a means of comprehending the role of gender in society (McCall 1992). This is because the dualistic focus on the subjective and the objective resonates with feminist stances and methodologies; a further point of methodological convergence is Bourdieu's insistence on the need to study agents' embeddedness and embodiment in social structures. In so far as a specifically female habitus can be identified, Adkins (2005) notes that it has been moving from the

private to the public sphere. One reason for this is the greater visibility of women in roles outside the home.

Capital

In Bourdieu's use of the term 'capital', 'assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks or circuits within and across different fields' (Moore 2014, p.98). Thus, Bourdieu does not define 'capital' solely in the monetary sense of an economic exchange because, as noted previously, he specifies four different types: economic, social, cultural and symbolic. Taken together, these four components represent 'the set of actually usable resources and powers' available to an individual (Bourdieu 1984, p.114). For Bourdieu, capital accrues from inherited social space. This inheritance varies from agent to agent and individuals are therefore able to access and deploy differing amounts of capital. Habitus, in the sense of inherited social space, is therefore directly linked to capital.

Put briefly, economic capital provides agents with 'distance from necessity' (Bourdieu 1984, p.372). Social capital is derived from networks of acquaintance and will be deployed to extend an individual's sphere of operation or influence. In the arena of career, it is capable of extending horizons via access to work experience placements or other employment opportunities. Moi (1999, p.273) describes this type of capital as engendering 'relational power'. Cultural capital is summarised by Weininger (2005, p.87) as 'competence' and is derived firstly from the family and then from schooling. It takes the form of embodied dispositions; can be objectified, via cultural goods such as books; or it can also be institutionalised such as through the possession of educational qualifications as sanctioned and validated by the state. Skeggs (1997) notes that middle class cultural values are seen as dominant in Western societies. The fourth type of capital, symbolic, is derived from social recognition, that is to say when the other capitals have been perceived and legitimised, and value has been ascribed to them. It should be noted that accumulations of capital can have double value, for instance where the acquisition of substantial economic assets also has the effect of increasing social capital (Crossley 2014, p.86).

Within this study, an examination of cultural capital was of particular relevance, because it provided key frames of reference for individuals, such as ways of thinking, sets of meanings or general

dispositions. Ownership of cultural capital assumes importance within the professions, such as those inhabited by the participants in this study, because of the insistence on training that leads to tightly controlled qualifications. Cultural capital is also strongly linked to issues around choice and that is often viewed as a key factor in career, firstly in terms of initial career choices but then also when considering subsequent occupational decisions and the impacts thereof, albeit that for many freedom of choice can be limited by socio-economic position (Roberts 1977). Bourdieu (1986, p.244) noted that 'the scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family' and that social capital then underpins it.

Bourdieu's identification of three types of capital has, however, been challenged. Reay (2004) suggests the addition of 'emotional capital' and West et al (2013) propose psychological and familial capital. Those additions, it is suggested, would offer a better reflection of the broader contextual landscape than the three types specified by Bourdieu.

Bourdieu and Auto/biography

As discussed above, through his concepts of field, habitus and capital, Bourdieu offers an enabling framework that moves beyond rigid definitions – such as that of social class - to propose a more nuanced analysis of the patterns of behaviour. The application of those ideas to this study prompted an interrogation of what the participants – and me – were carrying without realising. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) noted that reality is often ill-defined, however the relationships between people assume paramount importance. Career narrations are often also equally ill-defined and the relationships between researcher and participants, in identifiably complex and multiple subjectivities, were highly significant in this study. In using Bourdieu's work, the study deploys theory to illuminate the wider picture that can be drawn from the personal and temporal narratives.

This aligns closely with the methodological choice to adopt an auto/biographical approach. As explained in Chapter 3, the use of auto/biography requires that explicit attention be paid to the context within which the study is located. Research interactions are examined at macro, meso and micro levels; issues around relational issues and dynamics are deconstructed. Auto/biography seeks to locate personal meanings within a cultural framework through the acknowledgement of socio-cultural realities. When narrating a story, a participant will tell of her past, present and future but

the story will be a re-presentation and, therefore, a reinterpretation (Reid and West 2016). That retelling of the past, the present and the future will be 'multi-layered' (Reay 2004), because it incorporates the individual's own conscious ideas alongside the collective history of her family and class; although the latter components represent a cultural frame, they might arise from unconscious thought. Hence, the idea of habitus is closely aligned to auto/biographical methodology because of the emphasis upon reflexivity as a precursor to knowledge – the need to examine the positions from which we speak (Skeggs 1997).

Motherhood

The final conceptual strand explored in this chapter is motherhood. This study was not established with the specific aim of interrogating the links between career and motherhood (in that there is no specific research question to that end), however each participant in this study is the mother of at least one child and the title of the thesis references the school gates. All three participants reflected upon the experience of motherhood and the impact that it had had on their personal career stories. It is therefore an important component of the study, in terms both of the context within which the research is located and also the thematic content of the transcripts.

It is also arguably another area of habitus (Bourdieu 1990) that is often taken for granted as a result of prevailing images of conventional motherhood. It can also be a site of conflict, both overt and more nuanced, invoking *inter alia* gendered and familial power relations. For Rich (1986), motherhood represents a site of patriarchal oppression whilst, conversely, also offering the possibility of creativity and joy. She describes motherhood as both an experience and an institution, reflecting its impact on the psychological and the structural. In linking motherhood to both power and powerlessness, she drew on personal experience within her own marriage: the text strongly reflects that positioning as well as the cultural and temporal context from within which it was written. By contrast, in works of popular fiction, the British author Pearson (2018, 2003) emphasises the comedic effects arising from the juggling of multiple roles by a middle-class professional woman. The metaphor of the juggler is a common image.

Above all, motherhood is a fluid social construct with broader links to the economic, political or social (Green 2004; Hays 1996). This link is brought into sharp focus when mothers choose, or are

forced by economic imperatives, to participate in the (paid) labour market. The work of Hays (1996) offers explanatory power here and is discussed in detail below, as are a more recent application (Ennis 2015) and critique of the work (Dow 2016). Hays (1996) noted that because working mothers found themselves at the interaction between the public and the private, there was an innate contradiction between two competing ideologies of motherhood. The first was that women should selflessly nurture their children and the second was that the wish to compete in the paid labour force reflected a selfish desire for personal gain. Hays (1996, p.3) suggested the prevalence of a 'public ideology' that women should be at home, nurturing and men should be at work, competing: therefore, 'the image of a career women is that of a competitive go-getter'. By contrast, images of motherhood often emphasise its all-encompassing nature and suggest that women who work can only, in effect, be part-time mothers. This is because 'good' motherhood requires that women 'do' motherhood, through performing actions or activities as a mother, in response to social expectations (Garey 2011). These can include visibility at the school gates or the need always to be reachable (Hertz 2011).

For Hays (1996, p.1), the notion of appropriate childrearing was often seen to be 'self-evident, sacred and untouchable'; it was therefore often a 'given': 'there is an underlying assumption that the child absolutely requires constant nurture by a single primary caregiver and that the mother is the best person for the job' (Hays 1996, p.8). Here Hays echoed the work of Oakley, who identified the 'myth of motherhood' (Oakley 1974, p.186), that myth being 'that all women need to be mothers, that all mothers need their children and that all children need their mothers'. The intertwining of gender and motherhood could, therefore, clearly be seen.

Hertz (2011, p.74) noted that femininity was conceptualised in ways that emphasised care, concern and connection to others and that this could lead to the assignation of what she termed 'family work' as the expression of 'real' motherhood. Linked to this was the notion that there were appropriate ways – even rules - of feeling (Hochschild 2012), however there were points at which a woman's actual feelings might not match the way that she would want (or feel that she ought) to think and, at that point, 'emotion work' began because the woman had to manage her feelings. The tripartite components of firstly, the situation in question, secondly, the conventional frame for addressing it and thirdly, the actual feelings that the woman experienced might not be harmonious, and this was because of the contradictions that were often at the centre of lived experience.

For Garey (2011, p.178), 'real mothers want to do things and have lives that are not entirely defined by having children'. When those lives also incorporated careers, the effects could be physically and emotionally draining because the women were often carrying out a so-called 'second shift' (Hochschild and Machung 1990). Hays (1996) had suggested that professional success offered more status than success as a mother, hence the compulsion for some middle-class women to perform the dual shifts of career and home, even where there was no financial imperative to undertake paid work. She also noted that the white, middle-class model of child-rearing was powerful, highly visible and well-articulated. That model proposed that, to be a good mother, a woman should be an *intensive mother*. The tenets of intensive motherhood were that it was child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour-intensive and financially expensive (Hays 1996, p.148). The study suggested that employed mothers felt a strong pull towards the 'outside world' (Hays 1996, p.136) rather than being content within the domestic sphere. Women tried to make sense of their individual positions *vis a vis* working outside the home and Hays suggested this to be 'ideological work' because they 'make a list of all the good reasons they do what they do' (Hays 1996, p.139). For example, a working woman might express fears of boredom if she stayed at home all day with limited opportunities for interaction and could suggest that such a scenario would be bad for her children. This reflected the need to balance one's own needs or desires against the socially constructed norms of appropriate child-rearing. Hays (1996) noted a tendency for women to theorise working motherhood in terms of the benefits that accrued to children because, she suggested, it was socially unacceptable to place one's own needs above those of the child. Rather, 'women often devalue themselves to put their children and families first' (Green 2004, p.35).

Historically, the needs of the child have not always assumed the paramount position, and, amongst the middle and upper classes, children were often raised by proxies (Glenn 1994). Working-class children were also often cared for by the extended family. This marked shift in attitudes to child-rearing - and the idea that childhood should be a protected, special time in the life course – highlights the need to consider motherhood as a construct of historical, social and material context and to remember that it may shift according to prevailing conditions. The links between motherhood and gender are also powerful; mothering is assigned to gender based on reproductive function and is therefore seen to be 'essentialist' due to women's characteristic natures and dispositions. Glenn (1994, p.3) noted that it is assumed to be 'natural, universal and unchanging', however cautioned against notions of universality given that, as noted above, more economically

privileged women had been able to remove themselves from some aspects of motherhood. She also noted the rise of middle class 'mother managers' (Glenn 1994, p.7) who were able to free themselves to pursue careers.

The study upon which Hay's work is based was conducted in the USA in the mid-1990s and reflects that historical moment as well as the middle-class milieu from which the participants were drawn. More recently, Dow (2016) found that Hays (1996) and others had reflected certain hegemonic ideologies, such as the assumption that motherhood would occur within a self-sufficient, nuclear family or, critically for this thesis, that there would be an inevitable conflict between employment and motherhood. She noted that many women had worked because of economic necessity and that it should not therefore be assumed that there was an incompatibility between work and motherhood: mothers could retain a dual identity. Earlier, Gerson (2010) had found that women worked to be self-reliant and noted that, historically, the work of African American women had been valued due to economic necessity. Thus, this group of women viewed work as a key part of their identities as women (Barnes 2008). In drawing those strands together, Dow (2016) proposed a new ideology that she termed 'integrated mothering', with the desire to stress that working motherhood was a normal state. According to Ennis (2015), although almost two decades have elapsed since its publication, Hays' (1996) work continues to offer a controversial representation of modern motherhood.

As can be seen, therefore, the notion of motherhood is a complex construction, drawn from and reflective of dominant themes of culture, history, economics or social processes. For many women, motherhood necessitates a compromise between personal needs and those of the children, whilst also struggling with 'myths of motherhood' (Oakley 1974), or the perceived need to pursue intensive motherhood (Hays 1996). Pressures to conform may engender feelings of guilt and lead to psychological dissonance. For Horwitz (2004, p.52), maternal guilt might be lessened if the dominant discourses of motherhood were questioned or even ignored by women, however she also noted that the pressure to conform may have arisen from other mothers. This illustrated the need for caution when ascribing frames of reference. Motherhood might satisfy some women and career might satisfy others; the literature reviewed above suggests that problems arise when both assume equally heavy emotional or time constraints, leading to what Hochschild and Machung (1990) described as a 'pinch' point.

That ‘pinch’ point is often experienced in terms of domestic work. Crompton (2006) noted that the essentialist ideology around motherhood also extended to domestic responsibilities, which were assigned to women. That was not to ignore the changing role that some men had begun to assume in domestic work, however Hochschild (2012) suggested that the home was still overwhelmingly seen as the responsibility of the woman, that the division of domestic labour was not equally shared and that clashes between work and family life led to a shortage of time for women and contributed to the juggling that was often characteristic of their lives.

Some studies have highlighted the intersection of motherhood and career. Thompson et al (2011) discuss the politics of pregnancy and work/career within a broad-spectrum text on modern motherhood. Unlike the present study, the work was based on biographical interviews with women as they navigated pregnancy, birth and maternity and therefore drew conclusions based on the early stages of motherhood. The authors suggested that women suffered a collision of working and maternal identities and acknowledged the need for reconciliation of those, such that women could be ‘good enough’ mothers and workers (2011 p.160). They also proposed that experiences of motherhood were shaped by factors such as social class, locality or migration, (the latter particularly reflecting the large-city location of one of their studies), as well as by the intergenerational legacies which exerted powerful influence on nascent maternal identities. The idea of ‘good enough’ spaces for parallel maternal and working lives referenced the work of Winnicot (1971).

Thompson et al (2011) also suggested that the type of paid work undertaken shaped a woman’s experience of motherhood and that professional women or those in senior, established careers, were more likely to return to work after the birth of a child. The reasons behind that were complex, but, as also suggested by Wolf (2013), women were likely to suffer what was termed a ‘motherhood pay penalty’ if they did not return to work quickly, in that the levels of their earnings could be seriously compromised after a lengthy maternity break. Women in the UK were said to be penalised particularly heavily when compared to other nations.

Miller (2005) offered a narrative approach to motherhood and focused on sense-making. The text explored the cultural scripts that women brought to motherhood. Within this, she noted that some women conceptualised it as a job whilst, for others, deep-rooted cultural ideas of what constituted

'good' motherhood could be at odds with their own psychological and social needs. She noted that the women in her research gave accounts of motherhood that were based on highly gendered notions of caring and child-rearing.

Further material covers the multiple intersections of motherhood with broader family life and work. Some of this literature was concerned explicitly to address gender inequalities and resultant 'strategies' for managing employment and domestic responsibilities, such as Crompton and Lyonette (2011), or the earlier work of Oakley (1974) on the gendered nature of housework. Another strand examines work-life balance. For Nippert-Eng (2005), for example, work-life boundaries were fluid for both genders, as were the conceptualisation and enactment of 'work' and 'home'. For some 'segmentors', home and work formed separate entities with clear mental, physical and temporal boundaries; others might be integrationist in character and made no distinctions. Both, however, were acknowledged to be extreme positions and Nippert-Eng was clear that most people would occupy a middling – but fluid - position on the spectrum. Clark (2000) preferred the term 'borders' to 'boundaries' because it suggested permeability. For Lewis et al (2007), flexibility and personal control of time were key factors in an individual's conception of 'balance', whilst Cohen et al (2009) explicitly linked the notion of work-life balance to questions of identity and the constraints thereon. Choices relating to the relative positions of work and life were subject to the same constraints that people faced in daily life, such as material conditions, power relations and cultural traditions.

More recently, Perrigino et al (2018) studied work-life balance policies and provision, for example on-site nursery facilities or family-friendly leave arrangements. They identified that such initiatives could also trigger negative reactions in the workplace, causing what they defined as a backlash. Such reactions could include negative attitudes, negative emotions and negative behaviours. Thus, they suggested that there could be a 'dark side' to apparently positive measures.

Though the idea of a harmonious balance between work and wider life was seen as desirable for all workers, male or female, the specific issue of women's work-life balance was debated by Slaughter (2016, 2012) and Rottenberg (2018, 2014a, 2014b). The former discussed the idea of a 'felicitous' work-life balance, achieved when equilibrium between work and home could be negotiated, and suggested that women should challenge norms around long working hours and obvious visibility in the workplace. The aim was well-roundedness and consequent well-being. To Rottenberg (2014a,

2014b), this suggested that any lack of balance was a failure on the part of the individual woman, rather than a consequence of social norms surrounding ideas of success, or of workplace culture. Hence, for Rottenberg, Slaughter was offering a neo-liberal discourse. As she put it, 'superwoman' now had to be balanced. Although these authors are American, and the debate was predicated on American middle-class women, the issues that they highlighted are relevant to this thesis. Their work suggested that issues around feminism had developed, from a focus on freedom or equality of opportunity, to a new preoccupation with well-roundedness and well-being, held as the normative model for middle-class women. Whilst this granted a freedom that was not readily available to women of their class in earlier generations, it did superimpose a male pattern of working. Slaughter (2012) suggested that it led to a separation, as their roles as women were siloed in the private sector of their lives.

The title of this study references 'the school gates' and the participants live in Greater London. In 2006, Vincent and Ball published a study that explored attitudes and behaviours towards the education of young children. The research was conducted with urban middle-class parents in the capital and reported on classed practices; the findings highlighted the anxiety and heightened sense of responsibility expressed by many of the respondents. In Vincent and Ball's analysis, those factors were directly related to the perceived need for class reproduction. One of the factors identified was the pursuit of extra-curricular activities: this was also a feature of the narratives gathered in the present study and some more recent work has examined parental strategies in this arena. For example, Wheeler and Green (2019) have researched organised activities and the development of children's leisure biographies, suggesting that facilitation of this aspect of childhood contributes to notions of 'good' parenting. Whilst applicable to both parents, it serves to increase the pressure upon maternal time and could be a further contributing factor to problematic work-life balance.

Emotion and Career

The final area of literature to consider relates to the impact of emotion on career and, at present, it is acknowledged as an under-researched field. Beginning in the wider literature, Fineman (2003) sought to demarginalize emotion at work, arguing that it was discernible in many aspects of organisational behaviour, including leadership decisions. For Ahmed (2014), reactions to emotion were representations of gendered cultural politics. This meant that emotional responses were often viewed as evidence of female weakness, being contrary to notions of rational behaviour. Moving to

the field of career, in 1998 Kidd identified emotion as an 'absent presence' within the theoretical literature associated with career development and then conducted a study (Kidd 2008, 2004) that explored the key components of career 'well-being'. The aim was to identify positive and negative emotions that were impacting on individual perceptions of career. Kidd's data were drawn from 89 participants, working in a range of occupations and at varying levels of seniority. She herself acknowledged that it was a limited study, reliant on retrospective recollections, and recommended that further research be carried out with more diverse samples. Hartung (2011) found that emotion had been seen as a barrier within the career development literature but stressed its usefulness in benefitting human development. A further strand of literature sought to link the notion of emotional intelligence to career well-being and success, though works tended to the populist rather than the academic. Goleman (1996) used the term emotional intelligence (EI) to suggest that an individual should be able to manage and influence his or her emotional responses and his work spawned a large volume of literature, principally within the fields of business, management and popular psychology. The central tenet of EI appeared to assume that some control over external circumstances was always achievable and, to return to Ahmed's work (2014), that demonstrations of emotion would always carry negative connotations. The literature also contains works of critique, including an edited volume from Murphy (2006), pointing to a contested field in which the very notion of emotional intelligence had been dismissed as a business 'fad'.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter has explained how epistemological choices influenced the approach to collecting and reviewing the literature. This is because the focus is on the production of knowledge via engagement with emergent subjective, lived experience and not on any testing of existing literature. To locate the study within the field, works relating to career were reviewed, including theoretical constructs with a specific focus on women, however no single piece of theory was found to be capable of explaining the careers of the participants in this study. Works on accounting, education and medicine broadly confirmed the contextual material provided by the participants and served to introduce some of the key themes to be discussed in the case study chapters, such as the lack of women working at the highest levels of the accountancy profession.

The chapter then examined the contextual situation within which the career narratives are located in this thesis. The work of Bourdieu was reviewed and critiqued here, with the aim of introducing

the tools used to support the complex analytical process and to explain how constructs such as social class are addressed later in the study. The review of literature on motherhood and the negotiation of home and working lives highlighted the contradictions and challenges associated with the positioning of career with motherhood and wider responsibilities, as narrated by each of the participants. Finally, literature on career and emotion was reviewed, revealing the current paucity of coverage. These strands are discussed substantively within the case studies, however firstly the next chapter explains the methodology used within the study.

Chapter 3 Methodology, Methods and Collection of Research Materials

Introduction

The previous chapters introduced the study and then critically analysed existing literature, to locate the research in the context of the wider field. In this chapter, the chosen methodology, methods and materials-gathering approaches are introduced. The purpose of this research was to explore the factors affecting the careers of three women, who were: in senior posts within stable professional careers; mothers; and aged between 45 and 50 at the time of writing. They were also my friends but did not constitute a friendship group. The issue of friendship is central to this thesis, so a separate chapter (Chapter 4) discusses it in detail. A complete disaggregation of methodology and friendship within the study is not, however, possible, so the current chapter introduces the key themes.

The project is qualitative research, located within a constructivist paradigm; it uses narrative methods within an auto/biographical methodological framework. Those factors reflect deliberate choices and the following sections explain the rationale for the decisions. The participants' descriptions and explanations of their careers and lives were of interest, in addition to the broader social and cultural context within which the women lived and worked. On a personal level, I was curious as to where the project would take me, academically and in relation to my own career. I was also apprehensive – despite having completed an earlier small-scale, narrative, interpretive study at Masters' level (Stead 2014) - because of the fluidity of the chosen methodology. That feeling was exacerbated because, academically, the focus of the study, career, also has multidisciplinary characteristics and the literature on career is rooted in various disciplines, including Psychology, Sociology or Business and Management. As noted in Chapter 1, I had studied History for a first degree and, whilst there was some overlap (notably in the use of interpretive methodologies), for the most part it was necessary to extend my disciplinary repertoire whilst also confronting the methodological challenges. The purpose of the study, however, remained clear as expressed by Denzin and Lincoln (2011b): *'Qualitative research* is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the

world visible' (Denzin and Lincoln 2011b, p.3, their emphasis). Thus, the research aimed to illuminate the particularities of the careers of three individual women, in order to highlight what might be common to other women in comparable circumstances. The focus on lived experiences also carried a requirement to locate the stories within the specificities of context and time.

To meet the aim of eliciting and exploring issues of influence, context and meaning, the project was framed by the following research questions:

- What factors have influenced each woman's career?
- Have these changed over time? If so, how?
- What meanings do the women attribute to their career paths?
- How far does the literature reflect these women's career paths?

These questions reflected a wish to encourage the participants to explore their career stories in ways that were meaningful to them and were therefore deliberately broad. The aim was to provide space for the project to take shape according to the participants' narratives, whilst avoiding the closure of possible avenues within the research such as was likely to have happened had more definitive responses been sought. Initially, this approach also extended to the theoretical underpinning of the study, albeit that a range of literature was reviewed before interviews with the participants began. That was methodologically consistent, as it placed the subjects of enquiry centrally in the research process and avoided the imposition of theory that might have closed lines of investigation and interest (Merrill and West 2009). As a result of working with the transcripts, it was possible to identify that the sociological framework of Bourdieu (1990, 1984), works on motherhood and a range of career theories were helpful in offering illuminating and potentially explanatory possibilities for the participants' narratives. That, too, was methodologically consistent, because of the iterative process that took place between the transcripts, the literature and analysis and interpretation of the materials. The methodological decisions thus flowed from the research questions; the aim was not to seek generalisable facts or features that would necessarily be applicable elsewhere but, rather, to illuminate the participants' stories and, from that work, to contribute to the overall understanding of career. This was ontologically consistent with qualitative and interpretive research (Hollway and Jefferson 2013).

Epistemology and Ontology

Within the broad framework of qualitative research, a constructivist epistemological position was taken, that knowledge could be gained inductively from talking to people and gathering material on their lived, subjective experiences. That required an acknowledgement of the relationship between the researcher and the individual telling the story and the issue is explored in the next chapter, which focuses on the place of friendship within this study.

Ontology is characterised by Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.12) as posing the questions, 'what kind of being is the human being? or 'what is the nature of reality?'. This study is based firmly in constructivism. It assumes a relativist ontology in that human beings construct subjective versions of 'reality', relative to individual experiences and influences. As no two humans will share identical thoughts, there cannot, therefore, be a single world view. 'Truth' or 'fact' for one person will not be the same for another because both constructs arise from individual perceptions. We act on our perceptions: from within literature on career development, Patton and McMahon (2006, p.4) explain that constructivism views a person as open to interactions with his or her environment whilst 'seeking stability through ongoing change'. Humans seek meaning through the ordering and organisation of personal experiences, but this need not - and indeed cannot - involve factual objectivity. If this is translated to narrative methods, Plummer (2001, p.185) suggests that 'the narrative of a life is not *the* life', because it is a representation that reflects subjectivity and temporality and is therefore likely to change. This point is echoed by Reid (2006), who stresses the re-presentation that occurs during the research process.

Addressing the notion of subjectivity, ideas about necessary detachment and distance within research were questioned by researchers such as Oakley (1981) and Haraway (1988). Taking up this theme, Harding and Norberg (2005, p.2009), critiqued and strongly challenged positivist notions of objectivity, particularly the view that 'good method is supposed to guarantee reliable research results; ... good research methods are supposed to be culture free, value free'. To counter those claims, they noted the importance of reflecting the 'chaotic and confusing experiences of everyday life'. Thus, research would always be located within value-laden, cultural specificities. Extending the point, Oleson (2005, p.150) noted that 'multiple identities and subjectivities are constructed in particular historical and social contexts'.

It is possible to trace multiple subjectivities within this study, arising from the participants, from me as the researcher/friend and from the nature of the topic, career. On this point, Savickas (2011, p.15), explains that an individual simultaneously has 'subjective' and 'objective' careers, the former emerging 'from thought or mental activity that constructs a story about one's working life' and the latter observable by others in terms of chronology/periods of employment, as evidenced by the official human resources record, or conventional *curriculum vitae*. Although a person is the author of her own career narrative, the story is never written in isolation and always reflects social contexts. It is therefore co-constructed between subject and context, before any intervention from a guidance professional (or researcher, in the case of this study). Within this, however, there is a need to recognise that career continues to have no universally accepted meaning (Reid 2016; Kidd 2006; Collin and Young 2000). Peavy (1992, p.220) explained that individuals would construct life/career histories from an 'ongoing dialectic of circumstances and personal desires and abilities'. The role of reflexivity, or critical self-reflection, is important (Savickas 2011; Richardson 1997; Peavy 1992) because it equips human beings to look at the present through the lens of the past and to re/negotiate realities. It also provides a mechanism for paying close attention to the contextual situation of the narrative. Bruner (1990) reminds us that human beings can construe other ways of being, acting and striving, despite conditioning to conform to canonical narratives – expected forms of behaviour according to cultural and societal norms.

Underpinning Methodology: Auto/biography

Auto/biography is defined as a methodology that aims 'to draw attention to the inter-relationship between the constructions of one's own life through autobiography and the construction of the life of another through biography' (Merrill and West 2009, p.31). By situating the study within an auto/biographical framework, I therefore made an explicit choice to embrace personal subjective influences on the construction and conduct of the research. Adoption of auto/biography demanded a reflexive approach, moving beyond issues of researcher positionality, in order to explore both my place in the research and the perspectives of the participants (Etherington 2004). As the participants were drawn from friendship networks, complex relationships were introduced to the research and it was particularly important to address issues of subjectivity within a robust methodological framework. The career stories told by the participants were analysed with reference to my own story and the narratives were, therefore, joined whilst maintaining a necessary degree of

separation. Those issues are further explored in this chapter and then in Chapter 8, where the outcomes of the research are analysed in detail.

Auto/biographical research is complex, in that the author simultaneously acts as subject and object (Stanley 1992), bringing multiple subjectivities and different roles to the ensuing text. In this research, the participants are all known to me as friends, hence friendship has assumed a methodological role, as explicated by Tillmann-Healy (2003) and explored by Nowak and Haynes (2018) and Owton and Allen-Collinson (2014). At the beginning of the study, I had some awareness of the implications that this might have for design and conduct, however it was only by working through the study that the ramifications of the decision began to be revealed. This was consistent with the exploratory nature of the research questions and methodology and is discussed more fully in the next chapter.

As set out above, the adoption of auto/biography therefore led to explicit links between the participants' narratives and my own. In acknowledging those reflexive responses, I sought to shed light on events in my own life and to gain insight into the material narrated by the participants (Ellis 2007). In auto/biography, the researcher seeks to apply multiple perspectives to the study of a life, thereby creating a kaleidoscopic or faceted effect rather than narrowly channelling a single view, as through the lens of a microscope (Stanley 1992). Auto/biographical work therefore has the capability of shedding light on the unlit or the unsaid. Developing this point, for Etherington (2004) the application of auto/biography to a research situation requires that the personal narratives of the researcher/writer are carefully considered, though there is no requirement that autobiographical material is included as one of the outcomes of the project (L. West 2019, personal communication 21 May; West 1996, Stanley 1992). To address such issues in this thesis, material that takes a retrospective view of the research is included (Chapter 9). The desired transparency is hard to achieve because the production of personal narratives is fraught with complexity. To explain this point, when interviewing participants, Reid and West (2015) suggest that whilst close attention is paid to the individual dynamics in the interaction, there is also a need for due consideration of macro and meso dynamics. The researcher thus aims to acknowledge the socio-cultural realities of the situation. To return to the metaphor of illumination, sometimes that socio-cultural context is not brightly lit because so much is taken for granted. In the chapters on the individual women, the work of Bourdieu (1990, 1984) is used for a theoretical exploration of this point.

Following the discussion of the epistemological background and the methodological decisions taken in support of the research questions, the next section examines the methods used to gather the research materials.

Narrative Methods

The research questions adopted in this study focussed on influence and meaning making, hence each woman needed to tell the story of her life and career and so narrative methods were adopted. The key rationale for that choice was that narrative could offer a bridge between an individual and the prevailing cultural system for, as Wright Mills (1959) noted, a narrative can help its teller to link the personal to the public. In seeking and writing about the participants' narratives, the aim has been to link them to 'an engaged social science' (Lincoln and Denzin 2005 p.1117) and, thereby, to avoid the solipsistic 'journey' stories told on reality television shows or in celebrity memoirs. In exploring the individual stories, the complexity, contradiction and 'noise' of everyday life (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2001) are examined, with a key emphasis on context, in accordance with auto/biographical methodology (Merrill and West 2009). In this study, 'engaged social science' encompasses methodology, methods, the context specific to the work (notably friendship, but also including other facets) and the thematic content suggested by the transcripts. The latter includes the extent to which career theory is able to offer a credible explanation of the lived and self-expressed experiences of the women.

The field of narrative is complex and rooted in different disciplines; definition remains somewhat contested (Andrews et al 2013; Horsdal 2012; Riessman 2008; Speedy 2008). For Plummer (2001), it is a generic term, comprising different elements such as story or plot. Squire (2013) highlights that narrative research has no clear beginning or end points and that there are theoretical divisions within contemporary narrative research, relating to event- or experience-centred narrative. The situation is further complicated by the wide range of media that may be accessed by the researcher. In addition, stories may represent internal individual states or external social circumstances, or be shaped by their audiences. Squire (2013) stresses the positive features of the experience-centred approach, particularly in relation to life-story research, but counsels against over-interpretation of data. The work must be situated, culturally and politically, and the analysis should be tested with participants if possible (this point is addressed in the next chapter). Salmon and Riessman (2013, p.

79) suggest that 'a fundamental criterion of narrative is surely that of contingency', because stories need to be connected in such a way to make them intelligible.

Goffman (1959) offers an analysis of social interaction, based on the premise that individuals play roles in dramatic scenes. This work informed the critique of the methodology underpinning this research, particularly in relation to my own role within the study and the effect of the ongoing friendships with the participants. Bruner (1990) strongly advocates the centrality of 'meaning' within psychological studies and emphasises the enmeshment of stories with culture: for him, storytelling is central to the construction of the self. His work offers one way of understanding the participants' career narratives: he argues that stories are used to make sense of the world. In our culture, storytelling often extends to fiction and, in the literature, Ellis (2004) provides a fictionalised account of teaching a course, using it as a means of explaining methodological issues. Clough (2002) also provides insight on how fictional methods can be used within narrative research in education. Although this thesis does not include any fictional representation of the narratives (or my own), some creative processes were used as I interrogated my own biography. This was explained in Chapter 1 and further consideration is given in Chapter 9.

Andrews et al (2013, p.1) suggest that narrative research has no 'automatic starting or finishing points', however a PhD is of necessity a bounded project and those boundary lines must, therefore, be drawn. Crawford (2013) notes that epistemological assumptions should be considered separately to research methods, suggesting, for example, that an interview can provide positivist or constructivist outcomes, depending on the type of questions asked and the manner of their posing. Given the constructivist location of this project, and the nature of the research questions, I adopted an approach that used open questions because closed questioning would be better suited to positivist research inquiry. As explained above, narrative methods were chosen because they best supported constructivist epistemology, in encouraging participants to tell stories that were meaningful to them. The work did not start from a position of seeking to test hypotheses or to categorise actions according to a set of fixed criteria: the aim was to 'tell a different story' (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, p.5). The Latin etymology of narrative is knowing but, arguably, in our culture it has become synonymous with 'telling' (Andrews et al, 2013), also with 'story' (Riessman, 2008). Narratives may take many forms including the oral, written, aural and visual, however in this project the career narratives are oral, elicited from loosely structured interviews. The adoption of this style of interviewing sought to encourage the participants to narrate their stories freely and without

undue influence from targeted questioning. In the light of the experience developed during this study, I recognise that adoption of the interview as the sole research method was a conservative approach, however the project had to be managed effectively and interviews offered the best opportunity of securing participation. In focusing on factors that had influenced career, the research explicitly sought to examine what Denzin and Lincoln (2011b, p.5) described as 'the constraints of everyday life'; at times it also demonstrated the constraints of the research project, contingent upon participants' availability and the demands of family and working lives. In their narratives, the participants told fragments of their career stories, however it is important to note that those fragments formed part of a wider and coherent life story. In this project, 'everyday life' is examined by means of the women's careers as well as the context within which they each live and work. That includes friendship as part of everyday life, as explored in the next chapter.

In career construction theory, as expounded by Savickas (2011), the concept of self is different from that of identity. Savickas explains that identity is constructed by a psychological self and the social context within which the individual is located, in other words at the interface of self, context and culture. The importance of the social niche is stressed, and he notes that Western society privileges the individual over the group. By contrast, Arulmani (2014) notes that, in Eastern societies, decisions are more likely to be made collectively, within family or community. An individual's sense of identity leads to 'choices and commitments' (Savickas 2011, p.19), in order to synchronise internal needs and external demands. Identities are processed through the narration of stories, however, in drawing on memory, past selves are seen through the lens of the present. As Horsdal (2012) stresses, it is therefore hard to assess the 'accuracy' of autobiographical memory, although 'accuracy' would not be an aim of auto/biographical research.

Previous experiences of narrative research and writing highlighted some of the issues that could arise when dealing with time and chronology, particularly in relation to autobiographical memory. Reid (2006, p. 30) notes that, 'a narrative is not the straightforward telling of an event but is a *re*-presentation of the event imbued with meaning from the teller's perspective'. Emphasising the complexity and richness inherent in this type of research, Josselson (2011, 2009) also notes that different researchers can look at the same material but reach different conclusions. The 2009 study also included an exploration of Josselson's own reaction to a participant and the consequent effect on the research; that chimed with the present study. A further facet of issues around memory was discernible in this study when participants used descriptions of their emotional states to describe

their 'meaning'. When considering my own autobiography, it was impossible to remember the sequencing of some events, even those that appeared to be significant parts of my story, but I could clearly recall how I had felt at certain points. Stanley (1992, p.47) writes extensively about time and the vicissitudes of memory: in examining photographs of herself as a child, she explains that her personal connection to the images is 'a *post hoc* construction of the past based on the understandings, assessments, conclusions and conjectures of 'now''. Similarly, the narration of past elements of a career will be imbued with those of the present and also the future. The format of the research interviews was designed to address the idea that stories may vary depending on the point at which listening takes place (Andrews et al 2013). That included second interviews with all the participants, to provide a time for reflection for both participant and interviewer and to ensure that there was an opportunity to clarify and/or expand upon the materials from the first interviews.

Narrative stories can be big or small (Phoenix 2013; Savickas 2011). Big stories are narratives such as life histories, whereas small stories are gleaned from everyday encounters. This research explicitly encompassed auto/biography, so therefore addressed the big, however my everyday relationships with all three participants also comprise both big and small stories, the macro as well as the meso and micro (Reid and West 2015) because the research sits at the interface of career and private life. Working with research participants who are also my friends brought this into sharper focus than perhaps anticipated at the beginning of the study. Small stories from the everyday build up to create the perception of how an individual behaves or may even lead to suggestions of how s/he thinks. When we say that we 'know' somebody, this can be how we derive that 'knowing'. Assumptions can then be formed, based on what we think we 'know'. Given this background, it was particularly important to adopt open questioning in this study but even having done so, in parts of the transcripts it is evident that prior 'knowledge' and assumption had influenced the course of an interview. This was most obvious in early work with Beth, where known sensitivities were not pursued. I identified this via reflexive analysis and, as explored in Chapter 5, it appeared there was no deleterious impact later, on either the research or the participant.

The overarching methodology and methods under which the research was conducted were explained above. The next section discusses the selection of participants and explores what took place when the interviews were conducted.

Selection of Participants, Ethical Considerations and Collection of Materials

The three women who agreed to participate in the study were an opportunistic sample, drawn from an existing network of friends. When initially planning the study and well before any formal proposal to the University, I identified several potential participants with whom I thought it might be interesting to work. I approached 'Anna', 'Beth' and a third friend by e-mail and asked if they might like to participate if the study was approved. They all agreed. Those three women were chosen because they fitted the professional profile that I sought to research and probably also (with the benefit of hindsight) because they were likely to agree to participate. This was because they had each been encouraging and had shown interest in my previous research and we had discussed the findings. The women were working in accountancy, education and banking, but were not selected for those specific professional profiles. As the project progressed, the third participant indicated that she no longer wished to be interviewed, so 'Angela', a doctor working in general practice, was recruited. The approach to her was opportunistic, as with the other participants, but some of the literature on the role of women within accountancy had drawn comparisons with women GPs and her narrative, therefore, had the potential to provide a counterpoint to the other two case studies.

The women were not intended to be representative of any particular group, occupational or otherwise, save that they all had well-established professional careers and were mothers. Further, they were not a defined friendship group, though most of them were at least acquainted with each other. For those reasons, the study was located in auto/biography and not in the field of autoethnography. The decision to work with friends was taken at the time for pragmatic reasons: the women were willing to tell their stories; access to them would be reasonably straightforward; and the stories were likely to be interesting and to generate rich and thick research materials (Geertz 1973), such that analysis at an appropriate academic level might be undertaken. I was aware that the course of the research was likely to be complicated and had tried to determine how to approach certain scenarios, such as ownership of analysis. What I had not fully appreciated, perhaps naively given that I had already completed a short study based on a friend's career, was the extent to which the personal and the public would overlap and the extent to which the research would draw upon the emotional landscapes of participants and researcher.

Before the interviews, each woman received a summary sheet explaining the aims of the project and then she signed a consent form. An example of the summary sheet is provided as Appendix 1. The information was deliberately framed in a general way and did not, for example, include any definition of 'career' to prevent any signalling of my intention as the researcher. This aligned with the requirements of the chosen methodology and is an accepted approach to social research (Hollway and Jefferson 2013). The purpose of providing the summary sheet was to try to ensure, as far as possible, that the participants could give 'informed consent', however this can be problematic in an interpretive study of this type, where guidelines rather than strict codification of ethics are appropriate. In these circumstances, the British Psychological Society (BPS) notes that the overarching principle must always be for the researcher to apply appropriate professional and ethical judgement (BPS 2014: still current).

As noted earlier in the chapter, Andrews et al (2013) explain that narratives can be identified as event or experience-centred, albeit the boundaries are porous. This research was experience-centred because of the focus upon the personal experiences of the participants, and on 'career' in general and not just at a fixed point in time, though here it is important to recognise that because each interview was conducted at a fixed point, there was a requirement to recognise temporal matters in subsequent analysis. There was also a sense in which parts of the ensuing narratives were already constructed between us because I, as researcher, had an ongoing personal relationship with each of the participants. In addition, my role as the hearer of the narrative was paramount, however, as noted, the effects of prior knowledge sometimes had an impact. This is also explored in the next chapter.

To return to Goffman (1959), the role of performance (explained in terms of dramaturgy) also influences the research methods: during the interview, researcher and participant are both performers whilst simultaneously both being the audience. In Goffman's analysis, this can impact upon the language used in narrative, as well as paralanguage such as tone of voice or body language. In 'normal' life, when not researcher and participants, performances follow different patterns. By designating a particular time and space as 'research' (and calling it an 'interview'), a degree of formality ensued in this study that would not be present in an everyday encounter with any of the participants. Formenti's (2014) question, 'Who am I to you and who are you to me?' reflects the movement from one psychological and physical space to another. Hesitation or even nervousness was also detectable, and each participant sought a cue ('I'm not sure what you want', as Beth put it

in her first interview). I was also nervous, myself, as I recorded in field notes. The first two sets of interviews were conducted after an informal meal at my kitchen table. Notwithstanding any nervousness, it was highly likely that each participant had given serious thought to the stories that she chose to tell, at least initially. In the first interviews, each participant began with a recital of career 'fact'. In the case of Beth, it was a lengthy monologue, extending without a break for more than a page of transcript. Anna rehearsed the early part of her career and immediately offered clues to her conception of career. Angela's narrative was recorded at her home and contained a lengthy description of a working day.

With Anna and Beth, two sets of interviews per participant took place at my house. Conscious of the possible ramifications of specifying a meeting on my own 'territory', with the power connotations that it might suggest, each participant had been asked where she would like to meet. Anna and Beth were flexible as to their preferences. As it was important to avoid interruptions, I suggested my house because I would have more control over environmental conditions, such as a quiet space for recording the interviews. In the spirit of our usual friend relationships, I offered an informal meal – pre-interview - on each occasion. These we ate at the kitchen table, where the discussion roamed over usual topics such as family, children, books or holidays. Those topics, in themselves, provided clues to habitus (Bourdieu 1984) and were perhaps examples of the visible concealing the invisible. Interviews were recorded in the sitting room, which had more comfortable seating. Movement into a different physical space also signified our movement into the different psychological space of the interview.

The first interview with Angela took place at her home and was recorded in a quiet sitting room, away from other family members, though there was activity elsewhere in the house. After the discussion, both families ate dinner together. The second interview was also held at her house; on that occasion I went alone, recorded the discussion then stayed and chatted for a short time afterwards. Angela was friendly but business-like and the interaction felt more like a formal appointment. I was conscious of her busy schedule and concerned about taking up too much of her time.

For each participant, the interviews were recorded as unobtrusively as possible on mobile devices, (a tablet and a mobile phone). I transcribed the material manually, having decided not to use voice

recognition software. This was because, in hearing and typing every word of the discussion, I was able to immerse myself in the materials generated. As discussed below, each transcript was sent electronically to the participant; hard copies of the recording were also offered. Each woman had the opportunity to edit her transcript, including deletion of material if she so wished. In conjunction with the participants, a series of aliases were adopted so that the research materials were anonymised. This was a requirement of the University's Ethics Committee and is standard practice in social research, where the overarching aim is to ensure appropriate safeguarding. Working at the far edges of 'friendship as method', however, Tillmann (2015, p.306) describes how, in one of her later projects, she decided – in a spirit of collaboration - to offer her participants the choice of anonymity through the use of pseudonyms, or the opportunity to be identified via use of their real first name, or use of their first and last real names. She acknowledged that use of pseudonyms was the 'standard and safest' path to take because 'personal and professional risks' might arise from identification but explained that she wanted explicitly to recognise the collaborative input from her participants. When offered a choice, most of her participants chose to use their real, full names.

In this study, the research design always allowed for a second interview with each participant. Initially, it had been planned to record that interview shortly after the production of the first transcript, in order to preserve - and indeed encourage - the flow of the narrative, however there was also an identified need to provide a period of reflection for both interviewer and participant, as recommended (in the career counselling context) by Savickas (2011). A gap of approximately four weeks seemed appropriate. Anna's interviews were recorded on 19th November 2015 and 7th January 2016, approximately seven weeks apart. (It was difficult to schedule the second interview any earlier because of her work schedule and then the Christmas break.) Beth's were recorded on 16th March 2016 and 17th April 2016, so almost exactly a month apart. In that intervening month, we both encountered difficulties, she at work and me in my family life, and I write about those difficulties in her individual chapter. Although no dramatic incidents took place between Anna's two interviews, she did note the effect that the Christmas break had had on her thinking, in that she had spent time at home with her children and it had precipitated reflection on her role as a mother and the choices that she was making with regard to work-life balance.

The interviews with Angela were recorded on 9th October 2016 and 21st February 2017, some sixteen weeks apart. The reasons for the delay were a combination of factors relating to family, jobs and health, on her part and mine. Again, this was not conducive to a free-flowing interview process, but

it did not appear to have an adverse effect on the research because appropriately detailed materials were collected.

The examples of Anna and Beth serve to illustrate the influence of timing on individualised narrative research. Had I interviewed Anna before her Christmas holiday, it is unlikely that the discussion would have elicited the same reflections on motherhood or her working life. Similarly, the two interviews with Beth came at a time when she was worried about events at work; on a personal note, I had my own preoccupations. The interviews therefore differed markedly in content and tone because of the influence of intervening events. This corroborates the suggestion by Andrews et al (2013) that the temporal and other contextual specificities of narrative should be recognised in any subsequent analysis of the materials, so that any conclusions are tempered appropriately. Here, it is also important that the nuance within the research process is recognised. The psychoanalyst Frosh refers to the 'core of self' (Frosh 1987, p.248) that runs through and integrates the component parts of a life. This study focusses on career, and the narratives were recorded at a moment in time, however the participants' lives are necessarily broader than the fragments considered here.

Research Ethics

As noted above, and in accordance with the requirements of the University's Ethics Committee, each participant received summary information on the nature, purpose and potential risks of the research process. To minimise the potential for nerves or worry, before the interviews it was stressed that her career story or stories need not be a 'resolved account' (Squire 2013, p.60). Each of the women was then asked to give her informed consent and to sign the appropriate documentation (see Appendix 1 for Participant Information Sheet).

Before beginning the research, I had read material on ethics within biographical social research (Merrill and West 2009; Plummer 2001); works that specifically addressed ethics within narrative research (Squire 2013; Patterson 2013) and more material on researching (with) friends (Tillmann 2015b; Brewis 2014; Tillmann-Healy 2003; Christman 1988). All discussed the challenges of working in the field and especially the need for pragmatic solutions were an ethical dilemma to arise. This appeared to require more nuance than a codified approach and I was concerned that such codification might not be helpful in the face of any potential difficulties in my study. The questions

posed in the application for ethics approval could not, however, be addressed without research and reflexivity; this proved to be helpful in highlighting the challenges inherent in the chosen methodological approach for, as Plummer (2001, p.227) noted, 'ethics have to be produced creatively in the concrete situation at hand'. Further, the notion of informed consent was problematic for, whilst information on the structure and purpose of the study could readily be provided for the participants, it was located within an interpretive ontology and sought to elicit layers of meaning. It was therefore difficult to provide information upon which participants could make a judgement because, as Squire (2013) has suggested, the ethics of interpretation are problematic, and it is also important to consider issues of the relative power of researcher and researched over the research materials. In this study, I sought to redress possible imbalances by stipulating that the participants had the right to withdraw at any point from the research; they also had full rights over the content and use of the transcript.

From the inception of the project, a key challenge was to determine if and how prior knowledge of the participants was used. To return to Plummer (2001), and the idea of producing ethics *in situ*, two sets of the interviews provided contrasting experiences. When interviewing interviewed Anna, I found that – despite our friendship - I had only limited knowledge of her family and upbringing. This was helpful in the research context as it generated opportunities to seek clarification and ask more probing questions. Whilst some of the questions were perhaps uncomfortable, they did not appear to do harm. This accorded with Hollway and Jefferson's work (2013, p.80) for, as they noted, 'it can be reassuring and therapeutic to talk about an upsetting event in a safe context'. When I started to work with Beth, the closeness and length of our relationship as friends meant that I had met most members of her family and was well-acquainted with the details of her home life. I was, therefore, aware of some sensitivities and there are points in the transcripts where I did not ask supplementary questions or over-identified with her comments. As discussed in Beth's case study chapter, emotion was the main theme covered in the second interview and connotations arose from that as, culturally, it is often seen as anti-rational, lacking in impartiality and contrary to 'good judgement' (Ahmed 2014, p.170). Despite this project's constructivist location, positivist notions of logic and reason seem to run deep.

Analysis of Research Materials

As discussed throughout the chapter, the aim of the study was to explore meaning-making, not to establish facts or generate theory. It was, therefore, important to analyse the research materials in a way that avoided disaggregation and fragmentation or risked changing the meaning (Hollway and Jefferson 2013). In line with the chosen methodology, the guiding principles were, firstly, to secure the integrity of the process and, secondly, that the conclusions should be trustworthy (Riessman 2008) and multi-faceted (Richardson 1997). There was no intention to prove 'truth' or meet scientific criteria. The interviews generated valuable biographical, autobiographical and methodological materials and, as suggested by Merrill and West (2009) and Andrews et al (2013), analysis began as early as during the first interview, when mental sifting and reviewing began.

The project was conceived to focus on meanings rather than to pursue direct comparisons between the individual careers, hence there was no intention to adopt comparative analysis. As stated earlier, the analytical process was iterative, involving constant interaction between the transcripts, literature and the writing of the thesis. The transcripts offered more material than it was possible to use in the thesis, hence key themes were identified and selected. To focus this initial analysis, a proforma developed by Merrill and West (2009) was used. It suggests several headings to prompt thoughts and organise material and encourages the development of links from the participant's words to auto/biographical resonances for the researcher. As a further important benefit, the undesirable fragmentation of the transcript is avoided (Hollway and Jefferson 2013). Sample proformas, firstly showing initial workings and then fuller responses to a transcript, are provided as Appendices 3 and 4. Before using the proforma, I experimented with a rudimentary coding system based on key words, such as found in grounded theory (Glaser 1992), however quickly identified that to be a reductive process that risked losing the nuance and context of the participants' stories. Most importantly, it did not lend itself to interpretive analysis or the exploration of meaning-making. Merrill and West's proforma (2009) offered space and flexibility and strongly encouraged the holistic consideration of a narrative whilst also ensuring that analysis was derived directly from the participant's own words.

The next step was to write a case study, developed directly from a worked proforma; in order to achieve that the analysis was significantly extended as part of the iterative consideration of transcripts, literature and my reflexive responses. Production of the chapters highlighted a further point of ethical debate, specifically the level of involvement that should be offered to the participants. That is discussed in the next chapter, alongside a broader analysis of research 'ownership' in the context of this project. The material is also revisited in Chapter 9, when my reflections on the research are offered.

Leaving the Field

Given my continuing friendship with each participant, the notion of 'leaving the field' was a source of some apprehension. Anna and I now discuss the daily minutiae of her job in more detail when we meet, but not the research; the friendship seems to have returned naturally to its previous territory. The situation is similar with Beth but, as Angela and I meet only rarely, the situation has not arisen with her. Where friendship is also present in research, this study has found that it is not realistic to expect to leave the field, however it is possible to move to different spaces within it. In discussing their careers, the participants also covered personal histories and intimate matters such as relationships with their husbands and children, their parents or their colleagues. They spoke openly of vulnerabilities as well as successes and therefore the research expanded the parameters of the known within each of the friendships.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter has explained the decision to adopt an auto/biographical methodology in this study and explained its congruence to working with friends in a research arena; thus, it bridges the Literature Review (Chapter 2), the next chapter, on the role of friendship within the study, and the individual case study chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). The use of narrative methods was adopted, to respond to research questions with a focus on issues of influence and meaning, and the chapter explored issues around the collection and analysis of the research materials, including the sensitive ethical landscape of the project. Notions of power within the research process were signposted, as were issues arising from the author's prior knowledge of the participants as a result of existing friendships. All these factors are taken up in the next chapters of the thesis and contribute to the methodological

contribution that the study makes to the study of career. The next chapter focuses on friendship and the crucial position that it holds within the study.

Chapter 4 Friendship

The opening chapter of the thesis introduced and gave an overview of the research. This was followed, in Chapter 2, by a consideration of literature within the fields in which the work is located, principally: career; motherhood and different parameters of family life; and the occupational areas directly relevant to the participants. In Chapter 3, the approach to methodology, methods and the collection of the research materials was discussed. Now the focus turns to friendship, which warrants a separate chapter because of the central place that it holds within the thesis. As explained in the previous chapter, the three participants were recruited from existing friendship networks and, as the remaining chapters of the thesis show, those prior relationships had a clear influence on the development, conduct and outcomes of the research. This chapter therefore provides a bridge between the key contextual material in the opening chapters of the thesis and the stories of the individual participants.

What follows provides an overview of the significant literature on friendship, in which two distinct strands are discernible. Firstly, there is work discussing friendship as a construct then, secondly, a complementary, but currently limited, strand that explores the dialectic between friendship and the conduct of research. Both categories are explored in this chapter. This is a thesis on career, but it is important to note that the relationships within the study were formed in private life and not the workplace, so 'private' friendship is the focus of the literature discussed below. There is, however, a point of fruitful overlap between this study and the literature on workplace friendships: Pillemar and Rothbard (2018) have problematised friendships that arise in the workplace, reporting that they can be 'dark' because of the inherent tensions between friendship and organisational life. Similar tensions are also discernible when private friendships are introduced to research activity, such as in this study. An exploration of the literature, and the findings of this study, indicate that positive benefits also accrue, however, as discussed later in the thesis, in Chapters 5 to 8. As a prelude to that, the current chapter provides important contextual detail to enable the participants' career narratives to be located within a wider framing of 'friendship'.

The topic and theme of friendship have been researched under the auspices of several disciplines, and thus the literature reviewed for this study encompasses studies drawn from sociological, psychological, philosophical, biological and organisational standpoints. Notwithstanding the intense gaze placed upon it, there can be a difficulty in describing the relationship: for example, the terms

'friend' and 'acquaintance' are subjective and lack definitional certainty, thus they have variable meanings and there is no consensus on what a friend is, or should be (Pahl and Spencer 2010). Two friends are therefore unlikely to characterise and describe the same friendship in identical ways. To illustrate the point, Gouldner and Symons Strong (1987) note that a 'close' relationship for one would not necessarily be seen as 'close' by the other because of the difficulty of articulating definitions. Traditionally, friendships were often seen in terms of political alliance, however contemporary friendships usually form voluntarily, with the expectation of mutual benefits. They may come to assume significance in enabling an individual to maintain a positive concept of self and thereby provide ego support (O'Connor 1998). They may also be marginal or fragile and are not governed by legal imperative or codification, as compared, for example, to marriage (Tillmann-Healy 2003). There is often a strong expectation of emotional benefit. The notion that friendships can offer important emotional support for middle-class women is relevant to the participants in this study. In the past, such support might have been provided by nearby family, but familial ties have been eroded by the economic and geographical mobility of the middle classes (Adams and Allan 1998; Allan 1996; Gouldner and Symons Strong 1987). Friendships are usually crafted from 'personal initiative and social chance' (O'Connor 1998 p.126), meaning that whilst a friendship is likely to develop as a voluntary relationship, it will be formed within the limits of existing structural lines such as culture, education, marital status, career status and/or socio-economic class (Tillmann-Healy 2003). Allan (1996) explicitly links friendship to the ability to access material resources at a broadly equal level, because friends 'do things' together; the relationship is thus always situated within a specific social context (Adams and Allan 1998). Cronin (2015) introduces the concept of 'domestic' friendship, formed as a result of the strong practical and emotional bonds that arise from motherhood. Such relationships form as a result of the intersection of friendship and motherhood.

According to Dunbar (2018, p.32), friendship is 'the single most important factor influencing our health, well-being and happiness' and its creation and subsequent development require the deployment of significant time and effort. Dunbar defines friends as people who share each other's lives more deeply than casual strangers: for example, there will be emotional bonds that lead to increased contact between friends. Thus, friendships carry meanings based on the tenets of, firstly, trust and, secondly, obligation. Trust is said to underpin the whole concept of friendship; in this study, that resonates strongly with Riessman's (2000) call for trustworthiness in research analysis. The notion of obligation within friendship points to the requirement that friends should support each other. Unsurprisingly, this can be a transitional and fragile space, not least because it relies upon self-disclosure: friends start by disclosing the bland or the neutral and offer more intimate

glimpses of self as the relationship progresses. The idea of a trusted confidante then develops from that of a social companion.

For McPherson et al (2001), friendships develop as a result of similarity. This results in the principle of homophily, exemplified by the proverb, 'birds of a feather flock together', and they note that 'people generally only have significant contact with others like themselves' (McPherson et al 2001, p.415). This has roots in antiquity, as it echoes Aristotle's assertion that we only love those who are like ourselves (Aristotle, translated 1934). At a practical level, we usually befriend people similar to ourselves because we meet them during the course of daily lives.

In the specific context of this thesis, it is redolent of Maton's description of habitus (Bourdieu 1984) as a 'slippery concept' (Maton 2014, p.48). In the chapters on the women's career narratives (Chapter 5, 6 and 7), I analyse the nature of the individual friendships in the study and explore the consequent impact on the conduct of the research. Before that, in the next section of this introduction to friendship, literature on the relationship between friendship and research is discussed. This extends the exploration of ontology and methodology that began in Chapter 3.

'Friendship as Method'

From an early stage in the project, it was apparent that the decision to work with friends would be influential in the design and conduct of the research, so guidance was sought from the appropriate literature. From within the field of ethnography, Tillmann-Healy's (2003) work on 'friendship as method' offered a structured explanation of the implications of working with friends in a research arena. This was republished as Tillmann (2015b) and may be summarised as follows. Drawing upon the sociological literature (notably Adams and Allan 1998; Allan 1996), Tillmann-Healy (2003) stresses the voluntary nature of friendship, noting that its status varies, and that links can be made between friendship and the concept of self. In identifying that individuals tend to befriend similar people, from within the lines of culture, education, career status, or socio-economic class, Tillmann-Healy (2003) thus also follows McPherson et al (2001) in focussing on homophily. She highlights an important methodological link between friendship and fieldwork, noting that a prior relationship with a participant might offer entry to a particular research arena, but also carries an ethical requirement to negotiate roles and navigate the ongoing membership of the friendship. An

important consideration is that research should be conducted at a natural pace for the specific friendship. Finally, she emphasises that, if close friends are involved in a study, the researcher will need to step back and analyse the self-other context critically. Thus, notions of confidentiality and 'informed consent' are not, for Tillmann-Healy (2003), the requirements of a static exercise but, rather, elements of a dynamic personal relationship requiring ongoing negotiation. As a response to the self-other dialectic, I kept a research diary to record reflexive responses to the interviews and subsequent analytical process. That material is used in the thesis to inform the retrospective review of the study in Chapter 9.

Tillmann-Healy's (2003) emphasis on the positioning and exploration of 'self' and 'other' within research resonates with the auto/biographical approach and is particularly important in this study, where the boundaries are especially fluid because, in addition to their roles in the research, the three participants were (and continue to be) an established part of my personal life. In similar vein, Browne (2003) finds that, rather than conceptualising research as taking place 'there', in a sterile and somehow sealed environment at some distance from everyday interactions, it should be regarded as 'here' and subject to the same vicissitudes as any other type of human interaction. Thus, research 'distance' cannot guarantee objectivity, as Oakley (1981) and Harding and Norberg (2005) also note. The location of the boundary between 'here' and 'there' is a personal decision, and in this study led to challenging ethical questions, such as that of the ownership of the research. (This is revisited in Chapter 8, where the outcomes of the study are discussed.)

Linked to the issue of boundaries, Brewis (2014), working within the field of business and management, finds that friends might disclose more to the 'friend-researcher' than to a 'stranger-researcher' and that the stories they narrate could be painful or cathartic. Ethically, there is a danger of objectifying (or stereotyping) friends in writing or of commodifying them. Brewis also identifies that the main issue to be addressed is the private-public dilemma, as notions of betrayal or disloyalty might arise if private matters are introduced to public research texts. As she notes, the research text will have a continuing impact on researcher and participant(s), even where it has been anonymized. Conversely, there is also a danger of the 'redemptive narrative', introduced by McAdams et al (2001), arising from a participant with a strong desire to 'help', who might seek to present a resolved account, or be anxious to provide what she thinks the researcher wants to hear. Further, and as discussed in the previous chapter, the effects of memory should not be discounted,

as stories may come to assume greater significance in the present than had perhaps been the case in the past (Andrews et al 2013; Stanley 1992).

The ethical landscape is a recurring theme within the literature. In an ethnographical study, Christman (1988) highlights the potential pitfalls to be negotiated by a researcher when working with friends. She discusses a project with fellow graduate students and comments in detail on the power relationships that ensued, via interrogation of issues such as exactly who 'owns' the research materials. As in this study, her work explores the links between the everyday and a research project, however there is a notable difference because the participants were classmates, not intimate friends, and so not as embedded in her private life.

More recently, Owton and Allen-Collinson (2014) engaged in a study where one of them was working with friends to evaluate Tillmann-Healy's (2003) 'friendship as method' work. The title of the article, 'Close but not too close', encapsulates their findings, particularly on the shifting boundaries of the friend-researcher relationship. The study also draws upon the autoethnographic work of Ellis (2007, 2004) in acknowledging the place that loyalties, confidences and other awarenesses have in making research spaces difficult to negotiate. Oakley (2016) also discusses those themes when revisiting a project, on women and maternity, originally conducted in the 1970s. She concludes that some aspects of the relationship between researcher and researched are still 'insufficiently acknowledged and explored' in social research (Oakley 2016, p.196). In highlighting shifting boundaries, difficult research spaces and the complexity of interrelationships, these authors acknowledge the inherent challenges whilst also stressing the valuable illumination that can be gained from this type of research.

Friendship as method (Tillmann-Healy 2003) was also used in a study by Nowak and Haynes (2018), within the field of music sociology. That study sought to shed light on the individual experience of everyday life and drew upon the idea of friend-informants within the research process, proposing a 'methodology of friendship' toolkit that could be employed and adapted by researchers. Underpinning the research was the notion that research space is not entered temporarily, nor is it an objective space. As demonstrated above, this latter point runs throughout the methodological strand of the literature on friendship and highlights the need for critical analysis of 'truths', or the taken-for-granted. In this study, the work of Bourdieu (1992) is used to deconstruct those 'truths',

as has been discussed in the earlier chapters and will be re-visited in the individual narratives and subsequent chapters. Nowak and Haynes (2018) suggest that it is possible for a researcher to be an intimate insider and offer a critical perspective, provided that an appropriate level of criticality is reached. This is in response to a sceptical position taken by Travers (2009), who questioned whether so-called innovative methods in qualitative research were sufficiently robust.

As is evident from the literature reviewed above, it should not be assumed that, by choosing to work with friends, the researcher will avoid pitfalls. Owton and Allen-Collinson (2014, p.289) cite difficulties when potential participants leave a project: the researcher must also 'let go'. The difficulties of coping with a problematic or even unsuccessful interaction can be magnified where participant and researcher already have a relationship. Even when an interview appears to have gone 'wrong', it might still offer a valuable contribution to the research in question, but it is important to examine the reasons for the difficulties encountered. Jacobsson and Åkerström (2013) offer an analysis of a 'failed' interaction but also note that benefits might also arise through, for example, the formulation of new research themes or questions. Relating that point to this research, initial difficulties in interactions with Beth led to a deeper analysis of the research methodology and methods within the project.

Friendship within this project

As explained above, the friendships within this project existed before the research began. A description of my relationship with each individual participant is given at the beginning of chapters 5, 6 and 7, but, as highlighted in the literature by, for example, Gouldner and Symons Strong (1987) or Pahl and Spencer (2010), friendship is a subjective concept and thus it is only possible to offer my own interpretation. This is a study of career, so questions about friendship did not form part of the discussions held with the participants. Later in the thesis, in Chapter 9, I return to this issue and suggest that it is an area where further exploration could be fruitful.

A point of contact between career and friendship is the positioning of both concepts at the interface of the private and the public, where so-called 'big' narratives meet smaller stories (Phoenix 2013). As the study developed, the blurring of those lines became increasingly evident. The previous chapter discussed how the selection of participants was largely opportunistic and based upon

availability to join the study, however it was only when in the analytical process that the implications for the individual relationships started to become apparent. One such instance was the need to explore what Stanley (1992) described as the unlit or the unsaid; all friendships will incorporate such shaded areas, however in this work it was necessary to provide some illumination. Not every shaded area was subjected to the bright light of analysis because, as discussed in the previous chapter, themes for detailed exploration were selected from the women's transcripts. One example of an 'unlit' area came from Angela's transcript. She was the daughter of Indian immigrants to London, and it seemed appropriate to explore whether strong family influence over her career might be attributable to ethno-cultural factors such as those suggested by Arulmani (2014). She herself denied it and explained her reasoning. Whilst, for the purposes of research, there was possibly merit in a deeper pursuit of the issue, there was also a need to respect the parameters of friendship and a participant's sensitivities. Given those circumstances, the issue is noted in the thesis, but the analysis was not extended. This offers one example of the challenge of mixing friendship with research and the subsequent requirement to establish a compromise between the needs and sensibilities of the private relationship and the requirements of the work.

Summary of Chapter

The complexity arising from the deliberate introduction of friendship to research quickly became evident in this study, hence at a relatively early point in the thesis it was important to locate the work within a rigorous academic framework. This chapter, therefore, explored the theoretical landscape of friendship in two principal ways. Firstly, an examination of the broad range of literature addressing the conception and definition of the construct showed it to be a contested area of academic study. Discussion of the amorphous nature of the concept presaged the complexity of a consideration of friendship within an interpretive study, as discussed in the three chapters that follow. The chapter then turned to the work of authors who, in addressing the intersection of friendship and research, have illuminated and theorised the complexity of the relationship. Friendship is a construct usually linked to well-being, happiness and homophily and thus the scrutiny of relationships in a research context is challenging, as also discussed in the case study chapters. Linked to this is the need for robust interrogation of self-other positioning, which is a theme throughout the thesis.

Drawing on the material on friendship in conjunction with the ontological and methodological framework discussed in Chapter 3, the next three chapters are drawn from the career narratives of the participants Anna, Beth and Angela, and tell their individual stories. This material includes detailed analysis of my relationship with each woman; that material is then drawn together in Chapter 8, so that the impact of friendship on the study can be explored fully. The individual chapters begin with Anna's story.

Chapter 5: 'Anna' 'Does Work Define Who I Am and What I Do?'

Introduction

This chapter tells the story of Anna's career, drawn iteratively from the interviews I conducted with her, analysis of the resulting transcripts and references to literature. She was the first participant in the study and agreed that her narrative could form the pilot study. The research design had allowed for such a pilot, with the possibility that it not be included in the final thesis had significant problems arisen. Whilst I was able to identify some areas where my approach to the research interviews could have been more effective (see section below entitled *Collection of the Research Materials*), the interviews with Anna produced valuable material. The full transcript of the first interview is included as Appendix 2; initial responses are recorded on a proforma provided as Appendix 3 and sections of a fully worked transcript are given in Appendix 4.

A full explanation and analysis of the research methodology and methods was provided in Chapter 3, so that overarching material is not included here. Instead, firstly the focus is on the specific interaction with Anna and it then moves to her career narrative and the thematic content that it suggests. This chapter should be read in the light of research questions which, to recap, are:

- What factors have influenced each woman's career?
- Have these changed over time? If so, how?
- What meanings do the women attribute to their career paths?
- How far does the literature reflect these women's career profiles?

Pen Portrait

'Anna', a pseudonym agreed with the participant, was 48 years old when two research interviews were conducted. Her father worked as an accountant and her mother was a housewife. She has two older sisters. She was born and brought up in the south-east of England and lives in Greater London. She is married to a fellow accountant, though they did not meet through work, and has two

children, a boy aged 13 and a girl aged 11 at the time of the interviews. Anna has a career as a tax advisor in London; she works in the corporate sector as a tax director for a well-known professional services organisation. She has A' Levels in science subjects and qualified as a tax adviser by following a training contract when she left school. In so doing, she followed her father and grandfather into the financial sector. This was not, however, her first choice of occupation: as a school-leaver, she had wanted a science-based professional career, such as veterinary surgery or medicine. Although she is now well-established in her career, at several earlier points she gave serious consideration to leaving the financial sector, going as far as applying for jobs and university places, and attending interviews. Throughout her narrative, Anna expressed her understanding of 'career' via references drawn from job titles and the associated roles. In parallel, she explained that she had, at times, struggled to balance career and motherhood and worried that, through choosing to place her career in the foreground, she had not been a 'good mother' because she had perhaps been unable to devote sufficient time to her children. Now in a senior role in a global company, with substantial management responsibilities, she felt that she had earned her material rewards. She described her career as having been 'pretty ok' to date (Transcript 2).

The Friendship

Given the methodological importance of friendship within this study, discussed in the previous two chapters, the next section reviews the relationship between Anna and myself. The specificities of the friendship directly influenced the conduct of the interviews and, therefore, the material generated. Thus, in this and the two subsequent case studies, there were clear links between friendship and the subsequent exploration of the research questions.

Placing this is a broader theoretical context, if Bourdieuian terms (Bourdieu 1990) are applied to this study, friendship forms one of the 'fields' because it is a (metaphorical) place where an interaction takes place. Discussion of friendship also offers an insight into the habitus within which Anna and I first met and were continuing to occupy. Further, the relationship was an important source of capital for me: in asking her to participate in the study, I had deployed my own social capital; and cultural capital also ran throughout the research. With those theoretical constructs in mind, I now discuss the friendship between us.

As was the case with the other women in the study, Anna and I are personal friends. As we are professional women who are economically and geographically mobile, this friendship has offered important emotional support that, historically, would probably have been provided by nearby family (Adams and Allan 1998, Allan 1996, Gouldner and Symons Strong 1987). Neither of us has family living locally. Whilst our husbands have met occasionally, the boundaries of the relationship are overwhelmingly between Anna and me and, to a lesser extent, our daughters. We met in 2008 when those four-year-old daughters joined a local school. We did, therefore, first meet at the school gates, though those meetings tended to be infrequent because, as a result of work commitments, Anna was only rarely there. Over the years, our initially casual acquaintance developed into close friendship, including contact via various means several times each week. We also meet in person frequently – sometimes in a larger group of women, but more usually by ourselves - and have taken our daughters away on holiday. When I was studying for a qualification in career guidance in 2012-13, Anna showed an interest in the course and it provoked discussion of work and careers. The timing of the course had coincided with a period of upheaval in Anna's own career so there had been some convergence of interests: this is noted as a further characteristic of friendship (Allan 1996). At that time, such discussion was unusual in our wider friendship group, where conversation usually focused on children, schooling or marriages. The group almost never discussed work, something that was usually (but tacitly) treated as a separate part of the women's lives.

My friendship with Anna developed relatively slowly in the early years. We were members of a wider group of women whose reason for meeting and common interest was the choice of school for their daughters. Although some women met very regularly at the school gates, Anna was rarely there as she had returned to full-time work after her period of statutory maternity leave. Friendships were tentative in those early days as the women tried to establish what relationships might form beyond the education of their children. Social gatherings were often organised under the auspices of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and initially involved large numbers. Smaller friendship groups eventually formed, and Anna and I began to meet more regularly. Adopting a degree of initial caution because we did not want to upset the dynamic of the wider friendship group, we began to make private arrangements and thus the friendship grew stronger. As can be seen, our meeting by 'social chance' then flourished thanks to 'personal initiative' (O'Connor 1998, p.126). Allan's (1996) proposal that friends are friends because they <u>do</u> things is also pertinent here. As can be seen, this friendship conforms to characteristics suggested in a range of the academic literature and discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Although this friendship arose because Anna and I are both the mothers of daughters, it was not a 'domestic friendship' (Cronin 2015) because it did not form as a result of emotional or practical bonds directly arising from (early) motherhood. We did not meet when the children were babies and the focus of the relationship has never been fixed upon the children, though we do frequently discuss issues arising from motherhood. To return to the image of the school gates, there I did meet other women with whom I shared practical support more akin to Cronin's (2015) categorisation of friendship. Some of those relationships eventually lapsed because of a diminished need for that mutual practical support as the children grew older. Some people moved away; others returned to work or increased their working hours. There is no longer a need to collect the growing children from the school gates. As lives evolve, personal relationships have changed correspondingly.

In the midst of busy working lives and family commitments, Anna and I regularly make time to meet at the weekends: we 'do' things together, to return to Allan's characterisation of friendship (Allan 1996). In recent years, this has increasingly taken the form of long walks, where we tend to review our respective weeks and, increasingly, to discuss our work. As stated, 'career' was previously a topic for limited discussion; this research project has served to bring it to the foreground because of the nature and volume of shared information. There is no longer any need to explain the context behind many given incidents in a way that might have been off-putting in previous years. This point is interesting in terms of ideas about leaving the research field; when working with close friends, that 'leaving' is very difficult (Tillmann 2015b; Tillmann-Healy 2003; Christman 1988). This area is revisited in the concluding chapters of the thesis.

Collection of the Research Materials

In providing an overview of the friendship, some of the shared habitus (Bourdieu 1990) between Anna and myself has been explored. The following section explores what happened when we met to record the research interviews.

Thanks to previous discussions, I knew a little about Anna's career before interviewing her for this study. That knowledge was limited, however, and extended only to the broad occupational area and the name of her employer. I had little knowledge of the general practice of accountancy, the tax speciality within which Anna works, or life in a global professional services firm in the City of London, the latter being far removed from my own working life within public sector education. That lack of detailed knowledge was not problematic for the study; instead, it was particularly helpful in the first

discussion, because it was not possible to draw upon predetermined ideas when putting questions to Anna. It therefore met the methodological requirements of the project, particularly in relation to the aim of exploring what personal meanings a participant might attach to her career.

I invited Anna to participate because, thanks to the friendship described above, I had perceived that she was likely to offer reflective thoughts on her career and wider life. It appeared that, for her, there might be a close connection between career and identity and that was of interest, alongside the relationship between career, identity and motherhood. Work with Anna was the pilot study for logistical and pragmatic reasons, including residential proximity and her availability when I was ready to begin the research. As described above, the relationship with Anna was sufficiently well-established to engender a feeling of confidence at the start of the project. Although apprehensive of the potential ethical pitfalls discussed in the Methodology chapter of the thesis, I was confident of the ability to resolve them together, should the need have arisen (Plummer 2001).

The ethics relating to this project were particularly sensitive due to the prior friend relationships that sit at the heart of the study, as explored in the previous chapter and revisited at the end of the study in Chapter 9. Anna's interviews were the first to be conducted, and I was anxious to do things properly (as I saw it at the time, according to my research diary). Anna and I agreed that the discussions would take place at my house. Whilst this carried implications for the power relationship between researcher and participant (Stanley and Wise 1983), in practice it was a pragmatic decision, made for reasons of mutual convenience. We ate supper beforehand in the kitchen and chatted as usual. When we were ready to begin the interview, we moved into the sitting room. This offered more comfortable seating but was also a symbolic action. We were inhabiting a different physical space, and this was an outward and tangible sign of changing psychological space as we moved from friends to what might be termed 'friend-researcher' and 'friend-participant'. These terms emphasise the links, overlaps and fluidity between the different roles and subjectivities. Anna had earlier received and read a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for the project (see Appendix 1). Issues around power and ethics are widely discussed in the literature (Hollway and Jefferson 2013; Josselson 2011; Merrill and West 2009) and the difficulty of providing information to a participant is well-rehearsed. Indeed, Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p.80) explicitly state that 'it is impossible to inform participants in advance, in ways that would be meaningful, about the experience of our kind of [narrative] interviews'. This was confirmed by Anna who, despite earlier

discussions of the project and her reading of the information, later said that she had not really known what to expect (private conversation with the author, 2016). The term 'interview', which I had used in my Participant Information Sheet, was perhaps unhelpful because of its connotations with job applications or appraisals and the implication that the role of the participant, therefore, would be solely to respond to direct and targeted lines of questioning. It is possible that that this therefore served to colour Anna's preparation for the initial interaction.

During that first interview, I took a deliberately passive role and Anna spoke fluently and confidently. She appeared to have given advance thought to what she might wish to share in the discussion and largely addressed the past history of her career, using that past as a lens through which to examine her present situation. (It should be acknowledged that the opening invitation, to tell me about her first job, might have influenced this.) When describing her career, she attempted a chronological narrative, spoken mostly in the past tense. That continued in the second transcript, up to the part where she had brought the story up to date and was analysing her current situation. Bruner (1990) explains that people often make sense of the past in the moment of telling. It appeared that Anna had started that 'telling' internally, by reviewing what she might say. She had possibly also made decisions about what she wanted to share and what she wanted to keep in the shadows, however this is a tentative suggestion, given that she had not received any interview questions in advance.

During the first interview, Anna drank a glass of wine. I had coffee. (I was worried about setting up the recording devices properly and then about the role I would play in the interview. Perhaps I had wanted to appear 'professional' - we would both usually drink wine.) Anna appeared relaxed and sat with her feet curled under her. I explained the approach that I was taking to anonymity and confidentiality before turning on the recording devices. The first interview was recorded on a Thursday evening, near the end of a working work, and she had said earlier that she was feeling tired. She did not appear self-conscious when faced by the recording devices and there seemed to be no impact upon her delivery of the narrative. In keeping with the chosen research methodology and methods, I had intended that Anna should direct the content and flow of the discussion. On the recording, I sound encouraging. When I tried to interrupt to clarify occasional points, she sounded irritated. Anna appeared to wish to control the narrative; she set the boundaries around what she wanted, or perhaps was prepared, to say and was in a relatively safe space. That space did shift when we reconvened for the second discussion: I asked some unexpected questions, she was having to make sense of her past on the spot, (for example when she spoke in more detail about her upbringing or her approach to motherhood) and she was less able to control the direction of the

narrative. This had the effect of illuminating some things that had previously been in the shadows of the discussion, such as her family background.

The first transcript overwhelmingly contained descriptive material relating to Anna's paid work and reflected her personal definition of 'career'. There was very little about her home life and the stories were all anecdotes related to her jobs, most notably a period working for an investment bank in the City of London. As the researcher, I sought to make connections between the particularities of what Anna had told me and the context in which her paid work had and continued to take place: to 'connect the fragments', to use West's phrase (West 1996). In the second interview, I tried to bring the context out of the shadows (Formenti 2014), for example by encouraging her to explore her family background more deeply.

That second discussion took place about six weeks after the first one. In planning the interactions with Anna, I had assumed that the purpose of the second discussion would be to clarify and amplify key themes from the first. I had typed Anna's words from the first interview, so they were committed to paper, and used them as the basis of more targeted questions. As Charon (2006) suggests, the resonances between words and worlds was being explored, however it cannot be claimed that I necessarily understood that process. Anna had spoken in a very controlled manner on the first recording and presented a particular image of herself as a competent woman with a secure career. She had barely mentioned her upbringing or her current family life. When asked to respond to more specific questions during the second discussion, she seemed to move into more difficult psychological territory.

When the second recording was made, again at my home, the schools had just reopened after the Christmas break and Anna had returned to work after two weeks' holiday. Before starting the interview, we ate supper together, cooked by me. She again had a glass of wine, but I had a soft drink. I recall the desire to be 'professional' and a visibly competent researcher. Over supper she told me that she had been offered a new post by her current employer. During the interview, she again seemed relaxed, though she spoke in a more considered and hesitant manner than in our first discussion. This was because she was being asked to respond to specific questions and control of the discussion was, therefore, more evenly shared between us. Sometimes she seemed to be

thinking aloud until she arrived at a response; certainly, she verbalised lots of the questions that she was asking herself, as illustrated by the following extract:

> 'Does work define who I am and what I do? Or, is it all those other things I've just mentioned, ie: if I wasn't around, I wouldn't get another job in two years? If I didn't take this job, there wouldn't be another one?' (Transcript 2).

During the interview, I suggested that there were several areas from the first discussion to follow up. In hindsight, this approach failed to encourage a collaborative approach to the narrative; it would probably have been fruitful to seek specific reflections on the first transcript, including input on what she thought was important. This would have better suited the research question that seeks to explore the meanings that the individual women attach to their careers. Having deliberately tried to give Anna space in the first interview, analysis of the transcript suggests that I was overtaken by some of my own enthusiasms: I had decided what I thought was important and pressed ahead with questioning. Anna did refer to the first transcript at times, so there was evidence, firstly, of reflection on the discussion and, secondly, that she had felt able to contribute her own ideas. This was noted in my analysis of the pilot study and I resolved to try a different and more collaborative approach with the other participants. As will be explained in the other two case study chapters, this was not easy to achieve.

Analysis of the Research Materials

The day after each interview was recorded, I typed the transcript. This was an important step in the analytical process, though not the first. As already indicated, my analysis of the first interview influenced the conduct of the second; further, it was evident that a degree of analysis was also discernible during an interview, when the conversation took shape and changed direction, depending upon the participant's responses in the moment. By opting to type the transcript myself, instead of employing a third party or using voice recognition software, it was possible to immerse myself in the materials. To do that typing, I had to listen to every word of each recording. I heard things that I had missed when the interviews were taking place and listened particularly for nuance. The typed transcripts then provided a tangible representation of the interviews and, together with the audio recordings and my field notes, formed the materials that were analysed in order to produce this case study.

In approaching that analysis, I sought to demonstrate analytical responsibility (Stanley 2017): responsibility to myself and the research methodology, but most of all to Anna, simultaneously my friend and participant. This was the pilot study and I approached the transcripts with coloured stickers and matching pens. I grouped content according to themes that I was able to discern, then tried to order them in a proforma as suggested by Merrill and West (2009). I found that the two approaches (colours plus proforma) were incompatible and placed Anna's narrative in danger of an overly reductive approach. There was also a temptation to tie up loose ends and make things 'neat', to fit my analysis of the narrative, instead of recognising and embracing Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992, p.19) 'fuzzy reality' and, crucially, ensuring that Anna's own narrative remained paramount. I therefore abandoned the coloured sticker approach and used the proforma by copying extracts of text under loose headings. This provided the opportunity and freedom to link diverse strands: Anna's words, apposite literature, wider impressions. The purpose of this was to ensure that Anna's own words were firmly anchored at the centre of the analysis. Working from the proforma, a case study was produced, and the chapter was then developed via several iterations, as I sought to capture the main themes of Anna's narrative in a rigorous and respectful manner.

This critically reflexive analysis of the pilot study has highlighted improvements that could be made to strengthen the research with the other two participants. In offering these reflective thoughts, however, there is no wish to suggest that the discussions with Anna failed to produce material that was sufficient to address the research questions. The interactions produced rich materials, albeit that minor improvements were identifiable. In the next sections of this chapter, the thematic content of the transcripts is analysed.

The Thematic Content of the Transcripts

The initial analysis of the discussions with Anna focused upon themes that had influenced her career. Several important threads were identified that appeared to warrant further investigation (one example being the influence of family) and early versions of this chapter reflected those preoccupations. On returning to the transcripts, and in the light of work with the other participants, I identified that each woman's conception of 'career' itself should assume an important finding of the study. Consequently, this section of the chapter begins with an analysis of Anna's ideas about career.

Framing and Concept of 'Career'

As explained in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the working definition of 'career' that underpins the present study is taken from Arthur et al (1989) and it allows for career to be the evolving sequence of events that make up an individual's working life. That will not necessarily always include paid work, because no restriction is placed upon the type of events that may (or should) be included. Using that definition, there is the possibility, therefore, of tracing a career from a participant's earliest work experience and there is space to incorporate paid employment and significant life events such as unpaid periods of caring. The definition also allows for consideration of an individual's subjective ideas because it does not restrict 'career' to job titles or to the features of a conventional curriculum vitae. Prior to conducting the interviews, a deliberate decision was taken not to share this (or any) definition with the participants in the study; emerging ideas about 'career' arose, therefore, from their own perceptions, not an imposed frame of reference.

From the beginning of the first discussion, Anna offered clues as to her own concept of career. When asked an ice-breaker question about her first job, she seemed surprised, clarified what I meant ('before a proper job?') then immediately delineated what she called a 'proper job' from school holiday work in retail, or assisting her father in his accountancy office. This was the first indication of where Anna herself set the parameters of her career as, perhaps unconsciously echoing ideas that career follows an ongoing developmental or staged pattern (Super 1980, 1957), she went on to define a 'proper job' as the first rung on an identified career ladder.

In so doing she apparently contradicted Arthur et al (1989) as well as more contemporary definitions of career, for example Richardson (2012), in immediately discounting the earlier roles, even though they were paid and would, therefore, count as 'market work' according to Richardson (2012, p.197). She noted that 'my first proper, proper job was … as a trainee tax accountant' (Transcript 1). The repeated use of the word 'proper' offers clues to the habitus (Bourdieu 1990) within which Anna's first career decision was taken. A 'proper' job would lead to professional training, consequent status and rewards, in a way that previous retail roles could not. Anna's father and grandfather had both held 'proper' jobs and her upbringing reflected that; as Bourdieu (1990*)* suggests, Anna cannot be separated from her family background, because it has shaped her ways of thinking and acting, as a result of the inculcation of ideas, practices and ways of being.

When a trainee accountant, Anna followed a three-year training programme and acquired professional experience. Having passed the relevant examinations, she was admitted to membership of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW). This is the largest professional body in the sector, carrying responsibilities for providing qualifications and professional development, in addition to regulation of the ethical and professional conduct of its members (ICAEW 2019).

The training and qualification regime within the accountancy profession is highly structured as, often, is subsequent career progression, particularly within large firms (Whiting et al 2015; Gammie and Whiting 2013; Lyonette and Crompton 2008). Anna has spent her adult working life in this arena and her narrative suggested it to be the dominant frame of reference for her thoughts on her career. For Anna, career has been defined and measured by a hierarchical sequence of progressively senior job roles, starting from a highly regulated training programme. In her narrative, she explained that, post-qualification, an individual's progress would be defined by job titles that engendered a common understanding across the profession: for example, a post as a Senior Manager, Director or Partner would easily be recognised and understood by colleagues, whether in the same company or from a different firm. Such job titles were the outward symbol of the post-holder's relative seniority and, for Anna, were very important as a symbol of recognition. She related an incident relatively early in her career when, feeling overlooked and taken for granted, she had asked a manager when she might be promoted to Senior Manager. Similarly, when changing job several years later, she rejected an offer where the job title did not reflect her substantial professional experience and expertise:

> 'I decided I didn't want to go back to somewhere I'd been before. I decided they'd only ever see me as a senior manager, as though they hadn't taken any value of the 5 years I'd had away from the firm, the learnings I'd had from what I'd gone through and I decided I needed a new challenge' (Transcript 1).

The theme of recognition and reward that this suggested is discussed later in the chapter.

As a qualified tax accountant, Anna had always opted to work within the corporate sector, as opposed to offering services to individual clients via private practice. She explained that greater rewards were available in the corporate sector, albeit that her husband had built a successful career in private practice:

> 'if you truly see a career ahead of you, you drop the personal tax. Having said that, my husband's made an ok career out of doing private client work! But I think if you really want to become something you probably focus on the corporate side of it - mergers and acquisition and you start getting to the more complex stuff and getting involved with lawyers and making sure that deals are struck correctly' (Transcript 1).

Within her chosen sector, she has always worked for large firms and, at the time of the research, her current post was with an employer with a high-profile presence, client companies that were household names and offices located throughout the world. Employees worked within what Anna described as a highly developed policy framework; those policies covered gender equality at work though, as discussed later in the chapter, Anna questioned whether that much-heralded equality was deliverable in practice or, rather, illusory (Coppock et al, 1995). Her role incorporated elements of human resource management, so she was *au fait* with routes to promotion. All those factors had served to develop her sense of career as a hierarchical concept; that construct could be traced throughout her narrative. It was not, however, the only lens through which she approached, defined and explained her career story.

Influence of Family

'We were normal!'

One of the key contextual factors in Anna's story was family. As she grew up, family had provided the habitus as well as the capital that she had drawn upon when making her initial career choices (Bourdieu 1990, 1984); family had thus provided the context within which she had exercised the agency of choice. Illustrating Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992, p.19) comment that reality is 'fuzzy', Anna's narrative suggested that this capital was simultaneously enabling and restrictive: the former because she had come into contact with the professional area that then became her own career, and the latter because, as she said herself, she had then repeatedly stayed with the known, despite different possibilities that might have taken her outside the parameters of her own upbringing. West et al (2013) suggested that the concept of capital might usefully be extended to encompass 'psychological capital' and Anna's transcripts echoed that point. She admitted to a 'fear of the unknown' (Transcript 2) but that might equally be interpretable as a fear of personal or career risk (West 1996). The narrative indicated that Anna felt conflicted at several points, as evidenced by thoughts of complete change of occupational area or a career break to concentrate on full-time motherhood. The material in the transcripts suggested that Anna was herself strongly aware of her own resources of capital, however, and especially valued economic capital. She was conscious of

material reward and carried a strong sense of self-worth in that regard. She also carried within her the effects of an event from her childhood, when her father had been made redundant:

> 'My Dad was made redundant at some point – I think I was still at school – and I remember being shocked because the idea of being an accountant was a job for life and why would he ever – he would never lose his job, and I suppose we'd definitely been brought up that Dad goes out and does a job and that's it. He'd do that 'til he retired. He might move jobs, but it'll be there forever, and his hand won't be forced. (Transcript 2)

Anna largely narrated her career story in a chronological manner, sketching influential characters and events as she reviewed her working life. References to her family emerged at several points, noticeably early in the research process when she had described her initial career choices, but she did not, however, directly address family background until asked to do so. Then, she seemed surprised to have been asked the question:

> 'My family background? Yeah – I'm one of three girls; I'm the youngest of three. My Dad worked and my Mum didn't. What do you want to know really?! We were normal! (Transcript 2)

Use of the word 'normal' recurred in Anna's narrative. Family was normal, as was schooling. Anna expressed surprise that she had been asked to explore such topics; this suggested that they were perhaps not often subject to scrutiny. Family might also, for Anna, have represented defended space, given her comments about her failure to be a 'good mother'. It appeared that she had not expected to discuss such personal themes as part of a conversation about career and use of the word 'normal' was perhaps a reflexive response to deflect the gaze from an area with which she was less comfortable.

References to her present home life with her husband and children did not feature until later, when she had reached the point of the story that corresponded to motherhood and, to a lesser extent, marriage. She noted that her father and grandfather had worked in accountancy. She explained that her mother had not worked after having children (even possibly, Anna thought, after marriage):

> I can't remember if my mum worked at all after she got married or if she just gave up when she first got pregnant. I don't remember the story. She worked at one of the Polys in

> London, doing admissions. She used to take her dog to work with her every day and the dog used to sit under the desk! I know the stories… so mum never worked when I was at school. She was a bit of a taskmaster. I reckon she was more of a taskmaster than my dad, in terms of getting work done. All my friends think I was brought up very strictly' (Transcript 2).

Whilst the details of her mother's actual job role were sketchy in Anna's memory, she did remember what she called 'the stories', for instance that the dog had sat under the desk at work. The family was not unusual in having a single income in the early 1970s, when it was common for many women to leave the paid workforce when they embarked upon marriage and motherhood. According to government statistics, in 1971 the proportion of married women who worked was approximately 1:2; this had risen from 1:3 in 1961 (Office for National Statistics 2019). For Anna, here, the visible appeared to be concealing the invisible (Bourdieu 1990). Factors such as the shock that followed her father's redundancy, as well as the description of her upbringing as 'normal' and 'classic', gave clues to her childhood habitus. Although her mother's situation was not unusual, the somewhat elegiac stories of her abandoned working life and the description of a 'hard taskmaster' hinted at unspoken frustrations. Anna was the daughter of a professional accountant, but she wondered aloud about her family's social class: 'I don't know whether I'd call us middle class or not' (Transcript 1). (It should be noted that the reference to class was at her own instigation and not in response to a specific question.) Although the family was not poor, she said that there was 'not a lot of money' (Transcript 1) and, as an illustration, spoke of wearing second-hand clothes. Throughout the narrative, she gave the impression that her parents' financial situation had been stable throughout her childhood, barring her father's period of redundancy about which she said very little: the inference was that it was a short period. Anna's assertions that accountancy was a job for life and that an accountant's hand should not 'be forced' (Transcript 2) suggested that her father's redundancy came as a shock to the family. The finances appear to have largely remained stable within the family's known economic parameters, described by Anna as 'classic'. Her grandfather had also been a tax adviser and that gave further clue to a stable social and economic position through successive generations: another source of the 'classic' lifestyle that she referenced.

In Anna's description of her schooling, she again deployed the word 'normal': 'we all just went to normal schools' (Transcript 2), then she remembered that her older sister had been privately educated for a short period and had attended an academically-selective grammar school, 'whereas me and my other sister didn't – we just went through normal [primary] school and then just went on to comprehensive [school]' (Transcript 2). Anna's own children were being educated in the

independent sector, so their idea of 'normal' schooling would assume a different character to their mother's; certainly, habitus for them would be qualitatively different thanks to this and other factors, such as having a working mother.

Anna's use of the word 'classic' implied that the family's standard of living was not unusual for the area in which they lived. She chose travel as one illustration of their material position. By contrast to her own upbringing, during which money had apparently been somewhat limited and foreign holidays unknown, she spoke of a wealthy uncle whose lifestyle she had aspired to emulate. Whilst travel habits have changed significantly since Anna's childhood and it is now far more common for families to travel abroad, she noted that this rich uncle was well-travelled back in the 1970s and 1980s, whilst her family was taking holidays in caravans:

> 'My Dad had a brother who did earn a lot of money. He did live in France and... the two brothers were chalk and cheese – just the two of them, very different. He had no kids; Dad had three. He went and travelled the world, had glamorous girlfriends and a glamorous wife and I did look at that. Funnily the family have talked about me before in terms of Uncle Fred and Uncle Fred always thought I would never have a family because I always said 'No, no – I want to do what you're doing. I want to have nice houses. I want to travel. I want to have all this at my feet, so I'm going to become an exec director like you are'. Never did.' (Transcript 2)

Some members of her family had also suggested to the young Anna that she would grow up to be like her uncle. As a senior professional in a global firm, Anna was herself required to travel abroad on business. She was therefore able to point to success in a way that resonated with her childhood, despite the comment above that she 'never did' reach the career heights of her uncle:

> I've been to Indonesia; I've been to Philadelphia. I've been to Italy, I've been to Poland, I've been to … where else have I been? I've just been all over the place and yes Ireland – I know these are just nearby places, but I basically have gone to places – Singapore! – all over the place with that particular role. Places I would just never have envisaged when I joined [Company] and that just makes the role good as far as I'm concerned. Yes, I didn't really see the places that much, but I have also found that quite exciting' (Transcript 1).

> 'It's quite a safe environment to travel in. I never wanted to go backpacking round the world. I certainly would never travel on my own in any situation other than a business trip when you know you're safe. You know what plane you're getting on. Someone's given you an itinerary. You know that there's this car that's going to be waiting for you. The car's going to take you to the hotel. You probably don't have to leave the hotel. I probably haven't done much exploration where I've been' (Transcript 2).

This was a noticeably animated section of her career story, where she spoke with enthusiasm. In addition to highlighting the destinations and describing the comfort, ease and safety, she said that she liked to have a carefully-planned itinerary and, as she described it, enjoyed looking out of the window and seeing different parts of the world, though she noted that she did not usually explore the places that she was visiting because she was travelling alone. She explained that she liked to discuss the sights and sounds of a foreign country with somebody else, so that it became a joint experience rather than something that was only in her head. Here, there was a suggestion of an outsider, not fully comfortable in the place where career progression had taken her.

If her uncle had provided a somewhat distant career model, Anna specifically identified her father as the primary influence on her decision to train as an accountant. As she put it, 'why else would I even have thought about that [career]?' (Transcript 1). In addition to offering a role model, as a working accountant her father had also provided practical experience of financial services work as she had helped in the office during school holidays. Although Anna was now a third-generation tax accountant in her family, she said that she had not realised that her grandfather had also worked in the same field until several years after beginning her own career. Direct influence from his job should, therefore, probably be discounted. Notwithstanding this caveat, there was clear evidence in the narrative of occupational inheritance and absorption of work-related values and attitudes, from the 'taskmaster' approach of her mother, to her early work experience with her father.

In referencing her family background indirectly in the first transcript, and then addressing it directly in the second (when prompted by direct questioning), Anna provided important clues to the complex meanings that she attached to her career. In so doing, she offered insights to the social, cultural and economic capitals (Bourdieu 1984) carried from her upbringing that, together with internalised norms, made up her embodied culture. She asked herself questions about social class but was not able to provide a definitive response. It was possible to locate Anna's birth and upbringing within the middle class, thanks to her father's occupational location in one of the professions, but she herself had not make that connection. By using the lens of capital, a more nuanced exploration could be undertaken.

Having pieced together some of the fragments and offered an explanation of the context that Anna's family background brings to her career story, the chapter now examines the key, specific influences on that career.

The Decision to Train as a Tax Accountant

'I became qualified with letters after my name and it was clear what was going to happen'

When exploring her decision to begin an accountancy training contract as an eighteen-year-old school leaver, Anna explained that her A' level results had been sufficiently high to secure a university place, however not in the professional areas that were then attractive to her, namely veterinary surgery or medicine – both highly competitive fields requiring the highest grades at A' level. Twice in the recording, she said that she was 'not intelligent enough' (Transcript 1) to pursue either of those careers so had not made the relevant applications:

> 'I did science at school and I really wanted to be a vet. Not intelligent enough to be a vet. Then I wanted to be a doctor. Still not intelligent enough to be a doctor, so applied to be a nurse. Had a number of interviews for nursing but my father was an accountant and I used to help him in the summer holidays as well and I went to the careers office in [home town] and looked through their vacancies and there was a vacancy for a trainee tax accountant in London and I applied for that as well as my nursing job and when – once I'd got both – I could have been a nurse at XX Hospital – I chose the accountant because, very mercenary of me, it offered more money. It offered that within 3 years I would have doubled my salary. So I went that route' (Transcript 1).

Whilst describing her decision as 'mercenary', she also acknowledged that it was an occupational area with which she was familiar because she had worked in her father's office. She also explicitly said that it had been attractive because she could do it whilst earning and without going to university. Again, these were clues to Anna's motivations and habitus (Bourdieu 1984). In 1985, when Anna was eighteen, no member of her immediate family had completed tertiary education. That was not an unusual situation, for by 1990 only 19.3% of the UK population had attended university (Parliament. House of Commons 2012). One of her older sisters had started a degree course but left to get married. The family pattern was firmly focussed on the world of work. Reflecting on her decision to eschew university, Anna said that 'no one at home was encouraging me to do it and I didn't know how to do it' (Transcript 1). There was no reference in the narrative to careers advice or guidance from school, however despite Anna's rather blunt assessment of her own capabilities, it appeared that a realistic decision had been taken with regard to veterinary surgery or

medicine. Later, in response to direct questioning, she said that, in her view, her parents would have been supportive, had the impetus to go on to higher education come from her: 'if I'd said I really, really want to do it, I'm sure they'd have been supportive' (Transcript 2). Anna said that she had not wanted to go to university 'by herself' and explained that a local friend had moved away at a crucial point during her post-16 education. That friend's parents had expected their daughter to follow her siblings into higher education and Anna felt that she herself was also likely to have followed that lead. She did note that she and her friend were unlikely to have attended the same institution, but implied that the encouragement to start the application process might have led her to university.

This section of the narrative suggested a somewhat diffident teenager who considered that she was not sufficiently bright to pursue her first choice of career, or sufficiently confident to move beyond the established educational pattern within her family. Her academic ability had led to a different educational route to most of her close school friends and then her friend at sixth form college had moved away. As she put it, 'I was left on my own' (Transcript 1). Although she had applied to train as a nurse, she appeared to have recognised that a career in nursing would not have offered the same levels of material reward as a medical or veterinary career and, further, she considered that it occupied different professional territory. Her enthusiasm for nursing was correspondingly weaker: 'I could have been a nurse [but I chose to be an] accountant. Looking back, I think that whilst I had aspirations to be a doctor or vet, a nurse is something completely different. I'm not actually sure that it would ever have inspired me the way I wanted to be inspired' (Transcript 1). The need to earn money had been paramount: 'not a lot of money in the family so actually I had to go out and earn some' (Transcript 1). This was a strong motivational factor for Anna and offers an appropriate point to explore the theme of recognition and reward.

Recognition and Reward

'A sense of purpose and a sense of recognition and reward'

Financial reward featured as a strong motivating factor at several points in the transcripts and there were clear links to family background, illustrating the intertwined nature of Anna's career themes. Her narrative suggested that, even as an eighteen-year-old school leaver, she had been fully cognisant of the material rewards that could be gained from entrance to the profession (and subsequent qualification) via a large firm in London. As the daughter of an accountant, this should not perhaps be surprising; however, as explained above, her father's career had incorporated a

period of redundancy and, given her comments about the pressing need to earn money, the family finances were possibly not entirely secure. In the second discussion, I asked Anna to talk about her family background, so that I might reach an understanding of the broader picture of her upbringing. She again said that:

> 'we didn't have much money when I grew up – we certainly weren't poor… we were just 'classic'… my dad earned an ok salary, but they had to bring up three girls, so it doesn't go very far – we went on caravan holidays, we never went abroad. We certainly couldn't have afforded to go abroad. I had hand-me-downs all the time – went to jumble sales to get my clothes, that sort of stuff. I don't think it's done me any harm. That's the reality'. (Transcript 2)

She then made a direct link to her present ability to earn a high salary, thanks to her career status. The potential for high earnings had been a consistent factor in persuading Anna to remain in the profession: she herself highlighted satisfaction at having successfully negotiated a challenging training regime and noted she had worked long hours over many years to secure her present material rewards. Despite this, Anna disclosed her repeated questioning of whether she should change direction and perhaps take up a career within a broadly scientific area. This suggested that, material rewards aside, accountancy was not providing complete career satisfaction. Before she secured full professional qualification as a tax accountant, she had been offered a university place to read Biology. At around the same time, she had also applied for laboratory-based jobs. After the births of her children, she developed an interest in training as a midwife or in nutrition and diet. Anna had never taken decisive action in pursuit of any of these alternative career scenarios, always remaining in tax accountancy, where the work was familiar ('I stick with what I know', Transcript 1) and she could earn what she described as her deserved rewards.

Although remaining within her known field, Anna had enjoyed variety within her career. Most of her working life had been spent within large professional services firms, but she had also enjoyed a period in an 'in-house' role for a foreign bank. Her career had progressed steadily, if not always as rapidly as she would have wished. In her narrative, she expressed some frustration at the pace of career progress, especially when analysed alongside her long working hours. She identified that she had, at times, passively awaited the recognition that she felt she had earned. This passivity had also extended to her own input to the direction of her career, which she described as reactive rather than characterised by active agency. Again, the narrative suggested diffidence: she described how she had approached her line manager to raise the subject of promotion to senior manager:

> ‘I got to manager very quickly and then I didn’t progress for years. The manager, I remember going to an appraisal with him once, and I said, “am I ever going to make senior manager?” and he – he just looked at me and said, “I thought you already were”. I think that… that sort of, I think it proves that I’ve always been one of those sort of people – I don’t ever ask for money. You know a lot of people would go into an appraisal saying I deserve this, I deserve a promotion, I deserve that. I’ve always waited for things to happen to me and I think that probably tells the rest of my career: the waiting for things to happen to determine what happens’ (Transcript 1).

There was an apparent tension in the narrative here, between the recognition that Anna craved and a reluctance to pursue it. Her upbringing – what was ‘normal’ to her, to use her own words – seemed to have made a virtue of not complaining, of absorbing slights such as poor service. In the extract above, Anna seemed to be imposing that mindset upon career happenstance (Krumboltz 2009; Mitchell et al 1999). She also implied that what she presented as a form of inertia had had a solely negative impact on her career trajectory. Whilst it had impacted upon the speed of some of her initial promotions, the waiting ‘for things to happen’ had also, however, proved beneficial, as when she joined an investment bank on the recommendation of a senior colleague:

> ‘I worked on a particular account and I was completely up to date – I knew exactly what was happening, had a schedule that said what was happening and when it was happening and I was very organised... and I said to a partner that I really thought that this account needed more care and attention from a partner because no-one was very interested in it and she said ‘well, I’m happy to look at it with you’. So we had a look at this particular account – it was an Australian company and they’d introduced a new department in London – and she cold-called the department in London and said ‘I really think you need more help. I’ve got a senior manager here who says you need more help – you’re not looking after what you should’. I was introduced to the new Head of Tax in Europe for this particular bank and he recognised that the business was growing too quickly, and he said, ‘what we need, Anna, is you!’ Again, that was Anna moving on to the next job because this Head of Tax said, ‘you’re so organised, you know exactly what we’re doing and how we’re doing it. I need you in my business’. (Transcript 1)

Anna’s reluctance to put herself forward assertively for promotion, or actively to seek enhanced financial rewards, echoed her expressed inability to apply for a university place when she left school. In another part of the narrative, she explained that her family hated to complain (the example she used was that they would never make a fuss about bad service in a restaurant) and ‘got on’ with things. Another interpretation could be that they lacked the confidence to complain or to offer opinions. The narrative indicated that elements of those family traits were still with Anna and had

influenced her career. She did, however, express personal resilience and a willingness to 'keep on keeping on' in the face of career adversity or inertia.

Although Anna discussed the difficulties that she faced in her various posts ('there were certain people who wouldn't deal with me at work… [because I was] a woman', Transcript 1), the narrative also revealed singlemindedness in her pursuit of career. Despite setbacks such as failing a key examination or redundancy, and also through two pregnancies, she had doggedly continued to work. When she had been made redundant by the bank, her husband had suggested that she should take time away from the workplace to be at home with the children, but she had rejected the idea and instead applied for posts in the corporate environment. Later in the chapter, the dilemma she faced around work/home tensions and how she fretted about her failure to be a 'good mother' are discussed. For Anna, the struggle for career recognition appeared to have taken precedence over recognition as a mother. The idea of inter-role conflict is present within the career literature with, for example, Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) noting that working women are often caught in a conflict of priority between the occupational and the familial. The conflict is especially acute because either work or family can be seen as the normative priority and it is easy to fall into a situation of role overload. Whilst career places additional demands on women, there is no commensurate decrease in social or family demands.

There were signs in the narrative that Anna had begun to pursue her own sense of worth. When made redundant by the bank, she had decided to return to the professional services arena and, following an onerous recruitment procedure, had subsequently received offers from two firms. The salaries were broadly equal, and one was with a previous employer, but with the same job title that she had held five years earlier. Given the hierarchical nature of careers within the financial sector, in Anna's view the job that had been offered indicated that no recognition was being attached to her learning and development in the intervening period; therefore, she rejected it in favour of a post with a new company, offered at director level. She said in Transcript 2 that 'the honour of being asked to be a director swung it'. Secure in that post as a director, during the interview Anna explained how she had become more confident in her role, for example having no fear of speaking to large groups of colleagues or clients (Transcript 2).

That self-confidence might be attributable to the recognition from others that had bestowed legitimacy on her endeavours, and the professional identity that she had worked towards, often – as she said – at the expense of her family life. In her current position, Anna was recognised for her

work, via job title, status and income. She also drew self-respect from her work and explained what had happened when she was working at the bank, after most of her colleagues had left following the financial crash. In Transcript 1, she said that she 'became a bit important and it became quite nice to be – so big bosses in Australia that historically probably hadn't really noticed me suddenly were phoning me up at home and saying "do you know what happens here, and what this is, Anna, and what that is?" and it gave you a sense of purpose and a sense of responsibility and worth'. Here, Anna expressed how being valued by others had impacted positively on her confidence. She was eloquent when describing her positive working relationship with a major global client and pleased that her contact would be willing to give her a 'brilliant reference' (Transcript 1).

Women at Home and at Work

'She could handle herself in a room full of men and they would listen to her'

In both transcripts, Anna commented on the role of women, however there were signs of ambiguity and ambivalence in the discussion. There was material about her mother; her own personal role within her marriage and with her children; and, notably, more detailed discussion of the position of women within her profession. The focus on the latter reflected Anna's separation of her private and public (working) lives through much of the narrative, until asked specifically to comment. In Transcript 1, she spoke at length about a senior colleague, a partner in the firm, who had exerted influence over her (Anna's) career. According to Anna, this woman was unusual in the workplace, because she could handle meetings when heavily outnumbered by groups of men; she could talk about subjects like architecture. For Anna, this demonstrated 'common ground' with men: architecture was deemed to be a serious subject, not 'namby-pamby girly stuff'. Her colleague was 'attractive' but had not used it as a means of climbing the corporate ladder 'like some other women I've seen get to the top using their attractiveness in a different way'. Although statistical data (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales 2019) indicate that accountancy as a profession is an increasingly popular career choice for women, Anna suggested in her narrative that the overtly feminine was something to be avoided in the working arena. In this extract, she described how her friend and senior colleague handled client meetings:

> 'I'd go out to client meetings with her and we'd be round a table of fifteen men and we'd be the only two women and it's still like that now – less so, but still quite like that. She would be able to hold the fort and talk to all these men… very interesting, her husband was an architect and she used to be able to talk about the architecture, or the history of some architecture, or the architecture in Spain, or they'd travelled the world and… somehow that was her common ground with men and it was something that was not business-related, not sport related, but not namby-pamby girly stuff… She was well-read whereas my

> commonality tended to be if they had kids… My husband was hugely into sport, so I could hold my own on sport as well… She was a bit inspiring to me and she was the first woman I'd come across who could command herself in a room full of men and they would listen to her.' (Transcript 1).

Anna admired her friend's ability to conduct herself and 'hold the fort' when heavily outnumbered by men. In the scenario described above, her colleague had developed a way of interacting with the men that seemed to suggest a degree of compromise. On the one hand, she was not talking about sport or business (traditionally male preserves, Anna suggested), but neither was she overtly drawing upon the 'girly stuff' about which Anna was dismissive. Anna and I returned to this passage of transcript in some detail and discussed what she meant by 'girly stuff'. Acknowledging that she was heavily stereotyping, she explained that she would not expect to discuss something stereotypically feminine - such as clothes or make-up - with men at work because it would be treated with derision. The overall picture was of the women striving to find some neutral ground with the men, rather than the men attempting to meet them. In order to do this, the women drew upon the careers and interests of their husbands as a means of establishing the required professional connection and perhaps having to prove their credentials. The transcript suggested that, as the senior employee, Anna's colleague was more overt. At the time of the incident, however, Anna had been a senior manager with an established career, not an inexperienced junior. Despite this, the picture painted was of the women consistently having to establish credibility in a field within which they held substantial professional qualifications and experience, but that remained a male-dominated environment at the higher echelons.

The Corporate Environment

'It's weighted to men. Even now'

Ascent of the corporate ladder was a key metaphor in Anna's narrative: based as she was within the so-called 'Big Four'[2] in the financial sector, her conception of career and her route through it still appeared to be characterised by bounded organisations, clear notions of career hierarchy, stability and linear development, as described two decades ago by O'Doherty and Roberts (2000). Within career theory, such patterns of employment are said to be breaking down as individuals move to self-constructed careers (Savickas 2011; Storey 2000) but it would seem still to be entrenched in Anna's sector. The career trajectories of women accountants have been scrutinized within the literature (Whiting et al 2015; Gammie and Whiting 2013; Lyonette and Crompton 2008) and firms have faced criticism for not promoting women to the highest levels of their organisations, with an

[2] The four largest accountancy firms in the UK.

identifiable blocking point at partner level. This is despite what is described as the increasing 'feminisation' of the accounting profession since the 1970s, this meaning that the number of women entrants is now broadly equivalent to their male counterparts, rather than any cultural shift in behaviour to reflect greater gender equality. The research indicates that women who are mothers are especially disadvantaged when it comes to promotion to senior levels: Anna herself noted anecdotally that her friend and colleague, the partner, did not have children. Partnership is top of the career hierarchy in professional accountancy firms. Directorship (Anna's role) is characterised as length of tenure, high productivity and technical expertise whilst, at partner level, the role involves relationship-building with staff and clients, leading to the generation new business with added value to clients (Gammie et al 2007). The achievement of some of these characteristics (building relationships, adding value) is clearly a matter of subjective judgment and could, therefore, be open to stereotypical bias. The norm of the ideal worker is still strong. *He* (my emphasis) is full-time, available to work more than the prescribed hours and is free from responsibilities for care and household work (Pocock 2003). It is assumed that the job will take precedence, and family life is expected to fit around the demands of the workplace. Arrangements that make it easier to meet family responsibilities and hold a paid job tend to be regarded as a gift rather than as a basic entitlement (Leahy and Doughney 2014), emphasising Fitzgerald and Betz (1984), thirty years earlier, on the inescapable nature of role overload for women who attempt to combine marriage and career.

In Transcript 2, Anna explained that within her specialism (tax) it was, in her view, becoming easier for women to combine career and family, for example by reducing their working hours or working from home. In a 2011 paper, Crompton and Lyonette suggested that accountancy did not have a family-friendly occupational niche and that work-life adaptations would always rely on negotiation within each individual family. Anna's comments, made in 2016, therefore suggested that some progress had been made in support of female employees. The context to this was still that, within the profession, the 'good accountant' could prioritise work at all times. Crompton and Lyonette (2011) found that qualified accountants 'seem to find it difficult to control their working hours' (p.245) and that was echoed by Anna in the transcripts when she described – earlier in her career - working overnight to meet deadlines for colleagues in the Southern hemisphere (Transcript 1) or letting client needs take precedence over those of her family (Transcript 2). She also explained how she counselled junior colleagues to maintain sensible working hours and not habitually work late or at weekends - 'don't make a habit of it because people then expect it' (Transcript 2) - whilst also admitting that she routinely answered e-mail and conference calls when on annual leave (Transcript

2). The overall picture that she described was, however, making it easier for women to combine career and family commitments, albeit that there were still strong traces of the 'gentlemen's club' culture. Anna also noted that, in her view, there was evidence of insufficient encouragement of women's careers from within the professional environment and this had consequences: 'I don't think women are naturally putting themselves forward into that position and they don't like the look of what they see above them' (Transcript 2): that is, male ways of working and doing business. Again, it appeared that the notion of gender equality in the sector could be illusory (Coppock et al 1995), as a result of obscured cultural factors rather than overt, discriminatory actions.

Primary responsibility for children is often culturally assigned to mothers and this links to the stereotyping of women in general (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). If it is accepted that gender roles are socially constructed, in that men are seen as providers or breadwinners and women as nurturers who stay at home, this could provide a powerful basis for discrimination against women in careers and career advancement (Brown and Lent 1996). As noted earlier in the chapter, increasing numbers of women had entered the accounting profession since the 1970s but the higher echelons were still heavily dominated by men. It would therefore appear that 'the role connotations associated with being a woman, potentially a mother, may not align with the role of business partner to the same extent as the stereotype of the male breadwinner with a supportive wife' (Whiting et al 2015, p.578). Motherhood was therefore a driver for the scarcity of women at the top of professional auditing firms (Dambrin and Lambert 2008).

Glitz, Glamour and Clearing Up

'It was all about the bonuses that these chaps would get at the end of the year'

When Anna moved to work in-house for an investment bank, it came to represent a career highlight as well as a source of frustration and gender inequality; therefore, it offers another example of the ambiguity of lived experience. Having been introduced to the bank by her mentor and friend (see above), she found that she had joined an organisation offering tantalising glimpses of wealth, glamour and power alongside what, ultimately, proved to be unsustainable business practices. At that point in her career, Anna was a senior manager with around twenty years of experience within large accountancy firms, however the description of her first impressions of the company indicated that it would be a different working experience:

> 'I remember going to drinks before I joined, and it was scary and all I really remember... was that everyone was very dapper. The men wore pinstripe suits and spoke really nicely and

> threw the money around – there was champagne everywhere. The secretaries were very glam.' Transcript 1

Once she had started her role, she began to understand what lay beneath the glitz and glamour:

> 'There was a common purpose because everyone within the business wanted to make money. It was all about the bonuses that these chaps would get at the end of the year... it was all about the next deal, the next bit of money, how the business was doing all the time. Where the next quick buck was coming from. It was interesting – there was money coming out of people's ears. There were yachts, there were private jets, there were golfing weekends. You never stayed in anything less than a five-star hotel with champagne on tap, and the men would go to nightclubs. It was quite grim, actually. An awful lot of affairs going on, a lot of unhappy people, a lot of broken marriages, but there were good things as well.' (Transcript 1)

Anna's role was to establish systems to support those money-making ventures; the timing of the role coincided with developments in communications technology, so she was able to work from home and at unorthodox hours. Although this represented an erosion of the barrier between work and home, she appreciated the flexibility to plan her working hours around her family whilst noting that her husband could fit his working schedule around her hours.

From the over-awed beginnings described in the first extract above, Anna narrated what she described as the 'rollercoaster' of life as an employee of the bank whilst it expanded and then failed due to excessive debt. During the boom times, she gave the impression that she had been something of a peripheral figure, offering administrative underpinning of the deals brokered by the men. As she noted, 'I wasn't part of the gang' (Transcript 1). That 'gang' was exclusively male, and her exclusion had not arisen from a lack of seniority but, rather, gender:

> 'There was a chap recruited not long after me... who was also employed to do tax and there were certain key people... who would only deal with him and not deal with me... He could drink (not that I can't!), he could swear, he would go to nightclubs – he could go to lap-dancing clubs – whereas I couldn't or didn't want to. I didn't play golf! But I would write the same technical paper and get the same accurate answer for this group of people, but it wouldn't be acknowledged in the same way. I wasn't part of the gang.' (Transcript 1)

That situation changed when the bank failed, the men disappeared to make money elsewhere and Anna said that she 'was left clearing up the mess'. This metaphor of cleaning resonates with culturally-ascribed ideas that housework is women's work (Oakley 1974) but, for Anna, the cleaning up and closing down of the bank had led – perhaps ironically - to a period of career satisfaction. This

was because she 'became a bit important', in that the men in the head office had to work closely with her. She had also acquired a 'Head of' title, important for her CV, and a more satisfactory work-life balance because she had been able to set her own working parameters.

As a result of her position within the bank, Anna was able to offer a personal account of part of the financial sector at a time of notorious excess. The collection of such accounts is one of the key strengths of auto/biographical narrative research. The dominant theme of Anna's story at the bank was apparently one of discrimination based on gender, however a careful examination of her own words revealed a more complex, nuanced situation and illustrated the need to consider the macro, meso and micro factors that link the private with the professional or the psychological with the social (Reid and West 2015).

The Division of Labour within the Family

I think saying no is a failure

Anna's career was firmly located in the corporate sector, whereas her husband, also an accountant, worked with private clients. Both were full-time employees. She noted that he had been able to schedule his work so that they could share childcare, however the family had never been in the position of having a single breadwinner with a supportive partner who could run the domestic arena. They did not receive significant support from other family members (such as their parents) and had not accessed paid childcare since the children started school, preferring instead to fit chores such as the school run around the working day. At times, this required Anna to leave the office early and perhaps left her vulnerable to accusations that she was not taking her career seriously because she was unable to conform to the need always to be (visibly) available for her clients (Crompton and Lyonette 2011). Although working in a firm where gender equality was a stated goal, in 2017 Anna did view her career in relation to a man's, echoing Gilligan's (1979) findings from almost forty years earlier.

Anna acknowledged that motherhood had therefore placed constraints on her career, however her narrative suggested gender to have been a more important factor. When combined with motherhood, there was thus the possibility of a double jeopardy. Taking a broader view, she suggested that, within the profession of accountancy, there were issues of recognition for all women, not just mothers. As an employee of a large organisation, she was pursuing her career within a framework of policies explicitly designed to promote equality. In her view, however,

> ‘there isn’t enough encouragement of a woman’s career from within the environment, the professional environment. It’s all about what you put yourself forward to and I don’t think women are naturally putting themselves forward into that position and they don’t like the look of what they see above them. So they look, and they think “well that man’s doing that and look how he is and look how he works – that’s not how I want to be”’ (Transcript 2).

The ‘gentleman’s club’ that she described also impacted on her working life, in that an expected way of entertaining clients might be on a golf course or over dinner. She said that the former was not possible unless the woman happened to play golf herself and that it often did not feel ‘natural’ to suggest dinner to a male client. There were ways of ‘getting around it’ by organising group outings, or dinner in the office restaurant, but for Anna the territory could be difficult to navigate.

There were, therefore, clear implications for women who sought to be promoted, in that client interaction was a key factor in working at partner level (Gammie et al 2007). Perhaps this was not wholly a structural issue but, according to Anna, cultural considerations continued to influence promotion prospects for women at her firm. The position was, however, significantly more progressive than during her time at the bank when, as discussed above, the men would go to lap-dancing clubs, the business of the firm was to make money to pay the men’s bonuses and – as a woman – Anna had not been ‘part of the gang’. When the ‘bubble burst’ and the company had failed, she had been left ‘clearing up the mess’ (Transcript 1).

Work-life Balance

‘My work is always an excuse’

Issues around gender and motherhood carry implications for work-life balance and Anna covered that at length in the transcripts, musing for example in Transcript 2, as to ‘why I can’t turn it off’. In her narrative, she described the constraints imposed by the culture of her workplace that impinged upon her time with her family (the long hours, the need to be seen in the office, the requirement for responsiveness to client needs at all times). As considered earlier in the chapter, she also fretted about her relationship with her children and explained how, when the opportunity had arisen to spend more time at home or to refocus her career, she had deliberately chosen to return to the corporate arena with all the implications that the decision carried for work-life balance. She noted that her husband had wanted her to spend some time at home with the children but had also felt that she should return to work after two years or so. Anna had been worried about the

ramifications of taking a career break because she had not wanted to risk her professional position. She noted that she had worked hard for it and had worried whether she would be able to return at the same level:

> 'I was always nervous that I would get out of the swing of it or the job would be taken away from me… I think there are two things going on. One is, does work define who I am and what I do? Or is it all those other things… ie: if I wasn't around, I wouldn't get a job in two years? If I didn't take this job, there wouldn't be another one. I don't know which way I'd fall on that. People who talk about me… would say it was the former, that work defines me and therefore again I would be a little bit lost if I moved away from it all and said "ok, I'm having two years off"' (Transcript 2).

In this extract, Anna moved from speaking personally to adopting impersonal language at the point where she was uncertain of her thoughts, or possibly because they were uncomfortable, and she needed to project those thoughts onto anonymous 'people'. Despite her qualifications, substantial experience and the successful navigation of increasingly senior roles, she still expressed uncertainty and insecurity about her career. This echoed the diffidence apparent in the narrative of her early educational and career choices. Here, the issue of work-life balance appeared deeper than the practical details of working hours versus home and childcare reflecting, also, deep-rooted psychological considerations around worth and recognition.

For Anna, recognition through her work continued to be critically important to her personal sense of worth. It also brought tangible reward for her years of training, long working hours and her perceived deficiencies in motherhood. In her efforts to develop and protect that recognition, she suggested in her narrative that her work-life balance had not always been satisfactory. For Anna, motherhood did not offer the same benefits as work, psychologically or materially. She characterised motherhood as involving play dates, baking and helping with homework, none of which was appealing. The timing of the second interview, directly after the Christmas holidays, had led to some softening of that stance, as she had described a degree of satisfaction from helping her daughter with schoolwork. Echoing Schultheiss' (2009) terminology, however, Anna's narrative repeatedly indicated that she 'mattered' more as a working tax accountant than as a mother and she did not consider motherhood to be a career in and of itself. Nor, indeed, was she indicating that it formed part of her own. This is not, however, to deny that her experience of motherhood had influenced her career.

Anna's story suggests that the notion of work/life balance is a subjective concept for an individual, and that work and home are not neatly fixed entities. The boundaries are flexible and permeable; personal control of time is key (Lewis et al 2007), albeit that other factors are also relevant. Anna said that when she was working on the closure of the bank 'I did have a work/life balance probably then because I could walk in late and go home early… I was my own boss, really'. Thus, it had been easier to navigate the usual constraints of a job in her sector, such as the need to be visible in the office. It should be noted, however, that each individual will negotiate the borders between work and home according to her respective circumstances. Anna's narrative demonstrated the fluidity inherent in approaches to work-life balance (Nippert-Eng 2005), suggesting that perception and enactment of work-life balance was affected by intrinsic and external factors. For her, perception of the value (psychological and material) and security of her job was equally important in her approach to work as the culture of long hours within her specific workplace or what she perceived to be the needs of her husband and children. The narrative reflected the tension that this sometimes engenders.

There was a degree of stoicism in Anna's story: whilst she suggested that it was in her 'nature' to be a 'doer' and a 'coper', there had been negative impacts on her work-life balance. Links could be discerned to her tendency to take on too much work because, she said, in her family 'you don't say no' (Transcript 2). Taking this further, she explained that she was part of a family who never complained. Those traits had affected her working life, particularly – she suggested - the trajectory of her career. Here Anna was describing part of her habitus (Bourdieu 1984), notably via reflection upon her family's collective history (Reay 2004). Her perceptions of the world had clearly been shaped by her family's place in social structure and in the narrative she discussed 'people like us'.

Anna conveyed the sense that she had been taken for granted at times, such as when her boss had assumed that she had already been promoted because of the level at which she was working. Anna also explicitly said that she would never ask for a pay rise, this despite her expressed need for career recognition in all its forms. As a senior manager, she was now working with a new generation of women accountants, some of whom were more prepared to make demands at an early stage in their careers. Anna seemed to admire the chutzpah of some of those women who had clear ideas about their future directions and were, she said, beginning to make an impact on the sector. She did note, however, that there was still a marked shortfall in the number of women at the most senior levels of

the profession, echoing what academic researchers have suggested over the past two decades (Whiting et al 2015; Gammie and Whiting 2013; Lyonette and Crompton 2008).

Analytical Reflections

In describing the bank as a highlight despite some of the slights that she had endured, Anna served a reminder of the complex and subjective nature of career. For the purposes of writing this chapter it has been helpful to sub-divide her narrative into themes, but there is a large amount of inter-linkage and permeation between those themes and the boundaries between them are fluid. The link between the themes is that career is a field (Bourdieu 1990) within which there is competition for power and dominance (Moi 1999). That competition may be overt or occluded; whichever form it takes, it is located within the complexity of social relations (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Those complex social relations are also evident in the relationship between researcher and participant and this leads directly to issues of analytical responsibility (Stanley 2017) or trustworthiness Riessman (2008). It would be possible to construct an analysis of Anna's narrative that placed a single issue such as gender, or family background, or psychological disposition, as the central influence on her career story and to suggest consequent responsibility for cause and effect. Indeed, this could offer a neatly persuasive way of presenting her narrative for the purposes of research. Reflecting life, the story was, however, more complex and nuanced. The themes ebbed and flowed and there were iterative links. Other factors were also relevant. The narrative was a product of a particular moment in time and reflected the preoccupations that Anna was feeling then. This chapter is a further re-presentation and reinterpretation of the narrative and therefore inevitably incorporated the preoccupations of the researcher. The final version now carries the influence of the other case study chapters, reflecting the development of the research.

Anna's own final assessment was that, in the narrative, she had described a 'pretty ok career'. The apparent qualification of success ('pretty ok') chimed with a comment that she had perhaps worked harder than was reflected by her progress, measured by the hierarchical parameters for career that she described throughout. This was as true for when she described entering the accountancy profession as an eighteen-year-old in 1985 as for her position in January 2016, when she was interviewed as a highly-qualified, experienced professional. In the intervening years, her life had also incorporated marriage and motherhood. Anna's narrative acknowledged psychological pressure

arising from culturally-ascribed notions of motherhood, but other factors had influenced her career trajectory, such as personal uncertainties or the culture of her profession.

As a final response to this case study, it is appropriate to reflect upon the respective positions that Anna and I held within the research. In the analysis and re-presentation of her career story, the relationship was subjected to intense scrutiny, appropriate for a research study. Formenti (2014) states that a fundamental question to pose of an interaction is 'who am I to you, and who are you to me?'. This is a deceptively simple question that hints at the complexity of the subjectivities evident within the research. As the interviewer, I was simultaneously acting as a researcher, friend, mother, wife and daughter. The collection of the research materials was done via interviews, so I was present at all times when Anna was telling her story. Had different choices been made, Anna could have been left to produce materials independently. For example, I could have sought written material or used one of the creative arts to prompt her to tell her career story. Whilst she would still have been responding to my prompts, there would have been a degree of distance between us, as compared to an interview situation when responses are sought and collected in the moment. The use of interviews emphasises the *inter*, in other words what lies between us. This was the first case study and, in its genesis and production, I experienced a range of conflicting emotions: most were positive but others less so. I also felt the need to respect the friendship, recognising that it held an important place outside the boundaries of this research project. In hindsight, that wish to respect the friendship perhaps then extended to a desire to protect Anna. As this was a first study, I was also seeking my own voice within research, carried a growing awareness of power and responsibilities and was hesitant of claiming authority over a participant's career and life. In choosing to work with friends, I was drawing upon a network that usually provided mutual support in private life; furthermore, Anna was offering her time and story to support me in a study that now formed part of my own career. As a result of those academic and personal complexities, initially I had felt a responsibility to present her narrative in a resolved and positive way. At points where Anna had shared certain vulnerabilities, metaphorically I had felt a compulsion to look away. A further consideration was the potential to make judgements that Anna herself might not have made, hence the requirement for robust analytical processes in interpretive studies such as this (Merrill and West 2009; also refer to Appendices 3 and 4). All these factors contributed to the initial desire for caution when working with the transcripts, in addition to the wish to reflect an appropriate level of respectful attention to Anna's valuable career narrative.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter has explored Anna's career, drawn from the narrative that she gave in two interviews. The circumstances and detail of our friendship were explored as a key underpinning of the analysis of the meanings that Anna attached to career. In accordance with the requirements of auto/biographical methodology, I have also reflected upon my own responses, as the researcher, to Anna's career. The chapter explores themes drawn from the career narrative, including the framing and concept of career; familial influence and occupational inheritance; the impact of gender; recognition and reward; and the overarching issue of managing work and home, the public and the private.

Chapter 6: 'Beth' 'I'm the Woman Who Cries at Work'

Introduction

This chapter explores the career narrative of 'Beth', who agreed to participate in the research as the second case study. As with Anna, the first participant, this chapter discusses the specifics of the collection of the research materials, including the context of the friendship, then the research materials are analysed. Finally, I offer analytical reflections on the interaction.

As explained in greater detail below, Beth and I had been close friends for over fourteen years, making this the longest-standing relationship within the research project. Notwithstanding the challenges of 'friendship as method' (Tillmann-Healy 2003), documented in Chapter 4 of the thesis, the closeness of this particular friendship highlighted methodological and ethical issues of significant importance to a researcher that were, at times, difficult to navigate for a friend. Coming after the work with Anna, this case study also highlighted issues arising from the subjectivities that I brought to the project, which felt particularly acute in this chapter. Below, I discuss the circumstances that converged to bring such complex sensitivity to the study, before going on to discuss Beth's career. Firstly, however, a pen portrait of Beth is offered.

Pen Portrait

'Beth', a pseudonym agreed with the participant, was 43 years old at the time of recording two research discussions on 16th March 2016 and 20th April 2016. Having initially trained as a primary school teacher, since 2007 she has worked as an education consultant and school adviser, specialising in English. Since November 2015, she has been employed by a 'community interest company' (CIC)[3], working in-house with two local authorities in Greater London. She also participates in national initiatives, through work to assure the assessment standards of English tests within primary schools, and also in research projects. Before taking up her current position, she worked within a different authority in London for over twenty years, as a classroom teacher, school leader and then a consultant.

[3] This is a type of company introduced by the United Kingdom government in 2005 under the Companies (Audit, Investigations and Community Enterprise) Act 2004, designed for social enterprises that want to use their profits and assets for the public good.)

Beth is the youngest of four children; one of her sisters died in 2005. Her father is a retired senior airline pilot and her mother was a primary school teacher. Beth was brought up and educated in a town in the South of England, then attended university, where she read English and Education and achieved Qualified Teacher Status. (Known colloquially as 'QTS', this qualification is a requirement for teaching in the publicly funded school sector in the UK.) Beth's husband is the head of a London primary school and they have one daughter who, at the time of writing, is 14 years old. Beth also has an adult stepson.

Beth returned to work after her statutory maternity leave and has continued to work since then. For a short, initial period, this was a part-time job share but, throughout the rest of her career, she has worked full-time hours.

The Friendship

As discussed in the previous chapters of the thesis, friendship is one of the fields within which this study can be located hence it is important to explore the specificities of the relationship with each participant. This also serves to illustrate our 'habitus', or position in social space (Bourdieu 1984). The friendship with Beth was the longest-established relationship in this research project. Initially, a 'domestic friendship' (Cronin 2015) developed, because it arose directly from the experiences of late pregnancy and early motherhood. We met, with our husbands, at ante-natal classes in the spring of 2004, near the end of our pregnancies with our only children. Those classes were run by the National Childbirth Trust, a UK charity offering support through pregnancy and early parenthood (NCT 2019). The classes tend to attract middle-class women and often include a focus on widening awareness of women's birth options as well as on practical information. Our two families quickly developed a close, strong friendship. We meet frequently, have been on several holidays and have shared Christmases together. Our husbands get on well and our daughters are very close friends. Neither family has relatives living locally. In the spirit of the 'domestic friendship' (Cronin 2015), we have provided childcare and support for each other since the girls were babies. Given the circumstances under which we first used to meet, the focus was initially on the children, particularly throughout their early years. This usually took the form of practical help such as providing babysitting or, later, after-school or holiday care: therefore, in the earlier years of our relationship, we had practical reasons to meet that were directly connected to the children. Unlike many of the other friendships forged as a new mother, my relationship with Beth has endured and grown stronger; I suggest that this is due our ability to find common ground outside the parameters of early motherhood and child-rearing. Now that our daughters are teenagers, they arrange their own

meetings. Beth and I often meet by ourselves, though we do also share whole-family events. The extension of the friendship beyond its initial focus on the children came as a result of 'personal initiative' (O'Connor 1998, p.126) and reflects the interplay of subjectivities as the relationship broadened beyond a sole focus on motherhood.

A degree of fluidity should be expected in any research, when subjectivities and positions form and change thanks to the developing interaction with the participant. This case study of Beth incorporates strong friendship ties; I discern that it was the dominant subjectivity for me and, consequently, had an impact on the conduct of this part of the research project. The transcripts offer rich materials for analysing her career, but it must be acknowledged that there are places where deeper insights from Beth might have been forthcoming had her words not been accepted at face value as a result of shared experience or prior knowledge. Whilst this is discernible within all three of the participant case studies, it is perhaps strongest in this one. As a further consideration, the auto/biographical framework adopted for the study specifically demands that the context of the research be addressed, in its overt form and also in the 'shaded' part of the narrative. Some of those shadows are formed by areas that Beth hinted at but did not choose to explain or further reveal in her recorded narrative.

Analysis of the transcripts revealed the extent to which I had sought to reassure Beth, or to normalise her experiences. This was evident during the second discussion when she was experiencing negative emotions after a difficult period at work:

Beth	[Unlike my sister] my emotions still come into play hugely. I mean, I am the woman who still cries when my line manager tells me something that I don't want to hear. I'll still cry in the workplace and I know other people that absolutely just don't do that, just never do that, whereas I find it hard not to.
Christina	Well we are who we are, aren't we?
Beth	Yeah
Christina	And also... we all have to operate in the cultures that we work in, don't we?

(Transcript 2)

This was a dialogue between two friends, as well as a relationship within a research project, hence my offer of reassurance was entirely appropriate.

During thirteen years of friendship, we have shared key family events, including a christening, birthday parties and other regular gatherings. I have met most of the members of Beth's family, such as her parents, stepmother and brother as well as her in-laws (though not her sister, whose input to Beth's career is explored later in the chapter). When, therefore, in the transcripts she talks about an individual family member, I have usually met that person and hold my own version of him or her in my head. That perception is one of the lenses through which I analyse Beth's career story. This is the only case study where I have met the participant's extended family and it serves to illustrate the intricate and intimate connection between us, as evidenced by the complex subjectivities that we exhibit.

Gathering the Research Materials

Notwithstanding the personal connections explained above, when I asked Beth to participate in the study, I knew only a little of her career. I had helped with a job application, so had seen her curriculum vitae, and although we had often discussed her working life over the years, it usually covered the minutiae of the working day rather than anything specifically about 'career'. She readily agreed to take part in interviews. She had already taken an interest in my Master's degree, including the dissertation that I had written based upon interviews with a (different) friend. As a practising teacher, she was a helpful sounding-board when I was working in schools. She usually speaks with candour and indeed did so during our discussions.

Having analysed my first case study with Anna, I identified a wish to work in a more collaborative way with Beth. This reflected a wish to respect the friendship by aiming to achieve a more equitable researcher-participant relationship. In that spirit of collaboration, Beth was therefore asked to specify when and where she would like to meet to record the interviews. We agreed that it would be most convenient to meet at my house in the evening because she could call on her way home from work. It proved relatively easy to find a date. Before our first discussion, she received a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for the project (see Appendix 1) and we had a short discussion about the steps that I would take to ensure confidentiality. We ate supper at the kitchen table and discussed familiar topics: our daughters; respective families; mutual friends. My husband was away, and my daughter was in her bedroom doing homework. We decided to hold the discussion in the sitting room, where we sat on adjacent sofas, and I recorded the session on my mobile phone and laptop computer. Whilst the sofas were more physically comfortable than the wooden kitchen chairs, the change of room did also represent our move from a familiar and

psychologically-comfortable scenario – a casual meal with associated chat – to the unfamiliar territory of the recorded discussion. We were not disturbed. The pattern of supper followed by recording the interviews in a different room mirrored what had happened with Anna, the first participant.

For reasons of ontology and methodology, as well as of friendship with the participants, the approach to the research discussions was informal and loosely structured interviews were adopted. The research design sought each participant's story in her own words, thus is was not appropriate to 'lead' the discussion. As explained above, Beth and I are very close friends and, over the past thirteen years, have openly shared success, failure, happiness and sadness. As during the first recording with Anna, after some preamble I began with an open statement, asking Beth to talk about her career: 'I'm interested in career: it's up to you where you'd like to start with it' (Transcript 1). This was not a helpful cue for Beth as it was too broad; she was not yet comfortable with the situation in which she found herself, as the subject of research questions. She delayed her initial response by seeking to clarify what was 'wanted', seemed to be slightly embarrassed and clearly found it difficult to start. Plummer (1995) identifies this as one of the potential pitfalls of the loosely structured interview, because the participant has been given no clear indication of how she 'should' behave. I had to intervene and did so by describing the approach that Anna had taken, which was to speak about her first job. As a teacher and now a trainer, Beth is used to presenting herself and had apparently given previous thought to what she might say. Thus, once given a more direct cue, she spoke fluently: she talked uninterruptedly for more than a page of the transcript. Although some verbal interplay developed, the majority of the 8486 words that form the transcript were Beth's. There was very little hesitation and her speech was articulate and well-constructed, with striking grammatical accuracy and few hesitations.

In the period before recording Beth's discussions, I had been working with students and assessing practical guidance skills. My analysis of my own role within the research interaction with Beth suggests that those teaching activities had influenced my approach. The clear deployment of some guidance techniques was present, for example when some of her own words were reflected back to seek clarification or to encourage her to extend a point: 'what I'm hearing is repeated, slightly different ways of expressing your emotional involvement in your work' (Transcript 1). I also repeatedly expressed unconditional positive regard for Beth, (for example when she reported that she found it difficult not to cry in the workplace), deploying Rogerian techniques (Rogers 1962) learned when training as a career counsellor.

As with Anna, the use of loosely structured interviews again produced rich material. Beth received the typed transcript but did not comment or suggest clarifications. We had intended to meet again within approximately two weeks, aiming to retain the thread of the discussion whilst also allowing sufficient time for reflection. The proposed timing coincided with the school Easter holidays when everyday family pressures should have been lighter, however some of my own personal circumstances intervened and I endured a period of worry and preoccupation. When I returned to work on the study, the new term had begun and the interval between discussions had extended to five weeks. The written transcript of the first interview and the recording were available, but there was no time to listen to it together before we started to analyse that discussion in preparation for the next. Whilst it is possible, therefore, that some of the nuance of the discussion was not fully incorporated it appears there was no significantly detrimental effect upon the second discussion and the content that it produced.

The second meeting again took place at my house. As before, Beth came after work and I cooked supper. Whilst we ate, she mentioned that she was experiencing some problems at work and was clearly preoccupied but did not want to discuss them fully at that point. (She had already alluded to them in a text message, so I had received prior knowledge.) After the meal, we decided to stay in the kitchen to record the discussion at the table, as it provided more space. We would usually sit and chat at the kitchen table so, psychologically, it felt at least as comfortable as the first discussion in the sitting room, and probably more natural for us. Again, research was being conducted at the intersection of the public and the private. The discussion was recorded on a mobile phone and it seemed less obtrusive than the phone/tablet combination used before.

To begin the second discussion, I asked Beth if she would like to talk about the first transcript: what were her thoughts on it and what did she think it represented? Given that she had already started to talk about a problem at work, it was not surprising that, initially, she commented on her positive outlook in March and then reported more negative feelings. When asked if she wanted to say more, she queried whether that would be what I 'wanted' (this echoed her reluctance to begin to talk in the first discussion) so we agreed to move the discussion to any themes that she felt were prominent. It was important to let her open the discussion about themes to provide a clear opportunity for her to interpret her own narrative before I offered my own input. She immediately identified what she described as 'the emotional connection' as the dominant theme (as had I) and the discussion flowed (and developed more widely) from that starting point. As the conversation

developed, she became increasingly reflective. She had clearly read the first transcript very closely and it had triggered a degree of introspection and, perhaps, begun to open the possibility of a different type of working life. As we discussed her response to the transcript, she spoke more openly about problems that she was facing in her current job. At first, they were somewhat abstract, with scant detail, but eventually she talked about a recent and uncomfortable performance review interview. Using the material from the transcript, she had begun to trace key factors in her career history and was questioning their continuing impact on her behaviour at work and the future direction that her career might take. This suggests that participation in the research had provided space and time for Beth to think more deeply about career, but also reinforces the suggestion that my own role in the first interaction perhaps mirrored some of the characteristics of a career guidance session.

Given the close friendship with Beth, my professional background and her willingness to talk openly about her emotions, I was conscious of the need to guard against the research discussion straying into an overt counselling session. The very personal and emotional content of some of the discussion would provide rich material for a psychoanalytical approach, but ethically and academically it is not appropriate for this study to venture into that field. As a result of our friendship, I also had an awareness of details of Beth's family background that she chose not to divulge on the recordings. Whilst it would be unethical to include this material in the research, it should also be noted that I cannot 'unknow' this information and acknowledge that it has influenced the case study. This is because there were avenues of discussion that I considered highly likely to constitute sensitive topics. I was aware of the presence of emotion within the room: overtly, when she specifically discussed her emotional response to work-based situations, but also through the emotional relationship that we continued to experience as close friends. This led to a desire on my part to lead Beth away from topics that I judged might constitute psychological harm. In hindsight, this may have been an unwarranted judgement and came in contradiction of suggestions by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) that emotional response should not be equated to evidence of damage. The theme of emotion is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Beth's transcripts were analysed in the same way as Anna's, each copied into a new file and annotated with my responses to her words, including prompts to relevant literature. Words or phrases that suggested possible themes were highlighted, using direct quotes to ensure that Beth's own words would anchor the subsequent analysis. Several drafts of this chapter were then

produced. In the first draft, I accepted some parts of the material as given, without deeply questioning Beth's meanings or my own responses. For example, I wrote about her emotional reaction to career events and drew on her own 'emotion is bad' narrative instead of fully considering the gendered territory around emotion in the workplace. Although this chapter was developed from that material, it has been subject to significant revisions.

Having introduced Beth and explored the context in which the research materials were gathered, the thematic content of the transcripts is now considered.

The Thematic Content of Beth's Career Narrative

Construction of 'Career'

For the methodological reasons described throughout the thesis, Beth was not questioned directly on her understanding of 'career'; my interest in her response to that question has arisen from analysis of transcripts. In her responses to the broad questions posed, Beth did not give a direct definition of 'career', however her narrative offered indications, as discussed below.

Like Anna before her, Beth explicitly disregarded jobs that she took whilst still studying because, she said, they happened before her career began. She expressed particular views on what constituted a 'career' by reference to a 'planned pathway', 'deliberate choices' (Transcript 1) and a 'map' (Transcript 2). For her, this planned pathway appeared to have been initiated when she had decided to train as a teacher and her idea of 'career' therefore excluded retail and childcare work undertaken whilst a student.

In terms of that 'planned pathway', early in the first discussion she noted that 'a lot of the things that have happened to shape my career have not always been deliberate choices' (Transcript 1). For example, she explained that she had originally planned a career as a physiotherapist and had worked towards it whilst at school by completing relevant work placements in conjunction with her academic work. Unfortunately, she had been unable to pursue that career after an injury and had therefore made a late application to a different course. Here, she seemed to be making a distinction between free choice with no known constraints and restricted choice, made in the light of emergent restrictions. She described discussions about her future in a passive manner ('I was told') and did not seem to have considered different options, such as careers within the heath service with reduced physical demands. In this extract, she also first directly raised the issue of gender (discussed

later in this chapter), when explaining that a career as a pilot was not something that a girl could (or maybe should) establish:

> 'I had to change course quite quickly and I suppose that was the time I made any sort of conscious decisions and chose to go into teaching because of course at that time a lot of the advice that particularly my peers and I were being given was based around what your parents did, and of course my father was a pilot which was an absolutely "no, girls don't do that" at that point and my mother was a teacher, so I was pretty much told that perhaps what I ought to do was teaching, which of course was not what I had chosen, but once I'd been told that I couldn't do what I wanted to do, the fall-back I guess was "well you can go into education", but it all fitted – it fitted very much with my skill set. I'd always been very much an all-rounder and not excelled in anything in particular but done well enough in everything which fitted with very much being a primary school teacher where, you know, you have to be master of the whole curriculum, so I was quite happy that I'd made that decision.' (Transcript 1)

Here, she pinpointed occupational inheritance (Aldrich and Kim 2015; Rytina 1992) in her school's use of a parental career as the starting point for careers advice; hierarchical and gendered parameters were set because of the nature and characteristics of her father's career as a pilot. As Beth noted, 'my father was a pilot which was an absolutely "no - girls don't do that"' (Transcript 1). Accurate statistics are difficult to source but, in 2018, the proportion of women airline pilots worldwide was estimated at between 3% and 6%. For British Airways (BA), the United Kingdom's national carrier, the statistics are as follows: of 4180 total pilots, 245 (5%) were women and 52 (1%) were captains (International Society of Women Airline Pilots 2018). These data therefore reported that, in 2018, 95% of BA pilots and 99% of BA captains were men: the figures are likely to have been significantly lower in the 1980s. This thesis does not seek directly to address why so few women take up careers as airline pilots, however Beth's narrative provided a snapshot of a prevailing attitude in the late 1980s. The 2018 statistics suggested that careers in aviation were still acutely gendered, not least because the majority of cabin crew were women, and cabin crew jobs carried significantly lower status and pay (Hochschild 2012). The school's assertion that girls did not become pilots illustrated how gender could be cited to promote or narrow career choice, in line with the theory of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson 1996).

Beth's mother had also been a primary school teacher, so a first reading of the narrative seemed to offer evidence of the occupational inheritance (Aldrich and Kim 2015; Rytina 1992) that had not arisen from her father's career. Rather than her mother's example, however, Beth cited a family friend, 'Fran' (a pseudonym), as having been more influential on her career choice: 'she influenced

me enormously [and provided] my first impressions of what that sort of career would be, because she was a head teacher' (Transcript 1). Beth said that Fran's example left her 'not feel[ing] like I was settling for teaching: that actually it was something I was consciously choosing to do' (Transcript 1). This seems to have been indicative of a need for some immediate reconciliation with the enforced changed focus of her career from physiotherapy to teaching. Following a family dispute, Beth lodged with Fran for several months. During this period, they spent time discussing a teaching career and 'she was prepared to sit down with somebody at 17' (Transcript 1). Beth still looked back with gratitude at that input because, as she said, she gave 'my first impressions of what that sort of career would be'. As a head teacher, Fran had reached the pinnacle of the profession and the narrative suggests that she was important, firstly in establishing Beth's nascent identity as a teacher and, secondly, as the personification of someone with a rewarding career in teaching rather than her mother, whose teaching job was an adjunct to life as a wife and the mother of four children. Having chosen her degree course, Beth's occupational area was then set and – deploying hindsight and expressing a redemptive narrative (McAdams et al 2001) – she explained that primary school teaching 'fitted' with her all-round academic abilities and that she was happy that she had chosen well. Here, there are direct references to 'established' career theories, such as those of Parsons (1909) or Holland (1985): Beth explained how her skills and abilities had been matched to a congruent career.

Having first referenced her 'skill set' early in the first conversation, Beth returned to the idea several times later in the discussions. In the first reference, however, the skill set was based on academic interests rather than wider skills relevant to employment. Having said that a career should involve a 'planned pathway', she characterised her own (seemingly pejoratively) as a 'sequence of happenings that I've responded to'. In discussing a planned pathway, once again she seemed to be referencing first paradigm career theory, with its roots in positivism and an emphasis on linear, progressive careers (Rodger, 1952). As a pilot, her father had followed a hierarchical, bounded career that fitted such a definition and it is possible that this had been influential in setting Beth's own expectations about 'career'. Her mother was a teacher and took a career break to have her children, but that was not unusual in the 1970s. Beth said that she then 'taught a lot at the schools we attended', implying that she was employed as a supply teacher rather than in a substantive post. According to the narrative, the fact that her mother worked carried greater influence than the specifics of what she actually did, and this suggests that, for Beth, the notion of occupational inheritance (Aldrich and Kim 2015; Rytina 1992) was more nuanced than a superficial analysis might initially have suggested.

Again, it reinforces the need to interrogate the taken-for-granted in a participant's life and habitus (Bourdieu 1984).

Hierarchies within the Teaching Profession and (Career) Hierarchy at Home

'People stopped seeing me as a person'

Within the teaching profession, it is possible to map a hierarchical career path. A classic progression would be to move from newly qualified classroom practitioner, into a leadership role, to deputy-headship, to headship. Beth's husband had taken that route and he had been a headteacher for over a decade. In an early passage within her recorded narrative, Beth commented on the lack of a such a pathway in her own career: what she repeatedly referred to 'planned' progression. There was, however, evidence that she had moved quickly through the first two steps (classroom practitioner into various leadership roles). A period as an acting deputy head was not, however, a positive experience. Early in the first transcript, in part of one of her long, uninterrupted narrations, Beth described what had happened:

> 'I didn't like going to work every day to be the person where everyone went "who's covering my class at 10?", "where's this?", "what's that?", "have you done this?", "what have you done with the timetable?" and people stopped seeing me as a person, and they'd forgotten to ask me "did you have a nice weekend?". It was all about the deliver this, deliver this – and that really put me off and the school went through a difficult period then – there were a couple of very difficult families and so we had to deal with loads of 'stuff' at that time and I felt that put me off those leadership roles and really career-wise I would have had to spend some time as a deputy in order to move into the headship role. (Transcript 1)

Supportive interpersonal relationships were important to Beth and she indicated that her time as a deputy head had had a negative effect on her identity at work: as she put it, 'people stopped seeing me as a person' (Transcript 1). Within teaching, identity shifts throughout an individual's career thanks to interactions within schools and broader communities (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009). That fluidity reflects ongoing complexity, but also the 'tensions and contradictions' within the profession (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009 p.175, drawing on Olsen 2008). It is also a resource that teachers use to make sense of themselves as they create their own narratives, as this quote proposes: 'I view identity as a label, really, for the collection of influences and effects from immediate contexts, prior constructs of self, social positioning, and meaning systems (each itself a fluid influence and all together an ever-changing construct) that become intertwined inside the flow of activity as a teacher simultaneously reacts to and negotiates given contexts and human relationships at given moments. (Olsen 2008, p. 139)

In addition to the sense of conflicted identity and lack of fulfilment arising from the everyday tasks associated with the post, the role of deputy head also took Beth away from the classroom, where she had enjoyed developing pedagogic practice through initiatives such as participation in research projects. As she noted, the route to headship would, of necessity, have involved a further period as a deputy head and the unsatisfying experience in the temporary role had served to deter her from following that route. The narrative indicated that it was not the only influential factor, however.

Beth showed strong awareness of the traditional career hierarchy within teaching, as explained above. She spoke warmly of 'Fran' (with whom she had lodged as a teenager), as an example of somebody at the pinnacle of the profession, who had showed her what might be possible when she, Beth, was taking the medically-imposed decision to abandon her first choice of career. She offered a sequential narration, describing the various roles that she had held in schools when her career was running in parallel with that of her husband, 'John' (pseudonym). For Beth, the adverse experience of deputy-headship was quickly followed by the advent of motherhood; at the same time, John had been appointed to his first headship. Beth had continued to work in a school and took various leadership roles which, she said, had led to the development of new skills. Eventually, in 2007 and at the suggestion of the head of her school, she had moved into consultancy via an advisory post within the local authority that had employed her in schools since the beginning of her career. She had left that role in 2015 to take up her first post outside the borough.

Beth explained how, in 2007, she had realised that the move into consultancy might offer an alternative to a school-based headship. John's career had followed a traditional trajectory and she had recognised that, in order to protect their family life, she would have to seek an alternative route to achieve 'influence' within the education system:

> 'We got to a point where I could have come back in [to a school role] after I'd done the [first] consultancy role [ie: in 2015] and chosen to go back in as a head, but because John was a head it was a feeling that we had his school, I had the school I was working for and the school that [our daughter] was attending – there were three schools in the house already that I was keeping track of – that if I'd stepped up into a role where I was head, that would have been the centre of my world. You would have had three people with three different schools all trying to have that as the centre of their world, never mind just coordinating the parents' evenings and fairs and all the rest of it! So that was a conscious decision as a family

> that John had made the decision to go into headship and that's where he was and actually there wasn't space in the family for there to be someone else in the same role and that for me the consultancy was a different role to the same sort of outcome – I wanted to have an influence on the same level, and the consultancy allowed me to do that without having to take on the responsibility of the school. So, I suppose, yes, that was definitely – that was a decision that I think was made more consciously.' (Transcript 1)

One reading of Beth's narrative could imply that John's career was afforded more importance within the family. He had reached headship first and had established his position; thus, there was 'no space' for Beth to follow the same path even though she had been suitably qualified to apply for a similar post. The narrative suggested that the unhappy experience of deputy headship had also influenced her decision. Elsewhere in the transcript, Beth had acknowledged the input from her then head teacher to her decision to seek a post as a consultant: she noted that he had first suggested it as a possible route and disclosed that, simultaneously, his intervention had prevented her from pursuing an application for a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) role in another school. She also explained that she had decided to apply for that SENCO post because 'lots of things happened at the school and lots of things changed quite quickly and again I didn't like the response to some of those things and again I think I decided I wanted to go' (Transcript 1). The decision was therefore multi-faceted, but this was only revealed by the close reading of different parts of the transcript.

Principles and Emotion

Visions and values and ethos

As she moved through her narrative and reviewed her career, Beth focussed on turning points – akin to Denzin's 'epiphanies' (Denzin 1989) – that had led her to change employers and, subsequently, job role from school-based practitioner to office-based consultant. It should, however, be noted here that Denzin later (2001) cautioned against what he described as the 'epiphany as hindsight': the retrospective attribution of influences to a decision, such as might be seen in McAdams et al's (2001) notion of the redemptive narrative. Several of Beth's decisions had arisen as a result of negative incidents, even though each time she had secured a more senior post. The dominant theme in each decision was what she described as 'the emotional connection': the strong role that emotion had played in the direction and conduct of her career. Near the beginning of the transcript, she identified the effect of 'emotional and circumstantial things' and the theme developed as she discussed various job changes that she had made on the basis of what she described as an

incongruence of 'visions and values and ethos' between herself and the relevant employing organisation. Beth held strong and heartfelt views about the place of education within society and a strong commitment to the children at the centre of the education system. She struggled politically and emotionally with the prevalent neo-liberal agenda, not least because in her consultancy role she was required to offer a commissioned, chargeable service, managed as a business interaction. Although this had become a normalised part of the UK's education system (Gunter et al 2015), for Beth it was the site of personal conflict because she did not want to work to a fixed price but, rather, to deliver a high-quality service to schools.

According to her narrative, Beth's strongly principled approach extended to views on how managers and colleagues should behave at work and, at times, this had led to conflict followed by a change of job: 'when I don't agree with the organisation or the people that I'm with, I make the changes [of jobs] based on that' (Transcript 1). Developing this theme, the second discussion explored whether it was becoming more difficult as she took on senior posts and if her emotional reactions extended beyond the social and personal to the abstract or political. For example, her approach to the presentation of unpopular national education policy (such as external assessment regimes) to teaching colleagues was explored. In that aspect of her professional life, her personal response appeared more pragmatic and it was notable that she had chosen positive engagement with the national policy agenda, for example by working on a national assessment project and, previously, as an Ofsted inspector. She said:

> 'I do employ that kind of swan thing… I am serene and quite calm and can present things very clearly. I'm paddling like mad underneath! But I also think that's a really important part of the sort of role that I do - we provide that mediation and make some of those things that seem so wrong make more sense and support schools in how they work within that...And I see that as a really positive part of the role but it's also part that you get a lot back from. So I get cross about stuff but I don't feel as connected. I find myself now doing a lot more of feeding in to – at meetings with heads and teachers and senior colleagues – feeding in THIS is what you need to challenge – you need to go back to the unions to challenge this. Or it's this bit you need to question. Or going back to government agencies that I work with and providing the feedback to them about processes – and actually about getting myself involved in that next level.' (Transcript 2)

Having acknowledged her ability to deal with difficult policy constraints in a dispassionate manner, Beth described how she found it more difficult to keep her emotions in check when issues arose from, or directly affected, her personal performance at work. 'My emotions still come into play hugely. I am the woman who still cries when my line manager tells me something I don't want to

hear' (Transcript 1). She briefly touched on specifics, such as an incident in her classroom earlier in her career: '[I said] I'm not putting up with this – I've had a chair thrown at me and I've not had the response from senior management that I want… It was the emotional response thing. It was the 'I can't work in that setting so I'll go somewhere where I can'' (Transcript 1). In the second interview, she explained that whilst such incidents might appear to have been of great significance in her career narrative, they were infrequent, and she had only changed jobs three times over the course of her twenty-year career. Those job changes had taken her to successively more senior roles and therefore Beth's experiences seemed congruent with Hartung's proposal that emotion should not necessarily constitute a barrier to career success because it could lead to a place of new opportunity (Hartung 2011).

During the second discussion, Beth spoke of the 'professional front' that she hoped to maintain at work, characterising this as emotionally neutral, even detached. She had been shocked to be told by a colleague that she wore her heart on her sleeve with obvious displays of emotion, and it led her to muse that it might change 'how people see me or interact with me' (Transcript 2). Here, Beth was reflecting what Ahmed (2014) described as the cultural politics of emotion, in that emotional responses may be mediated by interpretations made not by the individual but, rather, reflecting the prevailing attitudes of broader cultural positioning. In characterising that 'professional front' in terms of a detached presentation, Beth was perhaps unconsciously referencing a medical model, where staff were trained to remain emotionally detached in order that they might most effectively treat their patients. Here, it should be noted that this has eroded over time and there is no longer so strong an expectation that medical staff should deny their own emotions (West 2001).

Weakness and Empowerment

Issues of principle, problems of power

Beth linked her emotional response directly to 'believing in what I do or believing the direction or the vision of what I'm involved in' (Transcript 2). This had led to problems with successive line managers and turned her job into a field of conflict, to reference Bordieuian terminology (Bourdieu 1990). In the transcripts, Beth described several such clashes with both men and women, such as had arisen from the incident when a child threw a chair, recounted earlier in this chapter. Speaking about the job changes that she had made, and in the light of her reflections on her career as part of this research, she said:

> ‘My question has been, do I actually just have an issue with authority? Everything that’s made me make those changes has been a clash with authority. It’s not been about colleague to colleague. It’s always me coming up against the head of an organisation and again always coming down to vision and values and ethos but it’s me going head to head with that authority, not liking the response and so voting with my feet.’ (Transcript 2).

Although Beth described her reaction as ‘not liking the response’, perhaps she had felt powerless in the face of authority. Candidly, she also said that she would not wish to be her own line manager and suggested that she might be being ‘quite petulant and childish and not liking the authority’. She also reflected that motherhood had made her re-evaluate her behaviour: ‘I don’t want my daughter to think you can be petulant and throw your toys out of the pram and that it will work for her’ (Transcript 2).

A discernible thread throughout the narrative was that emotion at work should be avoided because it was a reflection of weakness. For example, Beth said that she cried when she heard something from her line manager that she did not like or agree with. She reacted emotionally when she did not feel supported at work, such as in the incident involving the thrown chair. Similarly, when she felt that the organization for which she worked was in danger of becoming adrift from previously understood shared values or principles, and the response from management could not provide reassurance, her reaction manifested itself in emotion. In characterising her reactions like this, Beth was following cultural norms dictating that, in the workplace, displays of emotion were contrary to good judgement (judgement being based on the principles of reason rather than intuition) and should, therefore, be avoided. A feminist reading of the situation, however, would suggest that a person’s emotion reflects her own reading of the world that she inhabits (Ahmed 2014), hence the suggestion above that some of Beth’s emotional responses might be connected to issues of empowerment or its opposite, powerlessness.

Beth spoke of certain colleagues who would offer support as she navigated what had become a corporate working life. She spoke admiringly of a previous colleague who ‘if she was asked to do things that went against her principles… would find a way of getting round them’ (Transcript 1). This suggested that Beth’s colleague, also a former classroom teacher, had developed her own methods of coping with corporate life and, in so doing, had found a way of reconciling issues of principle with problems of power. Beth explained that she had found a kindred spirit in her new organisation who would listen and offer advice, described as a ‘go-to’ figure (Transcript 2). Although this was a

relatively recent development, she valued this colleague's willingness to give time to talk things through:

> 'I think for me that bit is really important, just having people that I can go to who understand the context because I find that very hard, you know talking to family and maybe talking to John, they don't really understand the context that I work in very well and make big assumptions that don't work. My sister will come back with business-type solutions to things and I suppose it really helps me if I've identified people within an organisation who understand the context I work in who do that for me.' (Transcript 2)

Here Beth had personally identified the importance of the context within which she worked and the impact that it had upon her own agency over her career. The broader narrative that Beth offered must be located within the context of her day-to-day working life, for both elements contributed to her career habitus (Bourdieu 1992, 1990). This is important in seeking to connect elements that can only ever form but fragments of her story (West 2014).

Beth had changed employers in November 2015 and, at the time of the research interviews, was in her second post as a consultant. The new job had been offered ostensibly at a more senior level than her previous post, but Beth was unhappy that the reality of the position was not as she had expected: 'I feel like I've been a little bit duped… I actually thought I was going to be doing something more' (Transcript 1). In the first discussion, she had also said that she had been expecting to have line management responsibility, but it had not materialised. She linked line management to seniority and was concerned that she had not 'made that kind of jump' (Transcript 1). That, coupled with the degree of emotional detachment that she felt in her new job, was making her question 'how long I want to hang around' (Transcript 1). She talked about possibly working as an independent consultant, where she would have more freedom to choose projects and would be able to exercise greater ethical judgement: 'I would be able to have integrity about things that I wanted to – that really mattered' (Transcript 2). Beth appeared to be expressing concern about the tasks associated with her job and a desire for greater congruence between that job and her own ethical values. The transcripts did not suggest that she was seeking to become the senior manager of an organisation, or that external recognition was particularly important to her: rather, her priority was to control her working parameters by exercising agency – and power - over her own career. In so doing, she hoped to reconcile issues related to what she described as 'vision, values and ethos' with work-life balance and her role as a mother, as now explored in the follow section.

Career and Gender

'My sister says I should stop thinking like a woman'

Discussing her choice to be a working mother, Beth acknowledged that financial and psychological imperatives sat at the heart of her decision-making. She cited the influence of her mother, although she used the terminology that she had *worked* rather than had a career. This was perhaps another indication of Beth's own interpretation of 'career' as necessarily being linked to hierarchical progression and deliberately planned actions. Further clues to Beth's habitus (Bourdieu 1990) were offered in the following extract, where she discussed her mother's life and the formative influence that she had had on the three sisters:

> 'My mum has subsequently been the drive for me to want to continue to work, as a mum (myself), which is interesting considering… her father was a Victorian type father, but somehow instilled some kind of equality, sense of equality, because actually she had a… traditional-roled marriage because as a woman she was expected to be at home and look after children first and foremost – she took on very traditional roles in her own marriage.' (Transcript 1)

Beth noted that her mother 'was expected' to fulfil domestic roles rather than to concentrate on a career and attributed it to the demands of a marriage where the female partner played a traditional role in the domestic sphere. Data from the Office for National Statistics show that in the mid-1980s, when Beth was at school, more than 60% of women in the United Kingdom were in paid employment (Office for National Statistics 2019), thus paid employment was the norm for more than half of the female population of working age. This study is not directly concerned with the career and working life of Beth's mother or, indeed, other women of her generation, and the interviews were not conducted accordingly, so it is not appropriate to speculate as to internal workings of her marriage. The extract does, however, give further insight to habitus (Bourdieu 1990) because Beth specifically pointed to the expectation that her mother would not work, thereby implying that that family's income had been sufficient without further input from her. Women from poorer families were less likely to have had the luxury of choice, so this is perhaps an example of the taken-for-granted in Beth's family.

After discussing her parents' marriage, Beth went on to explain the influence that she perceived her mother to have had on her three daughters:

> ‘all three of her daughters have been absolute feminists and have chosen their own entirely different pathways. She’s still very influenced by males - and yet she has got three daughters who are completely different to that.’ (Transcript 1)

Beth used strong terminology in this passage, claiming feminist credentials for the family’s three sisters and asserting that none of them were influenced by males, in direct contrast to their mother. Returning to this idea in the second discussion, Beth explained that, to her, ‘feminism’ meant:

> ‘the right to do what we want to do and to follow what we want and to do it even when you’re told that you shouldn’t be, or you couldn’t be… I see it as having the confidence to do what you want and that shouldn’t be related to what other people perceive’ (Transcript 2).

There was an apparent contradiction in the narrative between the assertions that she made here and other parts of her career story, such as described in the previous sections where she acknowledged the constraints on her career.

The influence of upbringing emerged in the narrative, in a passage linked to gendered notions of work. As well as citing her mother directly, she referred several times to one of her older sisters, who, at the time of the interviews, was living and working abroad and had an established career within a multi-national corporate organisation. The two women were in regular contact and the narrative suggested that their respective working lives were often discussed. The context in which her sister worked (the large, global, corporate organisation) was very different to Beth’s location in the United Kingdom’s public-sector and she speculated that it was a ‘very male environment’, meaning that the majority of employees were men. By contrast, she characterised her own situation as a ‘female-oriented team’; most of her colleagues were women and their approaches to work were correspondingly different. Beth suggested, therefore, that some of the advice that she received from her sister did not translate to her own working context.

Notwithstanding her assertion that the women in her family were all ‘absolute feminists’, Beth also noted that her sister had told her to ‘stop thinking like a woman’ in order to improve her working life (and, by implication, progress her career). She suggested that here her sister was advising that, if she did ‘stop thinking like a woman’, she could adopt a tougher attitude to frustrations such as the high volume of work and the consequently adverse impact upon her working hours. Personally, she questioned the usefulness of the advice and suggested that a flexible and less confrontational

approach often proved most beneficial in terms both of her ability to complete tasks and of her overall job satisfaction.

The exhortation to 'stop thinking like a woman' is open to interpretation. Perhaps her sister was suggesting that she would not progress at work. She might have been passing comment on Beth's emotional investment in her work which, coupled with her (self-confessed) wish to achieve perfection, was having a negative impact upon her life, both at work and in the private sphere. If Beth were to stop thinking like a woman, the implication was that she should begin instead to think like a man and conduct herself differently at work. Beth herself linked the comment to emotion and the idea that a rational, deductive, unemotional way of being and working was always preferable. Again, this way of thinking is critiqued by Ahmed (2014), as discussed earlier in the chapter; Belenky et al (1997) also suggested that the power and effectiveness of intuitive knowing should not be overlooked. In her sister's words, as remembered and re-presented by Beth in the transcript, there was an underlying assumption that women should behave like men and adopt male traits because it would enable them to succeed at work. According to Pocock's taxonomy of the ideal employee, he: works full-time; is available to work for a greater number of hours than contractually obliged; and has only light or no responsibilities for care or other household work (Pocock 2003). Such working hours are possible because there is a woman (possibly 'only' at home; possibly also working) who will assume the domestic responsibilities and also carry a mental map of the family's needs (Waller and Swisher 2006).

Beth noted that she was unable to follow her sister's well-meaning advice and explained why:

> 'She sees [the thinking like a woman] as stopping me from being able to say, 'no, I'm not going to do this and I'm not going to do that'. She thinks it's stopping me from doing that, whereas I'm playing – not playing, not the right word – but I think I'm being more – I don't know what the word is – I'm navigating something that I think will work better in the end than if I just put my foot down and say, 'no I'm not doing it'... She works in that very male environment where they all just go from A to B. But I still work in quite a female-orientated team and environment. I think that probably changes how you respond as well' (Transcript 1).

This extract suggests that, for Beth, a more nuanced approach was more personally satisfying as well as an effective strategy within the context of her workplace. As a consultant, she was working with - and for - multiple clients and was therefore subject to different calls upon her time as well as

responsive to client requests. To return to her careful regard to vision, values and ethos, the ability to navigate the shifting environment of the workplace was important for Beth's professional identity. She openly acknowledged tensions and contradictions within her career (Olsen 2008) but the behaviour adopted at work – the presence of emotion, or circuitous navigation of difficult situations, that her sister has implicitly criticised by telling her to 'stop behaving like a woman' – was a way of reconciling the demands and tasks of her job with her own preferred ways of working. Parts of the narrative, however, indicated that the situation was becoming unsustainable. At the time of the second discussion, Beth expressed fewer positive feelings about her working situation; further, she had begun to ask serious questions about her work-life balance and the consequent impact on career, home life and, particularly, her experience of motherhood, as will now be discussed.

Motherhood

'We're both kind of fighting it out for who's working the hardest'

Having identified the 'lack of space' for both husband and wife to have simultaneous careers as headteachers, Beth admitted that her work-life balance still gave cause for concern, despite her pragmatic response to take a job as a consultant instead of moving into the highest echelons of school leadership. In the narrative, she made a causal link to her predilection for 'perfection':

> 'no matter where I go or what I choose to do, the feeling of always wanting to do that to the best of my ability always wipes out any good intentions about the time I spend at work or the time I work at home' (Transcript 2).

This was redolent of the 'pinch point' identified by Hochschild and Machung (1990): motherhood and career were assuming heavy emotional and time constraints for Beth, resulting in tension because she had neither the time nor the energy to do both to a level that would bring satisfaction. One result of this was her expressed guilt that her daughter was 'suffering… because she's not getting anywhere near the best of me in the time that she has available' (she did not explain how that 'suffering' manifested). It was notable that Beth thought that both the work and the family parameters were entitled to the 'best' of her. In using emotive language, she was also expressing guilt that she had not afforded paramount importance to the needs of her daughter. As explored in Chapter 2, the perceived primacy of the needs of the child is a descriptor of intensive motherhood (Hays 1996) and can be traced in all three of the narratives within this study.

Hoping to improve work-life balance and to secure some protected time for the family, Beth and John had recently begun to synchronise their diaries so as to divide home responsibilities more equitably in, they hoped, the best interests of their daughter. Here, Beth was perhaps trying to assume the role of a 'mother manager' (Glenn 1994, p.7), in that her aim was to distribute domestic responsibilities more equitably with John in order to release time to pursue her career and to reduce the likelihood that she was having to carry out a 'second shift' (Hochschild and Machung 1990) by assuming the greater portion of domestic responsibilities as well as her full-time job. Beth explained that it was not an easy exercise because of an unspoken 'power struggle' (Transcript 2) with John as to whose diary should take precedence, based upon the relative importance of each job and subsequent contribution to the material health of the household. She cited the weight of gendered history - where the male input to the household finances was seen as the most important contribution - yet noted that her salary, whilst lower, was equally vital:

> I think the difficulty is the scheduling part – some kind of power struggle goes on every time we do the scheduling which means we're both kind of fighting it out for who's working hardest. There's an unsaid thing about "Well I'm working til 6", "yes, well I've got this" - there's that tension all the time and the kind of tension of "my job's more important than your job" is the undercurrent to it all that is never resolved and is never really said. I suppose it's the mainly male dominant thing where they get to the level where they are the important person and the breadwinner, which has never really been the case in our house because the earnings – the earnings are not entirely equal, but they're certainly equal in terms of what contribution is required to our household, so it doesn't quite make sense, but I think it still always feels (like) that kind of power struggle where he feels that his job is more important' (Transcript 2).

The domestic 'power struggle' that Beth described was echoed in difficulties at work, again illustrative of the 'pinch point' (Hochschild 2012) that she was experiencing. Here the temporal nature of the research project should be acknowledged (Andrews et al 2013; Plummer 2001), because Beth brought specific preoccupations to the second discussion. She explained that, in a very recent meeting, her manager had asked her to improve some aspects of her administrative performance. In the narrative, she was keen to avoid making excuses and sought to reconcile the demands of her post with an analysis of her own strengths and weaknesses, finally admitting that she needed to 'manage to contain the work a little bit more' (Transcript 2). She explained that she felt tension because, having chosen to work as a consultant to have an input to school improvement (she described this as an 'emotive vision and belief'), she was now subject to the constraints of working within a business environment and had to reconcile her own beliefs with the realities of

education policies and practices that were based on neoliberal political imperatives. This had affected her approach to work:

> 'you feel like you have to do something because they're paying for it as opposed to doing what you believe is right and to me that makes quite a significant difference to how I approach it and how I can deliver… the quality comes from actually really wanting to make a difference and to do what's right in order to make a difference, rather than saying "this is what you've paid for, so this is what you'll get" (Transcript 2).

Beth acknowledged that this might have been somewhat utopian, given the national political context within which education provision was framed. It served as another example of her relative powerlessness and was also highly likely to have been the source of some conflict with what she described as 'authority' though, as has been illustrated above, that conflict was not a recent development.

Beth's Analysis and Explanation of her Career

As the final topic of the two discussions, I sought Beth's overall impressions of her career to date. She had difficulty in responding so, in an attempt to diffuse the apparently uncomfortable directness of the question, I asked what her mother might have to say about her career. That question invited her to develop threads from both discussions but as Beth had already spoken of her mother's exasperation with her daughter's desire to 'have it all', in hindsight perhaps a different line of questioning might have been more effective. Eventually – for there were long pauses on the recording – she said, tentatively: 'I think she would say something like "oh very successful but seems to get into quite a lot of situations where other people seem to be getting it wrong" but I think that's a personality and family trait' (Transcript 2). Again, Beth was here acknowledging her habitus (Bourdieu 1990) but also perhaps referencing psychological capital (West et al 2013). Having acknowledged this element of her personal and cultural script, she returned to her lack of a 'planned pathway or [career] map' and emphasised the reactive quality of her decisions. In reflective mode, she explained that she had only that morning visited her previous workplace. Over the course of the two interviews, she had spoken of how she had come to leave that post because of a clash with authority. The visit had led to her:

> 'actually realising what a lovely work environment that was, and how happy actually… I really enjoyed working there… but a lot of the time you're thinking the grass is greener and I'll move onto something better and I've sort of got to that point where I've realised it isn't,

> always, and to stop looking for the next thing the grass will be greener in and, actually thinking, "this time I've got to stay – I'll work through some of that stuff a bit more"' (Transcript 2).

In the final paragraphs of the transcript, she made an explicit link between motherhood and the need to be 'more sensible' in career terms, musing on the career script that she would like to pass on: 'I don't want my daughter to think you can be petulant and throw your toys out of the pram and that it will work for her'. She still maintained, however, that she was unable to offer her own definitive assessment of her career, saying instead that she could only see 'lots of "stuff"'. This was a further reflection of her assertion that a career should be planned or plotted, like geographical features on a map, and gave further clue to her adherence to the ideas of established career theory rather than to twenty-first century ideas about the construction of career. Given the direction that Beth's own career was now taking, with its increasing focus on working across institutions rather than for a single employer, this could explain the dissonance that she described when seeking to reconcile notions of 'career' with the reality of her own situation.

Analytical Reflections

Like the other participants, Beth was seeking to manage multiple roles across her working and personal lives, including as employee, mother, wife, daughter and sibling. In these interviews, she was also required to assume the dual roles of research participant and friend. She carried a personal cultural script drawn from upbringing, education and personal experience. In the discussions, she offered a perspective of self, constituted by that script but also dependent upon historic time (Savickas 2008). As a result of critical incidents at work, her self-concept, which she seemed primarily to express through notions of confidence, varied between the two interviews. Her narrative repeatedly indicated her view that a 'career' should involve a planned, hierarchical pathway, but her own working life had not followed such a pattern and there was evidence of dissonance, not least when she was unable to give the defining message of her career to date and said that she could only see 'stuff'. Her description of early career decisions included active agency ('I wanted to be a physiotherapist and that was the kind of career I'd chosen and I'd done work experience in a hospital') but, when health factors intervened, and she had had to make a different choice the narrative expressed a degree of passivity ('I was told…that perhaps what I ought to do was teaching').

The space provided in the narrative discussions gave Beth the opportunity to reflect upon her approach to work, both historically and in her current post. She also began to project to the future. In speaking about her career, she strongly acknowledged the role that emotion had played in her approach to her work and in associated decisions. As discussed in Chapter 2, at present, there is no significant body of literature on the impact that an individual's emotional life can have upon career decisions. An abstract concept, emotion is not readily measurable, and definitions are problematic. Within the social constructionist paradigm, emotions are theorised as the result of cultural experiences and social expectations, combined with emotion roles and scripts and the variations of language and interpretation (Fineman 2003). For instance, when Beth spoke of maintaining a 'professional front', or not wearing her 'heart on her sleeve', she was reflecting absorbed cultural norms governing acceptable behaviour in a job like hers. When she referred to 'emotional connections', she seemed to be referring to multiple feelings, including anger and guilt as well as loyalty, commitment or happiness. Crying in front of a line manager may contravene emotional 'etiquette' – described by Fineman as 'socially transmitted values of 'correct' emotional display' (2003, p.17) – but there is also the suggestion that it is a gendered response because women are considered more emotional beings than men, and emotion is considered dangerous because it is not 'rational' (Ahmed 2014). The narrative suggested that Beth's sister had sometimes served to reinforce that stereotype. Beth developed the theme of emotion through the discussions and, by the end of the second transcript, she was reflecting that behaviour that she had initially attributed to principles might instead have been petulance. That unflinching assessment should be set against a recurring theme of issues related to power or powerlessness.

Beth's career narrative was heavily influenced by interpersonal relationships in her work settings, ranging from repeated clashes with managers to what she described as supportive relationships with colleagues. She described the moderating influence of a current colleague, who was prepared to discuss issues with her. Beth had never had a mentor (formally or informally) and it seems that such a relationship might have been beneficial as she constructed – and, indeed, continued to develop – her career (Garvey et al 2018).

The transcripts included material lying at the intersection of gender, family and career. Maternal influence was a feature and Beth explicitly aspired to be like her own mother, in working whilst bringing up her daughter. Unlike her mother, however, Beth was working full time in a more senior post; her career could not have been defined as an adjunct to that of her husband and her income

was a necessary component of the family's finances. Still, she set the expectation that she would be able to offer 'the best' of herself simultaneously to family and employers, apparently superimposing the characteristics of Pocock's (2003) ideal worker (always available to employer and clients; without domestic commitments) on her wish to spend time supporting her daughter and enjoying family life.

Although there was some evidence of a more positive outlook at the end of the narrative, for much of the transcripts there was scant evidence of 'career well-being' (Kidd 2008). Drawing on previous knowledge of Beth's career, and in the light of events subsequent to the interviews, this was probably due in some part to the timing of the recordings that coincided with a particularly difficult period in her working life; thus, it highlighted the temporal nature of narratives. Beth repeatedly rued her lack of a 'planned pathway' but acknowledged her 'skill set'. Although working in a senior post, at a level akin to school headship, she was unsure of her future direction, not least because of the fluid policy environment in education and her dislike of the neoliberal, managerial and bureaucratic form that it had taken. Beth's analysis echoed Neary's (2019) findings relating to career counsellors. Beth narrated her story in terms of emotionally charged episodes, often involving conflict with colleagues, and admitted that she did not 'like when people aren't getting it right'. She also mused that she 'wanted to have it all' – to be a mother, have a career, run a home – but that even her own mother was telling her that her expectations were unachievable. Her work-life balance remained unsatisfactory, but she was hoping to take a degree of control in order to make improvements.

The final point of analysis for this case study is of the respective positions that Beth and I took within the research. The close friendship that existed between us prior to the research was described at the beginning of the chapter. For Speedy (2008), the job of the researcher is to go beyond what is told by a participant; to 'trouble' the edges of both the proffered narrative and the researcher's own responses. That approach is challenging and exacerbated when close friendship is present and the shadows within the relationship have already developed. As the researcher, I identified an instinctive response to avoid illuminating those shaded areas for fear of doing harm to the participant. This led to a tendency to normalise Beth's responses and offer reassurance, rather than pursue more challenging avenues in relation to her career. There was also a personal dimension to this, and it served to illuminate one of the aspects of auto/biographical research not fully evident at the beginning of the project. In this case study, it was more difficult to manage the different roles that I brought to the study; the ramifications of that did not become apparent until the process of

analysis had begun. In selecting Beth as a participant, a highly valued private relationship was brought into the public arena, however it was difficult to prioritise my role as a researcher over what I came to understand as my preferred role as a friend. Thus, a compromise was required that met the needs of the project as well as respecting the friendship. That was difficult to achieve, as the activities of 'normal life' continued alongside the research study. The subject matter relating to emotion may also have been a constraining factor – albeit subconsciously – on the analytical process: Beth had described how she reacted emotionally to certain situations and I was keen that my work should not provoke any upset. The factors described above influenced the representation of Beth's career story and this chapter has had several iterations, with a focus on successively deeper analyses to explore the relationship between us and its impact on my reactions to Beth's career narrative.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, Beth's career was explored alongside analysis of the friendship and my reflexive response to her story. Although this was a stand-alone case study, some of the material mirrored and developed themes identified in Anna's career story, particularly in relation to friendship and the gendered context of a contemporary working life. Themes identified in Beth's narrative were: hierarchy, weakness and empowerment; principles and emotion; gender; and motherhood. Taken together, the themes spoke of juggling, conflict and compromise as she sought to forge a career that would satisfy her emotional needs alongside more practical considerations such as family logistics, national education policy or material rewards. The second of Beth's interviews was recorded at a time of career stress and the content and tone of the narrative reflected that context. Initially, Beth struggled to describe her career and the difficulty appeared to stem from her long-held view that career should involve the matching of skills and abilities, deliberate planning, hierarchy and organisational boundaries, such as would be described by established career theory (Parsons 1909, Rodger 1952 or Holland 1985). The narrative suggested that she was entering a transitional phase of career, propelled by a desire to achieve greater control over the nature of the work that she undertook. This would have the key benefits of, firstly, satisfying her desire to work ethically and, secondly, offering greater flexibility to manage the demands of motherhood. In so doing, she would be moving away from a career located within a single organisation and starting to construct her own career (Savickas 2011) for the benefit of greater control of her wider life story (Savickas et al 2009).

The next chapter explores the career of the third and final participant, 'Angela'.

Chapter 7: 'Angela' 'I Never Thought of Myself as Having a Career'

Introduction

This chapter presents a case study of the career of my friend, 'Angela'. Following a brief pen portrait, the circumstances of her participation in the study are discussed. Next, the prior friendship and the subsequent impact upon the gathering of the research materials are explored. An analysis of the thematic content of the transcripts is provided and the chapter concludes with reflections on the chapter and a brief summary of the themes that identified in Angela's material.

Pen Portrait

'Angela', a pseudonym suggested by the participant, was 46 years old when the research interviews were recorded. She trained as a medical doctor and was working full time as a general practitioner (GP) in a large inner-city primary care health centre, where she was the senior partner. As such, she was the lead clinician and general manager of the practice. She was married to a fellow GP, whom she had met at medical school, and they had three children aged 21, 19 and 13 (as at June 2017) and a large, extended family network. Angela's late father had also been a GP working in South London. Although she chose an English name as her pseudonym, Angela and her husband were the children of immigrants from India, who settled in the United Kingdom in the 1960s. The family was living in suburban Greater London, close to where she grew up and subsequently attended medical school. Angela had always lived and worked within narrow geographical confines: members of her immediate family lived nearby. Except for short periods of statutory maternity leave, she had been in continuous employment since qualifying as a doctor. In addition to her work as a GP, she was a prominent member of a national medical society, had published academic papers and had also undertaken repeated further study in pursuit of interests complementary to her medical career. Notwithstanding the above, Angela's narrative suggested that she viewed career as a somewhat distant concept with little connection to her daily working life or wider academic interests.

Participation in the Study

Angela joined the study at a relatively late stage, after the first two sets of interviews had been completed. A replacement participant was required because one of the women from the original

research design had indicated that she wished to withdraw. Angela received the same background information to the research project as the other two participants, including a consent form (see Appendix 1). As the case studies are presented as stand-alone sections of the thesis, her late recruitment did not present any difficulties. Like the other participants, Angela was a mother and had an established career as a senior professional, hence it appeared that her story would complement the other case studies. The background to this is discussed elsewhere in the thesis but, in brief, the research participants were all women who were following careers characterised by restricted entry, selective progress and limited opportunities to ascend an organisational ladder (Young and Collin 2000). A further characteristic would be a period of formal training leading to a recognised qualification. As with the other two participants, I had originally met Angela through networks developed after the birth of my daughter – in this instance because our children were in the same school year – but we were not close friends. I approached her by e-mail, gave a brief description of my project and asked if she would agree to participate; she agreed readily. From previous social interactions, she was aware that I was researching women's careers. I did not specifically seek her participation because of her career as a doctor, but had recognised that her input might complement and bring a different perspective to the narratives provided by the earlier participants. Some literature on women's careers in accountancy had also referenced the careers of female general practitioners (Crompton and Lyonette 2011); further, it was suggested that general practice could offer a 'feminized' medical career (Khan 2012) and Angela's input to that debate was of interest.

A second prompt for inviting Angela to join the study was the knowledge that she was also undertaking her own research, drawing on the archive of a local heritage organisation. Here there was a further personal connection as my husband was a trustee of the organisation in question. The research formed part of a diploma through which Angela was exploring a keen interest in medical humanities and ethics. My own first degree in history and my teaching portfolio at my current institution therefore suggested some commonality of academic interest. That was an important consideration because, as indicated above, my prior relationship with her was more distant than those with the other participants. The shared academic interests established a key lens for the interviews that then took place. Adopting the (tacit) questions, 'who am I for you' and 'who are you for me' (Formenti 2014), we positioned ourselves as women with shared academic interests rather than a developed emotional connection. The following extract illustrates how, as the researcher, I used the common ground and prior knowledge in specifically requesting that she comment on her academic work, even though she did not apparently recognise it as part of her career:

> ‘I’m going to invoke prior knowledge here, which I normally try not to do, but you’re really interested in history and I know you’re really interested in the history of medicine – because of conversations we’ve had in different arenas! Do you want to talk a bit about where that’s come from and how that fits in to the overall pattern of career - if it does?’ (Transcript 1).

A discussion of the background to Angela’s work in medical humanities is included later in the chapter, in the section headed ‘Motherhood and Family’. The next part of the chapter turns to the details of the friendship between us.

The Friendship

As no two friendships are ever identical (Gouldner and Symons Strong 1987), the relationship with Angela was inevitably different to those with the other participants, albeit that it was again drawn from within structural lines of culture, education, class and – perhaps more simply – geography (Tillmann-Healy 2003). We had met socially, usually at school events, at parties or at dinner in a large group of women, but had not offered emotional support to each other or, indeed, met particularly frequently. Meetings tended to be coincidental rather than planned; in addition, there had been limited interaction on social media platforms. Due to work commitments, Angela was rarely to be seen at the school gates and her daughter had not joined the school until she was about seven years old. Angela had not been party, therefore, to initial socializing when the girls started school, neither was she part of school-based informal networks for childcare. I had, however, sat with her during social events and had enjoyed our conversations, finding common interests such as history and reading. We had exchanged book recommendations and repeatedly promised (usually in vain) to find time to meet more regularly. The burgeoning friendship also extended to our husbands, who had met at a few social events and also held some shared interests. This was not, then, a typical school gates friendship based on regular, short interactions that centred on the children, neither was it a ‘domestic friendship’ (Cronin 2015) because it did not form as a result of emotional or practical bonds directly arising from (early) motherhood.

When preparing to conduct the first interview, the emotional distance with Angela (as compared to the other participants) already seemed indicative of a different experience of research. I knew almost nothing of her life or career beyond superficial information about her family and her occupational area of medicine. This set different parameters to the other sets of interviews, where I

had regular contact with the participants, knew their families and had spoken before about their jobs. As a result, I held fewer preconceptions because it was not possible to identify, in advance, what the research might reveal. On a personal level, the emotional distance raised questions about the analysis and subsequent publication of the research materials once the interviews had been completed. The dilemmas caused by the overlap of friendship and research (Nowak and Haynes 2018; Owton and Allen-Collinson 2014; Tillmann-Healy 2003; Christman 1988) are challenging, however close or distant the relationship. In Angela's case study, the emotional distance noted above led to uncertainty in respect of my response to possible conflicts. That uncertainty led to some feelings of anxiety and a perceived need to defend my status as a researcher. (Hollway and Jefferson 2013). There was a consequent effect on the performative quality (Goffman 1959) of my interviewing, when I clearly felt some compulsion to establish and then cement my credentials with the participant. This was not a deliberately planned action. The following extract illustrates this when I display my 'expert knowledge' of career. Although this came relatively late in the second recording, I still felt the need to demonstrate my competence:

> Angela: 'I think if I worked in a big bank or in a law firm and I started as someone down here and I thought I had to work my way up somewhere...
>
> Christina: I think in accountancy, for example, if you go in as a graduate you know that if you pass the first set of exams you'll get a particular job title and then maybe two years later you'll get the next and up you go, and job titles are very recognised – so if you're a senior manager in one firm, you'd be doing the same sort of thing as a senior manager in another – as I understand it. So it's very hierarchical, and obviously you can specialise along the way but still within that framework, whereas education or medicine seems to have more diverse routes, opportunities' (Transcript 2).

Analysis of the discussion with Angela suggests that my discomfort had been compounded by the physical location of the interviews. As with the other participants, Angela had been asked where she would prefer to record the discussions and had chosen her own home. Even before the two interviews had taken place, therefore, a different dynamic had been established because, at their suggestions, the discussions with the other participants had been recorded at my house. Whilst Angela's choice almost certainly involved a degree of logistical convenience, it probably also reflected uncertainty on her part of what the process might involve, because she preferred to remain somewhere that she knew and where she felt comfortable. She had never been to my home, but I had visited hers for children's parties or social events. The change of interview venue, from my house to a participant's, did not at first appear significant, however it altered the character

and dynamic of the discussion. As a visitor to her home, I was aware that my study was impinging on her time; even though she offered sincere and generous hospitality, the arrangement to meet felt like a formal appointment with a consequent requirement to behave professionally and demonstrate credentials as a researcher.

The preceding paragraphs offered an analysis of my interactions with Angela. Those thoughts are mine alone because, in keeping with the plan for this study, further input on the research process was not gathered from the participants. It is, however, a potentially interesting area that could fruitfully be explored in a future study. I return to this point in the final chapter of the thesis.

Two discussions with Angela were recorded some sixteen weeks apart: this was longer than had initially been planned and, whilst not conducive to a flowing discussion, was indicative of the overlap and tensions between research and wider life. Angela's availability was limited due to the demands of family, job and her academic research; an injury had affected my ability to work. The first discussion was interrupted after approximately forty-five minutes when Angela left to attend to something in the kitchen. In the light of what she later said about leaving the tyranny of the family kitchen, this was a somewhat ironic development. When she returned, the recording device failed to capture the conversation so approximately fifteen minutes of the interview was lost. I had made some brief field notes soon after the interview so, whilst the loss of the material was frustrating, the general meaning of what she had said was preserved albeit not the verbatim transcript of those final few minutes. There appears to have been no detrimental impact on the project.

That first interview was held on an autumnal Sunday in the late afternoon and was followed by an informal supper involving both our immediate families and her niece. We sat in a separate room, a sitting room that was closed off from the rest of the house and did not feel as if it were used very often. Although we sat on adjacent sofas, the whole effect was somewhat formal. The doors were closed but, on the recording, the sounds of food preparation and chatting are clearly audible. Even as we were discussing career, family was never far away both metaphorically and physically. The second interview took place on a weekday evening in school term time and, on that occasion, I went alone. Then, at Angela's suggestion, we sat in a large open-plan area at the back of the house. I was struck by the very large dining table, providing a visual representation of the size of Angela's extended family and the large numbers for whom she had regularly catered. We also sat on sofas in

that room, but it was a more relaxed setting than the formal sitting room where we had recorded the previous discussion. The second recording includes the sounds of a personal training session for Angela's daughter in their home gym, plus regular noises emitted by the alarm system for the house. As during the first discussion when the family had been audible, again the personal and the professional overlapped. The personal training session served to bring to life some of what Angela had disclosed in the first discussion, where she had spoken of her decision to stop taking her youngest child to various activities and, instead, to bring the activities to their home. After the recording, we chatted over a glass of wine. This was a more relaxing conversation, after what felt like the business of our meeting had been concluded. In the meantime, Angela's husband had arrived home from work and was beginning to prepare their evening meal, so I returned home.

Angela received each transcript a short time after the respective interviews and was asked to comment and to suggest amendments as she saw fit. The first transcript already contained a detailed description of a typical working day, but she added further material such that it provided what she felt to be completely accurate information. The amendments were all factual rather than concerned with the nuance of what she had said and served further to highlight the 'busyness' that is a strong feature of her career narrative. She made no comments on the second transcript.

Conceptualisation of Career

'I never thought of myself as having a career'

As the analysis of Angela's transcripts began, I delayed the thematic analysis of the specific content and instead considered her abstract ideas about 'career'. As with the other participants, at no point in either interview had she been asked to define her understanding of 'career': her ideas emerged in response to different prompts and were not always consistent. As stated previously, in setting the parameters for the research, a broad definition of career had been adopted, offering the possibility that 'career' could encompass paid and unpaid work and sequential rather than hierarchical tasks (Arthur et al 1989). Angela was asked to give an overview of her career at the beginning of the discussion, however initially offered only the headline facts of occupation and date of qualification:

> 'OK so I'm a GP. I've been a GP for 16 years, qualified as a doctor 21 years ago and I'm quite senior – the most senior post in my profession and (pause) what other kind of things would you like to know about?' (Transcript 1)

In pausing, then questioning what further information was required, it appeared that 'career', was a difficult concept for Angela; in addition, she sought further clarification of how she could help with the study. This mirrored the responses of the other participants and the common difficulty suggests that the individual women were not used to applying the concept of career to their own working lives. The wish to help was also a common reaction. It was clear that an 'easier' question was required, and I turned the discussion to the daily routine of her job instead of her career. Angela's response was qualitatively different, and she spoke at length, clearly finding it easier to describe the practical details of her job. When narrating her working day, she focused on tangible tasks rather than the abstract concept of career:

> 'I wake up at any time between 3-5am, make coffee and sit at my desk until 6am when I wake everyone else. This gives me time to sort emails, read news etc. I have family commitments – after dropping my daughter to school I'll go straight to work (1hr journey) and start off with a very busy surgery, pre-booked appointments and walk-in patients. Many of them will know which days I'm in, so I can usually – 70% of the time - predict who I'll be seeing. Then the morning is very full-on in terms of one patient after another, interrupted with phone calls, door knocking, telephone ringing, messaging – followed by, as long as it's straightforward, some paperwork, going through blood results, any tasks, repeat prescriptions which take time. I have other roles within the practice in terms of overviewing certain patient outcomes, for instance smears, flu vaccines, low uptake of cancer screenings and monitoring of various diseases, so every day I will have some smear results to look at, which is my responsibility. I will have the responsibility of looking through certain hospital correspondence and then any other unexpected items that may happen throughout that morning, for instance someone at home who's unwell and they need a visit, an extra something that makes every day very different, and then I may have usually a meeting with the other doctors and nurses and staff in the surgery which usually lasts about one hour. One of my staff will go out and get sandwiches and we'll probably have a little touch-base and general chit chat with colleagues before we get to the main list on the agenda. Those meetings vary – sometimes they are very pre-planned. Sometimes I'm doing teaching – I tend to do most of the clinical teaching in the surgery, so I may have had to prepare a slide show on a certain topic depending on what's happening currently' (Transcript 1).

Angela had only received brief information on the project by e-mail and there had been no additional discussions before the interviews were recorded. It is therefore likely that she had not prepared any responses in advance. As noted above, once the question was applied to her working day instead of 'career', she spoke fluently and at some length, providing a comprehensive and detailed overview of the extensive range of tasks and functions on an average day. She stressed her extreme busyness, but initially made few negative comments about the nature or weight of her workload despite, for example, stating that she sometimes started working at 3am. As the

conversation progressed, she appeared to suggest that, although her working life carried many of the hallmarks of an established career, she herself did not conceptualise it as a 'career'. She explained that she viewed career through the metaphor of a ladder, involving hierarchical progress and what she described as the need to apply for successively senior posts. As her own working life had not followed that pattern (for example, only once had she been required to apply for a job), she explained that she did not think of herself as having a career. This extract is from the middle of the second transcript when Angela was being encouraged to move from describing the minutiae of her job and take an overview of her career:

Christina	'If I ask you what's good about your career, what's your response?
Angela	Do you know, I never really thought of myself as having a career. Maybe because I don't feel like I'm on any ladder going up somewhere. I always think of a career as a ladder' (Transcript 2).

Inkson et al (2014) recognise that an individual might deny ownership of a 'career' if she has a fixed idea of how it should be characterised and assesses that her own working life does not match that characterisation. Such an individual would therefore give priority to the subjective career over the objective. From Angela's narrative, it seemed clear that she would be able to construct a curriculum vitae strongly indicative of a successful career, taking measures of 'success' to include seniority, national prominence and level of qualification. As a senior general practitioner, Angela had also attained a level of financial reward as evidenced by material possessions and lifestyle. (It should be noted, however, that this was not in her narrative and there is no evidence that future financial recompense had influenced her decision to study medicine.) Angela had developed her career over time, building her expertise and extending her knowledge. She had not, however, had to apply for a sequence of different positions to progress in her field, that progress had not been measurable in landmarks such as successively senior job titles, and she noted that she had not been forced to 'fight' for her career because jobs had 'come to' her:

> 'I've never applied for a job, it's always come to me. The only time I ever applied for a job was when I had maternity leave with my first child and I couldn't complete my first junior post so I had to apply for a job for a few months to gain that and there were two people that had applied for this job and I turned up late for an interview and I thought there's no way I'm going to get it but I got the job! I've never had to fight for a thing' (Transcript 2).

There is a contradiction in the first line of the extract, because she went on to say that she had had to apply for at least one job. Her medical career will also have begun with applications and competitive interviews for entrance to medical schools. The idea that career should involve a degree of 'fight' suggests a link to one of Collin and Young's (2000) categorisations of elite or professional careers, where limited entrance to an occupation is then compounded by limited access to opportunities for promotion, implying the survival of the fittest. Angela's narrative suggests a view of career as a hierarchical ladder of externally imposed dimensions, ascent of which was only possible through engagement with strategic job moves. In her case, there had been no deployment of such a strategy, hence her initial difficulty in discussing her own career.

Most of Angela's working hours were taken up with personal consultations with patients within the confines of her room in the surgery. Although she held regular meetings of the wider staff group within the medical practice, and carried management responsibility for those staff, the work of a GP – as described by Angela – was largely individual in nature, thanks to the focus on individual patients, and there was limited hierarchical progression beyond senior partner.

The quotation heading this chapter, 'I only talked about my life', is from e-mail correspondence with Angela after the completion of the first interview and suggests that she did not equate wider 'life' with career identity. The assertion that she had never thought of herself as having a career (Transcript 2, extract *supra*) was contradicted by other material within the narrative, for example a discussion of the relationship between career and motherhood. (This is explored later in the chapter.) Those apparent contradictions perhaps arose from her expression of different subjectivities: when she spoke as a mother, she noted the intrusion of motherhood on career, and vice versa. When she considered 'career' in an impersonal and abstract manner, she made no connection to her own working life because (as the extracts above illustrate) she had formed the opinion that it did not match the pattern that a career should take. Thus, her subjective evaluation of her working life did not construct a story that indicated 'career'. This contrasted with her 'objective' career (Savickas 2011, p.15), that which is observable to others, in terms of the type and chronology of employment and other work-related activities: Angela's career conformed to the pattern of a senior career in medicine.

For Savickas (2011), though a person is the author of his or her own career narrative, the story is never written in isolation and always reflects social contexts. The reasons for Angela's initial denial of career were not fully explained in her narrative, though shadowed areas of the story hinted at lack of choice or control. Those issues are explored below, drawing explanatory power from Bourdieu's concept of habitus, through which a person's actions should be explained in broader terms than can be described as 'rational calculation' (Bourdieu 1990, p.76). Habitus connects the past and the future with the present; individuals are not constrained by structure, however neither are they free to construct their own biographies. Class is lived intuitively and subjectively, but family background is crucially important because perceptions of the world are shaped by the family's place within social structure (Bourdieu 1984). Family background featured strongly in Angela's career narrative, beginning with her decision to study medicine and, in this context, the work of Arulmani (2014) on 'cultural preparedness' offers additional explanatory power, as discussed below.

The Thematic Content of the Transcripts

The Decision to Study Medicine

'I didn't know anything different'

In both interviews, Angela discussed what had first led her to a career in medicine and, specifically, to work as a GP. The purpose of revisiting this material in the second discussion was to explore whether the transcript of the first interview had prompted any further thoughts that might offer deeper insight. Whilst not wishing to predict her responses, her approach to the decision-making process was of interest and I had anticipated some discussion of skills or aptitudes and, possibly, the dawning of a gradual interest in medicine. In hindsight, those expectations were probably drawn from my experiences as a career counsellor with young people. Angela's response was starker than anticipated, and consistent in both interviews. Her occupational choice had been straightforward, she said: she had been 'groomed' for a career in medicine. Despite the wide range of careers that are available within medicine, that grooming had also apparently extended to general practice, the location of all her work after qualification. If a person is groomed for a career, it does not suggest that they have been able to apply agency or, indeed, rational calculation, hence a discussion of Angela's habitus (Bourdieu 1990) helps to shed light on the decision.

As the daughter of a GP, Angela had grown up in a medical environment and she described working in the surgery during school holidays and accompanying her father on visits to patients' homes. The

narrative contained strong language where Angela discussed career choice: medicine had been 'ingrained'; there had been 'absolute' expectation (from her parents) that it was what she would do; she had been 'groomed' and knew nothing different. Given that Angela was a senior manager responsible for child protection, it is likely that she was aware of the impact of language such as 'groomed'. She appeared to be suggesting that she had had little choice or agency. Everything, from schoolwork, to the holidays spent in the family surgery, to formal work experience, was focussed by her (and, she indicated, *for* her) upon a career in medicine. The transcripts suggested that it had continued to be a family project, not least when Angela married shortly after qualifying, quickly had a child and felt pressure from the family to return to work so that she could complete post-qualification professional requirements. Childcare and other domestic support had always been readily available from the extended family; career and family were therefore intertwined, from the initial impetus to study medicine to the development and ongoing management of her career.

When pressed to discuss the circumstances around her career choice, Angela could not determine whether the impetus to study medicine had been a personal choice or a matter of habitus (Bourdieu 1990), set by expectation and subsequent management on the part of her parents:

> 'It was ingrained in me from a very small age. I didn't know anything different and I really wanted to do that… I'd spent summers in the surgery... I still sometimes see the patients now – they know me from when I was very small – so I always wanted to go there… I had done my work experience in general practice. I had always read around things that were to do with medicine. I never actually thought of doing anything else. There wasn't a Plan B' (Transcript 1).

Here, Angela's description of the mechanics of her career choice and the broader meanings present in the narrative should be explored. For Arulmani (2014), culture has a material effect on the occupational choices made by individuals, because engagement with work can be viewed as one key manifestation of that culture: 'work as a human activity is deeply embedded in human culture' (Arulmani 2014, p.83). Thus, certain careers are imbued with value based on the beliefs of that culture, such as 'prestige, status, and social acceptability' (Arulmani 2014, p.92). Medicine is specifically referenced as a career highly prized by middle class Indian families, and Angela echoed that point in her narrative, with reference to herself and to her children's generation. The narrative also suggested that the decision to study medicine had not been entirely her own. In career counselling in Western societies, the focus is usually firmly placed on individual occupational choice

(Arulmani 2014; Savickas 2011). These transcripts suggested, however, that Angela had not exercised individual choice because her career path was so closely tied to familial expectation. There was evidence of strong paternal influence and deliberate intervention (Young and Friesen 1992) in her decision to study medicine, as in her father's behaviour at parents' evenings, described in this extract:

> 'It was considered really high status, especially to go round and tell everybody that your son or daughter was doing medicine… I cannot remember a single parents' evening where my dad did not ask the teachers about whether I had the capability of getting into medical school. I don't know what I'd have been like had I not wanted to do medicine and had I wanted to do something else and may have rebelled but actually I wanted to, and I can't really tell if that was because I really wanted to or because I was groomed into it'(Transcript 2).

It appeared that the same pressure had not been applied to her brother, though Angela did not specifically confirm that in the transcripts. When asked directly to talk about her family, Angela concentrated on her father, who had assumed dominant influence. (Here, it should be noted that the discussion was about career, not more general matters.) There were significantly fewer references in the transcripts to her mother or brother. The powerful occupational inheritance (Aldrich and Kim 2015; Rytina 1992) from father to daughter bestowed various types of human capital (Bourdieu 1992) that were important in the development of her career throughout its various stages. Elements included the acquisition of early knowledge of the profession or the domestic support provided by the extended family so that she could return to work (reluctantly, she indicated: explored below) after successive periods of maternity leave. Through her family background and her early experiences of medical life, Angela had absorbed work-related values and attitudes (Aldrich and Kim 2015), including the notion that a career in medicine conferred high social status, as she indicated in the extract above. The narrative did not indicate that, as an adolescent, Angela had wished (or perhaps felt able) to deviate from the medical path set by her father; rather, she gave an impression that she had not questioned her future path.

In the narrative, Angela did not specifically discuss why her father had been so keen that his daughter should study medicine, however the extract given on the previous page offered a clue. In addition to securing occupational inheritance, in having a child at medical school, her parents received kudos within the community because medicine was seen as an elite career (Arulmani 2014). Angela also noted in passing that such attitudes were still prevalent: no parent, she suggested,

would be disappointed should a child choose to study medicine. Neither of her two older children was at medical school and this suggested that they had not been subject to the same parental pressure as their mother.

Notwithstanding Angela's stated lack of choice over her career, medicine had provided a comfortable lifestyle and a level of job satisfaction with which she expressed contentment. Much of her narrative presented a measured - even dispassionate and unemotional - overview of her life and career. Where there had been (or still remained) restrictions, such as her parents' insistence that she studied in London and lived at home, or the frustrations of present-day medical bureaucracy, she dismissed them as unimportant. For example, when asked whether her expressed lack of choice over career had mattered, she said not: she still could not imagine having followed another career and was satisfied with her present situation, as this extract from Transcript 2 illustrates:

Christina	'Do you think that (lack of choice) matters?
Angela	I don't think it really matters. Even now, I can't imagine doing anything else.'

This reference to being unable to imagine a different career was interesting in the light of other parts of Angela's narrative. As discussed, her life seemed to have followed a preordained path into a medical career. When that had appeared threatened by her pregnancies, the family had taken decisive action and identified the optimum course for her. The narrative indicated tension: internal tension arising from a desire to be at home with the babies as against the wish to pursue a medical career, but also a degree of resentment driven by the family's insistence on the latter:

Christina	'Having qualified, you obviously wanted to carry on working when you had your first child?
Angela	There was a lot of want and there was a lot of pressure from family to carry on working.
Christina	In what sense?
Angela	So my father was a doctor. He's passed away now but was very keen that I continue and although not forceful there was a very indirect pressure from him that I shouldn't take too much time off as I'd have difficulty getting back in – and I'd got so far, and there was everybody else to look after the children.
Christina	And what did you think?

Angela I understood. There was a little bit of resentment – I wanted to be the motherly [type]. I mean it was my first child and you want to be there for them – you don't just want to hand them over at 6 months or 4 months – you want to do all those things' (Transcript 1).

From a distance of over twenty years since the birth of her first child, Angela remembered 'a little bit of resentment', however her first reaction was that, even at a time of raw emotion, she had understood the family's actions. At no point in the narrative did she express anything other than mild resentment; her voice was always reasonable, including when she described her own apparent lack of agency. There was a discernible lack of emotion in her words, as they were spoken on the recordings and then captured in the written transcripts. She was accepting of external circumstances and carried on dutifully. She was, perhaps, the 'good girl' described by Belenky et al, (1997).

In the extract above, Angela spoke of her father and of 'everybody else', suggesting that the decision-making that led to her initial career choice, and subsequent trajectory, had represented a collective effort. Arulmani (2014) notes that such collectivism can provide protection for members of the group in question, in return for loyalty:

> 'If independent decision-making is not directly nurtured in collectivist societies (as is probable), then it is also likely that the individual would have been enculturated to view self-assertion as being selfish and divergence from family and parental directions as the equivalence of disobedience' (Arulmani 2014, p.90).

This offers a more nuanced perspective on Angela's career choices and highlights the role that cultural background has played. The next section explores Angela's experience of motherhood and the subsequent impact on her career.

Motherhood and Family

'When you have your first you want to be there'

Although asked no specific questions on motherhood, Angela introduced it at several points in the two interviews. She noted that the births of her first two children had coincided with the end of her academic training but before the completion of other requirements and had, therefore, threatened to disturb her career in medicine. This early phase of Angela's career was explored in the second interview:

> ‘When I look back, I feel thankful to my family for making me go back (laughs) because I think had I left and not gone back I would have had to redo training or recertify in certain things. I’m very lucky in that my in-laws and my parents were very young when I had my first children. My mother in law was younger than I am now. They did everything, in fact they didn’t want me around – they wanted to take over the grandchildren and just have them, and I think when you have your first you want to be there and you want to do everything, and I was really enjoying it and the thought of going back to hospital medicine – it just wasn’t a priority and I just couldn’t think beyond a certain time – I couldn’t think ‘oh well I’ll have to recertify’ or the exams that I’ve done so far are going to be invalid, but now looking back I think now that I’ve done all that and the children are growing up – actually they had a really good input from grandparents, and grandparents did more for them than I would have done being rushed off my feet at that age’ (Transcript 2).

Here, she offered a more detailed but still neutral reflection on that time in her life and career. Angela’s tone was deferential: she thanked her family for knowing best; she said that she had been ‘lucky’ because they had taken a longer-term view and ensured that she qualified as a doctor. Set against those positive sentiments was an elegiac quality to the narrative: ‘they didn’t want me around – they wanted to take over the grandchildren and just have them’. She noted that her own priorities had been different because she had been enjoying time at home with the young children.

Angela was born in London in the 1960s, to parents who had recently emigrated to the UK from India. When she discussed her time at medical school, she referred to ‘Asian parents’, characterised as restricting their children’s opportunities to live away from home, drink alcohol or go out at night. She said that, although they had wanted to her to live at home whilst a student, her parents had not limited her activities (though she noted that she had felt no desire to rebel). There was a deferential quality to the narrative: she appeared never to have questioned the path set for her. It was of interest that she had referred to ‘Asian parents’ because, given the strong influence that her father had had on her decision to study medicine, it seemed plausible that the story reflected ethno-cultural considerations. When explaining how the family had stepped in to look after her young children so that she could pursue her career, Angela seemed to be describing a strongly communal approach to life, characteristic of Asian culture (Arulmani 2014), that had continued when the older children went university. The following extract illustrates the extent to which Angela felt compelled to offer basic practical support to those adult offspring and was able to achieve it through the ministrations of their grandparents, aunts and uncles:

> Angela ‘I still rely on them a lot – the older two are at university – grandparents live near there – they will often go and take food for them at weekends; they’ll

go to grandparents and get their laundry done there. I don't have to even rush to see them to do anything with the ones at university. They're still very helpful… And it's not just grandparents. I have a brother and my husband has a brother and a sister and they do the same – [my brother-in-law] has a daughter at university in London. She'll come here, and we'll do her shopping etc and take her back and in fact they do the same for [my elder daughter] – my sister in law will cook and pack food for her.

Christina Do you think that's a cultural thing?

Angela (Long pause.) We've not lived together. We've always lived separately. (Pause.) May be cultural but I see family units in our extended family where they don't get on, so I don't know. I compare – I'd say it was cultural if we lived together. I think as we don't live together it would just be like anybody – any grandchildren going to stay with their grandparents.

Christina Your family does seem to be particularly – the bonds seem to be really close.

Angela The main bond is actually between the grandparents and the grandchildren.'

(Transcript 2)

Given that the children were then adults, it was interesting that Angela still carried a detailed mental pattern of day-to-day responsibility for their basic needs, as identified by Waller and Swisher (2016), and relied on the grandparents and other family members to fulfil basic domestic tasks. As indicated above, when asked whether that represented a cultural response (a closed and perhaps rather clumsy question), her reply – which included lengthy pauses whilst she considered her words carefully – was one of denial. This raised a dilemma, because the situation appeared to reflect the communal norms of Asian family life and would not generally arise in my white, British, cultural background and experience. Clearly, this reflected a set of assumptions on my part and, whilst this aspect of Angela's story could have been analysed via an ethno-cultural lens, it was important to remain sensitive to the meanings that she expressed in her narrative. The issue was therefore deliberately left in the shadows of the transcripts and was not, therefore, subjected to full analysis out of respect to Angela.

Strong and consistent family influence was discernible in Angela's career story, past and present, and the narrative suggested that both beneficial and constraining effects had resulted. Angela herself was clear that the extensive support provided by her parents and parents-in-law had enabled her to fulfil the requirements for qualification as a doctor because good care had been taken of her young children whilst she worked long hours in a hospital. As indicated earlier in this chapter, there had been a personal cost, however: she had felt pressurised to return to work and thus unable to be 'motherly' when the children were very young. She expressed a degree of regret that long working hours had left her unavailable to help the children with homework, however she stressed that her 'main purpose in life was to bring up my children and I'd always felt that my work was the bit that I did in my spare time' (Transcript 2). This indicated a tension between her working and maternal identities (Thompson et al 2011) which ebbed and flowed in accordance with the needs of her children, the requirements of her job and her other interests.

Angela's narrative reflected a strong view that it was important to transmit social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) to children. Vincent and Ball (2006, p.137), suggest that this is a key preoccupation of middle-class parents who often strongly focus on educational enrichment for their children - such as music lessons or private tutoring – while developing and maintaining 'all-encompassing engagement with the child'. (This is not to suggest that other groups do not also place a premium on educational achievements.) They draw upon Bourdieu, in explaining that this provision of enrichment represents occluded but 'socially most determinant' educational investment (Vincent and Ball 2006, p.17). The following extract illustrates this desire to inculcate cultural capital and, also, to pursue strategies that Hays (1996, p.5) labels 'intensive motherhood': parenting strategies that are, *inter alia,* child-centred and labour intensive.

> Angela: 'The career that has been there, even though it may have been slower than it could have been, did hinder how I would have wanted to have looked after my children. I would have liked to have done more homework with them. I would have liked to have overseen maybe in their early years or in year 5/6 when they're really having to work more, I would have liked to have been there doing things with them rather than being tired or not having the time to sit through their maths etc. When you see other mothers who can do that, you know, and their children are doing well I think that's when you miss it and you think would my child have actually done better if I was with them more? You know you do ask yourself that question.

Christina But then now that the older two are at university...

Angela I have learned actually that when a child really wants to do something then they do it, but it's giving them that opportunity. You know I've done my bit of running around with tennis lessons and tutors and music lessons and in fact the older two – had I not done that – they've gone and done whatever they wanted to do, so none of them have gone into playing tennis professionally, or the piano professionally (laughs) and I think probably if I look at myself I was the same. If I wanted to do something, I would do it. But I suppose you think you have to give them that opportunity.

Christina Why do you think that?

Angela Well I suppose if I had not taken them to tennis or to learn the piano then I might have missed out on – it may have been their thing.'

(Transcript 1)

In this extract, Angela explained that she had sought to provide educational opportunities and consequent accrual of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) for the children; she had deliberately sought to deliver 'actually usable resources and powers' (Bourdieu 1984, p.114), albeit that she could now recognise that some of these efforts had failed once the children had expressed their own interests and preferences. She described how, consequently, she had adopted a different style of parenting for her youngest child, who was the only one left at home. Angela described it as being 'more grandparenty':

> 'I don't drag her around to loads of tennis lessons or tutors. If we do anything, it's either got to be something that's very, very local – so she'll go to piano to the lady down the road – or it has to be something in the house. So she loves personal training and her personal trainer comes to the house and we don't spend hours in traffic going anywhere so that's really such a big difference to the other two. She's also much stronger minded – she just gets on with things – she comes home and gets on with all her homework and has it all done, but when there's a project she'll want to do it and that's because *she'll* want to do it. In fact I don't sit with her and do any maths. I will help her with the topics that I have a real interest in, but she'll come to me for them. And maybe I'm being more grandparenty towards her because I've had her later' (Transcript 1).

Although Angela was suggesting this phase of parenting to be more relaxed, the description of tutors and personal trainers still retained the vestiges of 'intensive motherhood' (Hays 1996). As well as

hinting that she was more attuned to her youngest daughter's own preferences, here Angela also indicated that she had grown more protective of her own 'free' time. She was now solidly established in her career and that, taken in parallel with ongoing family support with childcare, enabled her to devote time to academic interests. This was perhaps a form of self-care and, in taking a lighter approach to parenting, Angela was able to ignore the 'myth of motherhood' (Horwitz 2004, p.52) that the needs of the children should always be paramount and that the mother was the only person able to properly care for the child. Given the family's income and the large house in which they lived, it was likely that she had accessed additional domestic help, though it was not specified in the narrative. It did appear that that Angela had identified what she considered to be 'good enough' mothering, to borrow Winnicott's term (Winnicott 1971), and that there had been a beneficial effect on her ability to pursue personal interests.

Whilst the extended family had played an enabling role, principally through the provision of childcare, she also identified family life as having constrained her career. For example, she spoke of numerous family functions and explained how attendance had eroded time that might have been spent developing her career. Progress along what she described as 'a pathway' (implying the velocity and trajectory of her career) had, therefore, 'slowed'. Angela differed from the other participants in the study because she had two older children as well as her thirteen-year-old daughter; she was therefore able to apply a degree of hindsight to her narrative when she discussed the parenting of the first two children; notably, less emotion was discernible in the discussion of her experiences.

When Angela discussed the current phase of her research work, the narrative also hinted at a degree of withdrawal from family life, both physically - in that she retreated to her study – and psychologically. This was relevant to career because Angela had herself identified that family obligation had, in the past, been constraining. For example, she described how, in the recent past, weekends had been taken up with parties and other social events because of the size of the extended family. In both transcripts, she spoke (unprompted) of the tyranny of the kitchen and the relief that she felt after releasing herself from time-consuming cooking:

> 'So I'm not really interested in cooking any more. You know there have been times where with three children in the house and a huge family you could spend the whole day doing the cooking. That's not there now.' (Transcript 1)

> I completely detest it now. I've done my time. I feel like I've had a 50-year sentence in the kitchen! I'm very happy to eat very simple things and not spend ages making something from scratch. I had a phase where I was making cakes. Waste of time: just buy one!'
>
> (Transcript 2)

Angela linked liberation from the kitchen to the most recent phase of her career, where she had enthusiastically embraced academic study. In Ann Oakley's study of housework (Oakley 1974) a link was suggested between high status jobs and dissatisfaction with housework, under which umbrella she would place family cooking. Since Angela had freed herself from the family's culinary demands - and, as noted above, had adopted a less intensive style of parenting for her youngest daughter - she had time to study. Family chores had made way for personal interests. If, as described earlier in this chapter, she carried occupational inheritance from her father (Aldrich and Kim 2015; Rytina 1992), she also identified a direct academic inheritance from her mother, who had studied history as a young woman in India. As part of her initial training, Angela had opted to pursue a specialisation in the medical humanities; she explained in her narrative that she had wanted to echo her mother. Although she had expanded her interests, her field of play was still firmly located within the habitus of parental experience (Bourdieu 1984). The children had grown up and required less direct supervision, thus she had been able to devote more time to studying and, as indicated above, had been able to reduce some of her other domestic commitments. Here, she explained the importance of the academic studies:

> 'The family will often ask me what I'm working on and I'll be reading something or studying something or doing the research. I don't really feel like it's working because I enjoy it, it's <u>my</u> time out. In fact there can be chaos in the house and I can just go into the study and I'll just research a bit more - find a few more newspaper clippings and that's for me. It is my down time. In fact, I get frustrated if I don't have it' (Transcript 2).

In the transcripts, she connected that further study to her medical practice as a GP, expressing the view that exploration of the medical humanities produced doctors with greater empathy. As a further benefit, historical solutions could be applied to modern-day diagnostic problems. Academic interests had led Angela to membership of a national society, and she was playing an increasingly prominent role. Despite voicing those connections, Angela did not initially consider that academic study formed part of her career because, as she said, it was not 'going anywhere': it was not leading anywhere on her metaphorical career ladder.

The tone of the narrative when Angela discussed her academic work was positive and enthusiastic. In contrast to the recitative quality of some of the discussion around day-to-day life as a general practitioner, she spontaneously expressed emotions such as enjoyment, frustration and fulfilment. The impetus for further study had arisen from her mother's example (though she did not say that it was as a direct result of any specific personal intervention from her mother), so was still located within family boundaries. Angela suggested that she had been conscious of a desire to develop a tangible academic connection to her mother, hence she had begun to study medical humanities as an undergraduate. She had been a successful student and had won a prestigious academic prize. More broadly, Angela's interest in the humanities, history and ethics pointed to a desire to create space for herself and to promote reflexive consideration of the way in which she practised medicine. As West noted, 'Doctors have been taught to distrust their personal stories in the name of big science' (West 2001, p.208), however it appears that some of those barriers were beginning to fracture in recognition of the positive role that broader and more discursive disciplines could play.

The transcripts hinted that, whilst her medical career had arisen from 'grooming' and subsequent duty, by contrast, her academic work represented greater personal choice and enthusiastic interest. Whilst it would be possible to construct a link that attributed the former solely to her father's influence and the latter to her mother's, that suggestion was not discussed directly, hence it was not appropriate to pursue such an analysis without further input from the participant. Family influence, howsoever applied, was a clear theme in Angela's career, however the narrative suggested a less direct attitude to the careers of her own children; thus occupational inheritance (Aldrich and Kim 2015; Rytina 1992) for the next generation had been dissipated.

The Influence of Gender

'I don't feel that being a woman [is relevant]'

Angela was working in what she described as 'the most senior role' within the general practice. In the narrative, she refuted the suggestion that gender had influenced the nature or progress of her career. Unlike other women who might have followed a career in general practice because of its family-friendly characteristics such as the possibility of fixed or part-time hours (Crompton and Lyonette 2011), or the ability to control those hours without endangering future career prospects, her decision had been 'ingrained' thanks to her experiences at a young age, as discussed earlier in the chapter. She did, however, acknowledge that gender influenced some aspects of her work, for example when a patient requested a consultation with a female doctor. In most other situations, as

she said, 'I don't feel that being a woman (is relevant). I forget. I could easily be a man!' (Transcript 2). A point to note here is that most of her working day was spent with patients in her consulting room. As the doctor, the patients came to her. Under the auspices of the National Health Service, she was offering a service in heavy demand in her own surgery. Women were very visible within general practice and the covert (and possibly unintentional) gender discrimination experienced by Anna in the field of accountancy was not evident in Angela's narrative.

Angela also maintained the irrelevance of gender when applied to her management responsibilities, though she did joke about stereotypical male and female roles, the former involving 'wires and plugs' and the latter relating to 'pretty pictures' and 'dusting' (Transcript 2). She acknowledged her femininity, saying that she felt most comfortable in her jewellery, dresses and heels. As on several other occasions during the interviews, her responses appeared extremely measured. There was no suggestion of any difficulty, bar matters relating to childcare. Here, gender appeared to assume relevance. She did not refer to her husband in either transcript, except when specifically asked about his attitude to her career when they were new parents and the decision was taken that she should return to work (Transcript 2). She did not cite him as an influence on her career (even though they had met at medical school, had parallel careers and were working in the same medical practice), nor did she reference any input from him when discussing maternity and parenthood. She noted that her responsibility for her youngest daughter had an impact on her ability to arrive at work as early as she might prefer but continued to drive the child to school rather than access other means of transport. She had highly developed notions of 'good' parenting and intensive motherhood (Hays 1996), probably arising from intergenerational and cultural legacies as well as from her location within the middle classes (Thompson et al 2011).

Analytical Reflections

Angela's presentation of her career story was almost entirely positive in character. There appeared to be a marked absence of agency, but the outcome was a career with which she repeatedly expressed satisfaction. Overall, there was a lack of emotion – both positive and negative – in the transcripts, even when she spoke of very personal matters such as early experiences of motherhood and her reluctant return to work. As Belenky et al (1997, p.65) suggest, the picture that she painted was that she had been a 'good girl', largely obedient and conforming to expectations, whether dealing with career choice, motherhood or irritating NHS directives. The narrative was consistent

until I commented upon the marked lack of 'angst' about her career, referring to the general discontents that the other participants had expressed. At this point, Angela's narrative did change and, perhaps feeling that she had been given permission by the reported experiences of others, she finally admitted to frustrations around her job, such as the unwanted consequence of the extreme 'busyness' that she had spoken about in the first interview: lengthy queues of patients, bureaucracy and multiple calls upon her time. Having previously said that she enjoyed patient contact most of all, she appeared to contradict herself by saying that she would like to become an academic and lock herself away with her books. When asked about the apparent inconsistency, she retracted the statement and recounted a story about a grateful patient.

As with all narratives, Angela's was the product of specific temporal factors (Andrews et al 2013; Plummer 2001). In her case, the interviews were recorded at a time when she was immersed in the research for her dissertation and the transcripts therefore reflected her preoccupation with, and expressed great enjoyment of, that work. Her responses to questions about career incorporated elements of the past, present and future as well as her experiences of being a daughter, doctor, mother and student. The interviews with Angela were the last ones to be completed for the study and the interpretation of her story was coloured by earlier work with the other participants. In turn, her narrative affected the other case studies because together they developed a picture of 'career' as experienced by those particular women in their individual lives. Angela's experience of motherhood was longer than the other participants (and mine) and, when responding to questions, she was therefore able to take a more retrospective and longer-term view of some of the challenges expressed by the others. The narrative indicated how she had negotiated different phases of her life. Although focused on her career as a doctor, much of the discussion also incorporated her thoughts on, and experiences of, multiple subjectivities, such as daughter, wife or mother. In discussing career, Angela also revealed some of the strategies that she had employed to facilitate pursuit of the role that was providing greatest satisfaction at the time, that of academic researcher. That ongoing negotiation of roles was a strong feature of the narrative and indicated a growing element of self-care as Angela had found herself able to withdraw from some domestic frustrations in order to gain the agency to devote more time to following her own interests.

Angela and I did not share a close friendship before she agreed to participate in the study and I have discussed the impact that this, more casual, acquaintance had upon the collection of the research materials. There was a degree of emotional distance between us and we had little prior knowledge

of each other's lives; in response, I had felt the need to establish my credentials as a researcher. For her part, Angela's narrative seemed controlled and her focus – at least initially – had been on the transmission of information, such as the description of her working day. There was such a high volume of detail that it was difficult to begin to 'trouble the edges' during the interviews. In the two earlier case studies, the presence of close friendship had acted to enable the research whilst simultaneously also constraining it because of the influence of prior knowledge. With Angela, that prior knowledge was not present and there was a certain distance between us.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter told the story of Angela's career. Like the other participants, she narrated that story, and it has been analysed, through the lens of friendship. From the transcripts, a number of themes were identified, including: conceptions of career; career choice and family influence; motherhood; and gender. The narrative gave the strongest of indications that her father's job as a GP in South London had been the dominant influence on his daughter's career decision-making. Earlier in this thesis, there is evidence of occupational inheritance (Aldrich and Kim 2015; Rytina 1992) in the career narratives of Anna and Beth and it was even stronger for Angela. As explored in the chapter, that inheritance extended to work experience and the focussing of her schoolwork, and she said that medicine had been an 'ingrained' career choice that she had been 'groomed' to pursue. Angela's story demonstrated a marked lack of agency around career; the chapter drew upon the work of Arulmani (2014) to highlight the crucial role that culture, familial expectation and direct intervention had played. Bruner (1990) also notes the influence that canonical narratives that are culturally and socially based can have on individual stories. For Angela, a career as a doctor was such a narrative. My own reflexive response to Angela's story was to critique and trouble her apparent lack of agency, however the narrative itself was dispassionate and showed a marked lack of emotion and there was a need for sensitivity to Angela's own context. It was notable that she expressed broad contentment with her career, to an extent that was not present in the other narratives, and explicitly said that her lack of choice had not 'mattered' because she could not imagine doing anything else. For the reasons discussed above, her medical career is thus closely tied to upbringing and habitus (Bourdieu 1984).

In the next chapter, the research questions are explored in the light of the materials presented in the three case study chapters.

Chapter 8 Exploration of the Research Questions

In the three previous chapters, the personal career stories told by the three participants were presented. This chapter returns to the overarching research questions established for the study, however this is an interpretive work and thus its purpose is not to provide definitive responses. Rather, the aim is to explore the questions to create meaning; as explained throughout the thesis, such meaning arises from my own interpretation of the material. Thus, although the case studies were drawn directly from the words spoken by the participants, (as demonstrated in the worked proforma provided at Appendix 4), those chapters reflected the process of interpretive re-presentation. As the author of the thesis, that interpretation drew on my own life and story in addition to the participants' words; the meanings created were, therefore, drawn from both components. The thesis is not directly concerned with the details of my own career, however the next chapter includes reflective responses to the participants' stories. All these aspects of the study are in keeping with the auto/biographical methodology within which the project is located (Merrill and West 2009; Stanley 1992).

This thesis has explored the careers of three women, working in stable, senior jobs, who are the mothers of school-aged children. The study offers a particular insight to the meanings made of their stories by the participants themselves. Specifically, the focus of the research was an exploration of the nature and trajectory of women's careers, using the following questions as a framework:

1. What factors have influenced each woman's career?
2. Have these changed over time? If so, how?
3. What meanings do the women attribute to their career paths?
4. How far does the literature reflect these women's career profiles?

The participants have told their stories and those stories reflect cultures and communities, some of which are shared by me and continue to be reflected in the friendships described within the study. According to Bruner (1990), stories offer a way of making sense of lives, and may offer meaning to the teller and the told. This research has taken those stories and developed thematic analysis: this text is the representation, indeed *re-presentation*, of the stories. The idea of 'authority' is, however, challenging. In authoring this work, I have assumed responsibility for the retelling of the narratives; as Josselson reported in a study of her own (2011, 2009), a different researcher would have highlighted different aspects perceived in the stories. For Richardson (1997, p.12), in authoring, 'we

are using our authority and our privileges'. Throughout the thesis, there has been discussion of the privileges arising from friendship and the subsequent influence on the research. That issue is revisited in the next chapter, which contains reflections on the study and an exploration of the contribution offered to the methodological field.

In the next part of the chapter, aspects of the individual narratives are brought together to assess what responses can be made to each individual research question. The purpose of this is to illuminate and connect the fragments of the individual stories, to gain insight into what might be common and could, therefore, help to explain the nature and trajectory of professional women's careers beyond those of the three participants. The questions are, however, interconnected so sharp delineation of the material is not possible or desirable, however it is important to provide illumination of the guiding research questions.

The Research Questions

Question 1: What factors have influenced each woman's career?

Despite pre-existing friendships with the participants, at the outset of the research I was unaware that each of them was following the career path taken by at least one of her parents. Whilst each woman described her personal experience, the presence of career legacy was strongly detectable and hence the exploration of the first research question begins by discussing the factors that had impacted upon initial career choice.

Legacy is one of Inkson's metaphors of career (Inkson 2004), and describes the idea that career is passed from one generation to the next. The theme is also developed in studies such as those by Rytina (1992) and Aldridge and Kim (2015), where notions of occupational inheritance are explored. It was a particularly powerful theme in Angela's narrative, where she described how she had been 'groomed' by her father for a career as a general practitioner (see Chapter 7). Whilst this had begun during her childhood, his influence had continued throughout her medical training and early married life. It was especially notable after the births of her first two children, when her father had been instrumental in ensuring that she completed her training instead of staying at home and focusing on motherhood. Although much influential career literature, notably from the first paradigm, focuses

on individual decision-making (Holland 1985), Angela's experiences appear to reflect more of a communal or familial approach, as described by Arulmani (2014).

Anna had followed her father into accountancy and made an explicit connection between her father's job and her own choice of career. Unlike Angela, she had considered higher education and several different occupational areas; her story told of repeated episodes of career indecision, albeit that she had persevered with accountancy. Anna's story of career legacy was perhaps more nuanced than Angela's, in that she also spoke of a childhood where there was 'not much money' and her father had experienced a period of redundancy, despite the assumption that accountancy would provide 'a job for life'. Anna credited her father's job for introducing her to the field, for instance through work experience, but did not describe any overt pressure from her parents to follow his career path.

Beth's story was also potentially one of legacy (Inkson 2004), however it differs from those of the other participants in that she had followed her mother into teaching and not pursued her father's career in aviation. As discussed in Chapter 6, there was an extent to which this had followed gendered stereotypes, as a result of advice given at school. Data relating to the gender imbalances in teaching and aviation are striking. In 2017, women formed 86% of the teaching workforce in the United Kingdom (National Union of Teachers 2018), whereas in 2018 only an estimated 3-6% of commercial airline pilots, world-wide, were women (International Society of Women Airline Pilots 2019). Unlike Anna and Angela, Beth rejected any notion of intentional parental legacy because she had planned to follow a different career until forced to change direction because of a medical condition. Her narrative explained that this had been relatively late in her school career; she had then chosen to enter teaching after an audit of her skills had suggested a good fit. It appeared, however, that a teacher had considered her mother's job when helping her to explore revised career choices, so it is likely that there had been some indirect impact on her decision-making.

As explored in the case study chapters and referenced above, it is clearly important to recognise the influential role played by all three families in the career choices made by the participants in this study. It is not sufficient, however, to attribute those choices solely to career legacy or occupational inheritance because of the need to reflect the differences apparent in the individual stories. Here, illumination is provided by Bourdieu's work, notably the concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1984), in

which explanation is offered for an individual choosing to follow the known over the unknown. As discussed in Chapter 2, habitus offers a lens through which to analyse an individual's disposition: ways of thinking, acting, feeling and being. Further, it provides a way of explaining how the past and the future affect the present and, in conjunction with the concept of 'field', or social space, enables links to be made between the individual and her social environment. Thus, it acknowledges that life events are influenced by individual and social factors, and that past experiences and upbringing are also discernible in present situations. It also suggests that, as a result of conditioning, individuals internalise the objective choices that they make. This research demonstrated clear links between habitus and the career choices made by the participants. Taking Anna's story as an example, by choosing to train as a tax accountant, she deliberately sought a career offering high material rewards. In so doing (and taken directly from her narrative), she also referenced an uncle's successful business career. Anna noted the family's shock at her father's redundancy, because accountancy should have been 'a job for life' (Transcript 1). There was a consequent impact on her way of thinking and, here, some linkage can be suggested between habitus (Bourdieu 1984) and Savickas' assertion that, in career, we seek 'to actively master what we have passively suffered' (Savickas 2011, p.11). As was demonstrated in Chapter 5, a desire for control of material circumstances ran throughout her narrative, at times at the expense of psychological satisfaction and, she felt, possibly to the detriment of her relationship with her children.

It should also be noted that notions of habitus (Bourdieu 1984) can introduce constraints. For the women in this study, parental careers were all based in the professional arena and none of the families appeared to suffer economic or social deprivation. With that caveat, however, all three career stories suggested some constraint. Angela had few opportunities to explore different occupations and Anna expressed the need for a career offering high material rewards. Beth's story was different, in that circumstances had conspired against her preferred career and she had faced time constraints to make another choice. She, alone of the participants, mentioned careers advice from a source external to the family, in her case from school, but given *in extremis*. Gottfredson's theory of Circumscription and Compromise (1996, 1981) suggests that career choice arises from the narrowing and elimination of options; the narratives offered by these participants suggested that, taken together, the juxtaposition of habitus (Bourdieu 1984) and legacy (Inkson 2004) impacted on the range of careers that the women considered.

The theme of family continues beyond initial career choice as the women are now all mothers themselves. This is explored below, when the second research question is considered. Firstly, additional factors that continue to impact upon career decision-making and trajectories are explored.

All three career stories illuminate wider issues of gender and here is another important and influential factor, albeit that it must be acknowledged that each woman is working in a different context. Beth and Angela are employed in the public sector. When a teacher, Beth was a member of a profession that was overwhelmingly staffed by women (National Union of Teachers 2018). Angela works in general practice, an area considered to be a female-friendly area of medicine (Crompton and Lyonette 2011). Anna has always worked in the private sector; she herself noted that her area of expertise, tax, was considered to be a female-friendly area of the accountancy profession (in contradiction of Crompton and Lyonette's findings in 2011), but her narrative told of issues arising from gender, such as invisible barriers to promotion. Some of the stories told by the participants were overtly discriminatory, such as Anna's account of having her work ignored because she was not part of the dominant, male 'gang'. Other issues were not directly cited by the women but can be linked to gender, such as Anna's description of 'clearing up the mess' – a striking allusion to housework - after male colleagues had abruptly left the investment bank where she worked following the 2008 financial crash. Beth's narrative featured the gendered politics of emotion and the underlying assumption that 'thinking like a woman' was a disadvantage in the working environment. Angela spoke of the tyranny of the kitchen and the need to manage the domestic sphere in tandem with a full-time job. Such comments came in addition to those that directly addressed the psychological and material demands of motherhood. The narratives spoke of discernible tensions as the women moved between the public and the private spheres of their lives. Each was drawn to the workplace for multiple reasons, including personal satisfaction and economic necessity and/or reward. Direct comparisons between the women's careers are problematic because they work in different sectors and occupational fields; the situation is further complicated by individual motivations and personal pressures. The impact of gender is, however, discernible throughout the individual careers. In Beth's case, this has taken a particular form, as I now explore.

As a teacher and later as a consultant, throughout her career Beth has worked in what she termed a 'female-oriented team'; she herself made an explicit link between gender and approach to work. She spoke at length about gendered ways of working, most notably her perceived need to reduce

her emotional response to workplace situations because it was evidence of 'thinking like a woman' and, she felt, an inappropriate reaction at work. She returned repeatedly to the theme of principles and emotion throughout her narrative. In her case study chapter (Chapter 6), it was noted that the second interview had been recorded at a time of somewhat raw emotion following specific difficulties at work, and the influential impact of that timing on the tone and content of the narrative must be reiterated. Beth spoke at length of an 'emotional connection' and linked it to, firstly, the lack of congruence between her own visions and values and those of successive employers and, secondly, to interpersonal relationships with colleagues. She made the discernible interpretation that a display of emotion at work was negative behaviour because it contravened social expectations of 'correct' behaviour (Fineman 2003) and should, therefore, be avoided. In this thesis, the analysis has been extended to draw upon the work of the feminist, Ahmed, in relation to the cultural politics of emotion, suggesting that Beth's was a gendered response because women are considered more emotional beings than men, and emotion is considered dangerous because it is not 'rational' (Ahmed 2015). Beth considers emotion as a reflection of weakness in a work environment, as when she noted that she should not cry if a line manager rebuked her in a way that she felt to be unjustified. Emotional reactions have also ensued when Beth experienced dissonance between her own vision and values and those of her employing organisation. This is relevant to the first research question because it had led her to change jobs on more than one occasion and may, therefore, be seen as a direct influence on her career. It is also important to recognise, however, that there was an overall picture of stability because, throughout her career, Beth had had only a small number of jobs.

In the narratives, there was also evidence that emotions linked to motherhood and wider family life had influenced career decisions made by the participants. Those factors are now explored as the second research question is addressed.

Question 2: Have [these factors] changed over time?

This question was prompted by the knowledge that the participants in the study were women who were established in their careers; indeed, at the time of the interviews it was almost thirty years since they had made initial occupational choices. Further, each woman was still working in the same occupational area that she had opted to join as an eighteen-year-old. In the intervening years, all the participants had had children; a further noteworthy point here is that each woman had married

a man who worked in the same occupation as her. Unsurprisingly, therefore, motherhood was a strong theme in each of the narratives. It is explored in this research question, and not the first, because all the children were born after the women had taken their primary career decisions. As previously discussed in Chapter 7 and briefly referenced above, Angela's first two children were born during the very early stages of her medical career; thus, her career and her experience of motherhood were almost exactly contemporary. By contrast, Anna and Beth had started families in their thirties, at a time when they were well-established in career.

From the outset of the study, I had expected to hear accounts of the direct impact that motherhood had had upon the women's lives and careers. Reflexively, here it is appropriate to acknowledge that it had been a preoccupation of my own, in that the desire for motherhood had been an important factor in the decision to leave a full-time post and move to a more flexible way of working. (This is revisited in the next chapter.) In keeping with the epistemological and methodological underpinning of the study, however, the interviews did not include direct questions about motherhood. In the absence of specific prompts, the material in the transcripts was, therefore, generated by the women themselves and reflected their preoccupations in relation to career influences. Motherhood appeared as a response to how those influences had changed over time, but in different ways. Anna expressed worries that being at home with the children would be unsatisfying, citing baking and playdates as holding no attraction. This stance chimed with Hays' suggestion of 'ideological work' (Hays 1996, p.136): Anna was drawn to the world outside the home but felt the need to justify that stance, to balance her own needs and desires against the socially-constructed idea that appropriate child-rearing was labour-intensive (for the mother) and always child-centred. Schultheiss' (2009) assertion that women may need to choose between mothering or mattering seemed apposite to Anna's story and could link to her desire for recognition, as discussed in Chapter 5. Motherhood was present in Anna's narrative as a source of worry, and also evidence of guilt; she wondered whether she was defining herself through her work and then using that as a reason for not being a 'good mother'. Again, this suggested a link to Hays' work on intensive motherhood (Hays 1996) and the expectations that it placed on women, for there was nothing in the transcripts to indicate that Anna's children were subject to maternal deprivation or suffering educationally. Vincent and Ball (2006) highlighted that education was a key concern of middle-class parents, as discussed earlier.

Beth spoke at greater length about marriage, motherhood and wider family life. She made explicit connections between motherhood and the direction that her career had taken, notably her choice to

pursue a consultancy role rather than a headship. This suggested a collision of maternal and working identities (Thompson et al 2011) and, at the time of the research, was not a resolved situation. The reasons behind that key career decision were nuanced, but one of the drivers had been her husband's decision to seek a headship at a time when their daughter was an infant. As Beth herself noted, emotionally and practically the family could not accommodate more than one headteacher, and she had been the partner to take a different path. Up to that point, her career had progressed at a steady pace and she had performed various roles in schools with direct responsibilities for leadership, up to and including deputy headship. Career progress had been influenced by what she characterised as 'the emotional response' (Transcript 1) and, in her own estimation, that had changed over time. When the research interviews took place, the idea of emotion at work had been prominent because of recent incidents; she noted that emotion had precipitated changes of job and had thus been influential. That influence extended to specific employers, however, rather than the overall focus of her career, and there had been only a small number of critical incidents. As explored in Chapter 6, Beth saw career squarely in terms of a planned pathway and a matching of skills and expertise; that was how she had explained her initial choice to train as a teacher, though the narrative had suggested the presence of more complex underlying factors behind that decision. For example – and in addition to the twin issues of habitus and constraint discussed earlier in this chapter - there was a strong suggestion of a redemptive narrative (McAdams et al 2001) because teaching had not been her first choice of career.

Angela identified that, at the time of the interviews, her experience of motherhood had entered a different, lighter, phase leading to a positive impact on her ability to follow her own academic interests. Earlier in the narrative, she had discussed the reverse - the impact that career had had on motherhood – in explaining how she had completed her medical training under challenging circumstances when her two older children were young infants. She felt that the trajectory of her career had been slowed, partly by motherhood and partly by wider family responsibilities, such as what she described as a fifty-year (prison) sentence in the kitchen. When she narrated her career story, her two older children were at university and, thus, motherhood and career had moved into a markedly different phase. This was because she had been able to release herself, as she put it, from some of the labour-intensive tasks that had arisen (and that she felt were her duty) during her children's early years and could, therefore, devote more time to her own interests, including her academic and committee work.

Given the above, it can be stated with some confidence that the three participants in this study continually navigated the dual arenas of career and home, in their efforts to respond to competing demands. They were not unusual in that, and it was not a situation applicable only to women, though the interface of career and motherhood has been repeatedly examined in the literature, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The narratives provided by Anna, Beth and Angela pointed to the frequently fragile nature of a work-life balance and to the continual review and negotiation required. All three women considered those factors to have impacted on their career trajectories, though not perhaps as starkly as Schultheiss's (2009) suggestion that women should choose between mothering and mattering. It is important here to recognise that, like career, motherhood is not a static state: children grow up and the parenting needs of a teenager are very different to those of a young child.

Notwithstanding the navigation described above, all three women were able to point to steady career progression over time. Anna and Beth had secured successively more senior positions and Angela, although denying that she was on a career ladder or even had a career, had become the senior partner in her medical practice and had assumed a national role in her academic field. Alone of the participants, Anna pinpointed the key ambition that had influenced her decision to train as an accountant and then to continue on that career path. This was to make money; recognition and reward were still fundamentally important to her, but also a source of frustration as, in her own estimation, she had not reached the pinnacle of her field. As part of her story, she unpacked some of the possible reasons for that; the influence of gender was again clearly discernible. This was relevant to this particular research question because, as Beth put it, her generation of women had been brought up to believe that they could achieve what they wanted in career terms. The implication was that the battle for equality had largely been won and that all things were now possible. Anna noted that she was working in a corporate environment with a clearly defined policy framework designed to support and protect equality of opportunity; in that sense, the workplace was qualitatively different to the beginning of her working life in the late 1980s. Discussing the influence of gender on a career as an accountant, she did, however, hold strong views about invisible barriers that discriminated against women and her evaluation was supported by literature (Whiting et al 2015; Gammie and Whiting 2013; Lyonette and Crompton 2008) as well as a more recent investigation into the gender pay gap (Atkinson et al 2018). This was important in the context of the second research question and also the next, on the meanings that the women attributed to their careers. Anna had certainly achieved high material rewards as a tax director and was, therefore, economically privileged, however she felt that her gender was a factor that had

prevented her from reaching the highest echelons of the profession. This impacted negatively on her overall assessment of her career and was a clear example of the need to move beyond what Savickas (2001) referred to as the objective career, to consider what was lying beneath. A further point to note here is that other factors were also discernible in Anna's career story: gender was not the only influence on her working life.

Question 3: What meanings do the women attribute to their career paths?

The purpose of this question was to explore how the participants might explain their careers. When formulated at the start of the project, the intention had been to respond to the explanations that the women might give, rather than address the process they would go through as they sought to discuss 'career'. The study has illuminated difficulties of articulation in either practical or conceptual terms, however it is clear that both aspects should be considered, as now discussed.

When the participants agreed to take part in the study, they knew that the focus of the project was on career. The written information that they then received (see Appendix 1) went on to confirm that. The women were all established professionals, used to managing people and processes, hence it is reasonable to assume that each of them would have given at least some speculative thought to possible responses to questions of 'career', even if the specific questions were unknown. The case study chapters included material to demonstrate that none of the women was initially comfortable discussing 'career'; one suggested explanation was uncertainty, firstly, about its meaning and secondly, about personal application. This was surprising and led me to interrogate various assumptions made at the outset of the study. All participants were, however, happy to discuss the day-to-day tasks and responsibilities of their jobs when the broader question of 'career' was reformulated. In each narrative, there were long, uninterrupted passages where the participant took great care to respond in detail and, indeed, Angela added more information to her transcript via e-mail correspondence, to make it more complete. All this indicated that a recitative list of tasks was an easier response than a discussion based on conceptual uncertainty; whilst not a surprising finding, it highlighted a clear gap between academic theories of the concept of 'career' and the lived experience of those actually 'in' a career.

The transcripts include material where the participant was clearly grasping to understand meanings. For Anna, that came via direct questions posed to herself: 'Does work define me and what I do? Or is it all those other things?' (Transcript 2). Though being asked to consider career, she had perhaps

begun to move the discussion on to identity. Beth started to question her behaviour at work and to interrogate her emotional responses. Angela's narrative was significantly more controlled in tone throughout, but she did start to imagine a different type of career where she would perhaps concentrate on academic research rather than medical practice. Whilst this was never a serious possibility, it illustrated that a certain playfulness had entered her narrative by the end of the discussion.

Those responses suggested that the act of participation in the study had provided a valuable (and indeed unusual) space in the busy lives described in the narratives, for the women to explore and potentially begin a process of reimagining career and self. As the author, there was a need to interrogate assumptions made about the nature of the research, particularly in relation to 'career' and the expectation that the women would instantly recognise the concept, then feel confident to discuss it on a recording. Although the interviews were not career counselling sessions, it was apparent that, in reviewing their working lives, the participants had begun to explore the past seen in the present and in possibilities for the future. It should be emphasised, however, that these were research interviews. Career counselling discussions would have posed different questions and, thus, elicited somewhat different themes. Nonetheless, the women's responses gave credence to Reid and West's (2016) call for space for narrative exploration in career discussions.

In this study, the space offered to the three women led to insights into their views on what might constitute a 'career' and there was a divergence of opinion, away from the broad and flexible definition chosen to underpin the research (Arthur et al 1989). The views expressed by the individual participants were explored in the relevant case study chapters, so are not reviewed in detail here, however it was notable that none of them considered anything outside formal employment, within the parameters of their current fields, to have formed part of their careers. This discounted motherhood or wider roles within the community, in contradiction of Richardson's study (2012). In perhaps the most extreme rejection of broader components of career, Angela also discounted the academic work that certainly could be considered as part of hers. Angela's own view was that her academic work took place in her 'free' time and thus was part of private life rather than public career, however she did acknowledge a positive impact on her medical practice. Direct influence on career can, therefore, be traced. It was notable how frequently the women drew on metaphors such as the ladder or path and the notion that a career should be a planned route was also evident, notably in Beth's narrative. In considering those responses from the participants, the continued pre-eminence of first-paradigm career theory was striking, when notions of matching

(Rodger 1952) or stages (Super 1980, 1957) were expressed. Anna and Angela worked in tightly regulated occupational fields, however, and their views of career reflected the influence of professional requirements. Although also a qualified professional, Beth's career had been more fluid; at the time of the research, her narrative showed elements of constructivist theory such as Career Construction (Savickas 2011, 2006) and it appeared that she might be starting to move away from a pattern of working for a single employer.

The narratives gathered for this study demonstrated how the participants had created meaning in sharing their stories. It is, however, appropriate only to offer tentative and careful claims and, therefore, there is no intention to suggest any universality or single interpretation of those meanings. The narratives expressed multiple and situated contexts, cultural spaces and, indeed, subjectivities. Horsdal (2001, p.1) posed the question, 'How do I know where I am if I do not know how I got there?'. This offers expression to the processes that the participants articulated as they sought to explain their careers by making sense of experiences and emotions. As Horsdal (2012*)* also noted, it was not possible to achieve via a linear explanation of happenings: hence, the participants told stories, encouraged and supported by the narrative research methods adopted. This study clearly illustrates the need to explore the subjective career as well as the 'objective' data provided in a curriculum vitae (Savickas 2011) and this leads to the final research question, as now discussed below.

Question 4: How Far Does the Literature Reflect these Women's Career Profiles?

The thesis has drawn upon a large body of career literature, from the general to the highly specific. With reference to the latter, in the case study chapters, literature specific to accountancy, education and medicine was selected to illuminate and explain the narratives, and to give context to the individual stories by linking them to the wider landscape of the relevant profession. Broadly, there were few points of dissonance between the stories narrated by the participants and previous studies reported in the literature. For example, Anna's narrative of the difficulty in gaining promotion to the very highest echelons of the accountancy profession chimed with work by Gammie (2007); Crompton and Lyonette's study in 2011 supported her views on the culture of the profession. It was in considering the broader, theoretical landscape that a more nuanced approach was required. It appeared that women like the participants in this study received relatively little direct attention in the theoretical literature, which was either drawn from the male career model or, perhaps

understandably given the limited resources available for research, focused on women who faced marginalisation and challenge thanks to the intersection of gender with other variables such as social class, race, caring responsibilities or poverty. The detailed analysis of career influences and meanings throughout this study illuminated opportunities and constraints; thus, the study has contributed a more nuanced understanding of the experience of career.

The case study chapters highlighted the difficulties that the women seemed to face when asked to discuss their careers without any further directives as to what was meant or required. All three found it easier to start with a recitation of posts or the daily activities typical of a working day. As the interviews moved on, participants started to tell stories and in so doing were using narrative as a framework for meaning making. The subsequent analysis of those stories drew upon strands of career theory as part of the process by which I myself made meanings. As an illustration, Beth discussed the reasons why she had chosen a career in teaching and she noted that the decision had been based on an audit of her academic capability. That suggested congruence with the trait-factor theories of Holland (1952) or Parsons (1909). She also explained, however, that she had initially chosen a different career, physiotherapy, but had had to change course for medical reasons. Occupational inheritance was then added to the story, thanks to her mother's work as a teacher (Aldridge and Kim 2015; Inkson 2004; Rytina 1992). Still further input came from a family friend, a head teacher. As her life and career had progressed, the advent of marriage and motherhood as a key life role had influenced her career and here the work of Super (1980, 1957) offered credible explanatory power. At the time of the interviews, Beth's career had appeared to be at something of a crossroads as she had contemplated greater self-construction and a move from a single employer. The rationale for that change was complex but included a growing awareness of her own skills and possibilities, in tandem with a negative reaction to certain features of her current role as an employee and consultant. In considering a move away from a single employer, Beth continued to navigate the demands and challenges of career and home and was seeking a more satisfactory combination of roles, via construction of her own future career story (Savickas 2011). As can be seen above, then, the meaning of Beth's career was not readily explainable through a single theoretical lens. Like those of the other participants, her story was multi-layered and subject to specific contextual, cultural and temporal factors, all of which she drew upon to make sense of her individual story (Horsdal 2012).

As illustrated by Beth's story, no single piece of theory offered a complete explanation of the career narratives told in this research, because they were deeply personal accounts laden with individual

meaning. An in-depth narrative approach, focussed on a small number of participants, thus adds to the wider understanding of career; this point is developed in the next chapter, which discusses the contribution that this study makes to the field.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter returned to the research questions, to explore them in the light of the material in the case studies. The discussion reflected the process of interpretive re-presentation that characterises the thesis and brought together aspects of the individual narratives to illuminate what might be common to the women's stories and to draw together material in support of the contribution that the thesis makes to the study of career, namely conception of career, emotion in career and methodological innovation. These elements are developed more fully in the following chapter, which also offers a retrospective view of the conduct of the study and a discussion of how methodological choices and the use of narrative methods enabled and promoted the consideration of issues of meaning. Finally, auto/biographical reflections on the study are offered and further projects arising from the work are discussed.

Chapter 9 Contribution to the Field, Reflections on the Research and Conclusions

Earlier chapters of this thesis explored the individual stories told by the participants and, in the previous chapter, the research questions were then discussed in the light of those materials. The first part of this chapter turns to the contribution that this study makes to the field in three principal areas: conception of career; the links between emotion and career; and methodological innovation. Following this, further retrospective reflections on the study are provided, including my personal responses to the research. This is consistent with an auto/biographical methodological approach (Merrill and West 2009; Speedy 2008; Stanley 1992). In the final sections of the thesis, areas for future work are identified and concluding thoughts offered.

To set the following material in context, it is helpful to rehearse, briefly, key parameters of the study. The participants in this research were all outwardly successful, in that they held senior jobs with corresponding levels of income. Their lives were not located at the margins of society and they had high levels of educational attainment and economic and social stability. This research conducted an in-depth exploration of the women's careers and demonstrated the challenges and constraints experienced as they sought to balance competing aspects of life, such as motherhood or wider family commitments, alongside their working lives. Such findings are not unique to this study, as consideration of women's careers in conjunction with wider life is widely covered in the literature. This research was not designed to test theory or models and, as has been shown throughout, aspects of many theoretical constructs could be applied to the three stories told and explored in this research. Chapter 2 of the thesis included a detailed discussion of the field, and references to a wide range of literature are woven through the case study chapters. At the end of Chapter 8 there is discussion of how far current literature can be said, within the constraints of this study, to represent the careers of the three participants.

'Career'

The first and most significant contribution made by this research concerns understandings of 'career'. Within the parameters set out above, the study offers a distinctive input to the existing literature on women and conceptions of career. This was not as a result of a specific research

question but, instead, arose from analysis of the narratives and identification of the evident difficulties faced by the participants when asked to discuss their careers. The decision to adopt the broad definition of career proposed by Arthur et al (1989) as an underpinning concept of the study was prompted by a desire to offer an appropriate level of flexibility to cover the women's careers. (This is also explored later in the chapter when I offer my retrospective reflections on the study.) These participants, however, generally rejected the flexible definition and carried within them clear ideas about what should characterise 'career', despite obvious difficulties in engaging with and articulating the concept. Each of the narratives indicated stability in career, with the women describing long periods of continuous employment with single employers. There was scant evidence of fragmentation or fluidity, and only one indication of somewhat embryonic engagement with the notion of a self-constructed career. Here, the participants' levels of seniority and occupational locations had contributed to conceptions of career proposed in first-paradigm literature. Thus, the research found a clear divergence between contemporary academic notions of career and the experiences described by three women 'in' career.

Angela rejected career as a concept relevant to her working life, Beth could only see vague 'stuff' and Anna measured career in terms of success against how hard she worked, then found it lacking. These were unexpected findings because the participants were apparently successful women, established in senior jobs within the professional areas of medicine, teaching and accountancy. The idea that such work might not be seen as a career by the person undertaking it was surprising and prompted closer analysis. The women's own descriptions and subsequent assessments of their careers seemed to be at odds with their curricula vitae and thus it appeared that there was dissonance between personal thoughts and public actions, conceptualised by Savickas (2011) as the simultaneous subjective and objective career.

Here, it is appropriate to exercise a degree of methodological caution. The narratives that form the basis of this analysis were the products of specific time and space (Horsdal 2012), narrated from autobiographical memory (Stanley 1992), and must be considered in that light. For example, Beth's assertion that she could not discern a career might have been a reflection of the difficulties that she had been experiencing at work at the time of the interview, as well as referencing her previously expressed idea of career as a planned pathway. Within the framework of auto/biographical, narrative research it is not appropriate to attach more definite motivations. When asked to engage with the notion of having a career, Angela's reaction was to deny it. That was, however, an

immediate response to an unexpected question in the unfamiliar environment of a recorded interview and might not reflect her views if she were asked to engage with the topic again.

There is also a broader point in relation to narrative time. In this study, the example given above showed how, in the process of narrating their careers, the women sought to explain the present by reference to the past. They moved iteratively between the 'here and now' and the 'there and then', as identified by Browne (2003). There were also glimpses of the future, such as when Beth discussed how she was beginning to see the possibility of a different pattern of career. The career narratives in this study were offered and gathered for the purposes of research; they were not counselling interactions. Given the identified general lack of time or psychological space to consider career, however, it did appear that participation in the study had begun to illuminate difficulties that the women were experiencing in their working lives. Again, this might relate to the rare opportunity to review and discuss their careers, including the very notion of 'career' itself. After participating in the research, Beth sought professional career counselling to explore possibilities and constraints and Anna pondered whether it might be helpful as she considered the next stage of her career. Of the three women, at the time of the research only Angela seemed to be reaching what was, for her, a more satisfactory balance between the needs of career, home and self. The narrative indicated that she had diverted attention from some family responsibilities in order to achieve that balance. As two of her children were older, she could offer a longer-term view of motherhood and noted that she had been able to reject some of her earlier, time-consuming concerns.

Emotion

The second significant contribution made by this research arises from its exploration of the impact of emotion on the women's careers. Emotion in career was acknowledged as under-researched by Kidd in 2004 and, with the rare exception of Hartung (2011), there has been little published work since that specifically links emotion to career. The study addresses this paucity in two distinct ways. The first, and most striking, finding was the negative impact of emotion on an individual's career. In this study, few of the emotions expressed in the narratives signalled positive effects on career; notably, the participants spoke directly of negative outcomes that had arisen from guilt caused by an inability to reach a harmonious balance between working and personal lives. This demonstrated preoccupations with culturally ascribed notions of motherhood (Hays 1996), alongside more broader considerations of family life. Despite the presence of negative emotions, none of the participants

expressed a wish to forego career: for these (and many other) women, working motherhood was a normal state, as identified by Dow (2016). Whilst is also possible that the reverse might be true, and that positive emotions such as happiness could promote career well-being, that was not found in the narratives presented here.

A further finding regarding the influence of emotion was its impact, positive and negative, on the methodological landscape of the research. In this study, methodology was underpinned by three friendships, and emotion was therefore present in those relationships (Dunbar 2018). For certain aspects of the project it served as an enabling factor, for example in facilitating the practical arrangements necessary for the actual conduct of the research. There were also constraints, however, including the extent to which prior knowledge could ethically be used in the analysis and presentation of the narratives. In auto/biographical work, the (/) joins and separates the researcher from the participants and the research more generally; this study has demonstrated that the presence of emotion makes that necessary separation more difficult to achieve. This point would also be applicable to different types of interpretive research, not solely to a study based on work with friends.

This study has shown that fruitful links can be made between career and Ahmed's work on the cultural politics of emotion (Ahmed 2014). This was most evident in Beth's narrative, where she spoke directly of the perceived negative impact of an emotional response to events in the workplace, feeling that it was a sign of weakness. Here, the implication from Beth was that there was a link to gender. Whilst, for her, emotion was a self-identified 'present presence', for the other participants in this thesis it was perhaps more of the 'absent presence' that Kidd identified (Kidd 2004, p.441) because it was latent rather than explicitly claimed in the narratives.

The research also found that, for these women, links could be made between emotional behaviour in a career context and family upbringing. Here, Bourdieu's work offered explanatory power (Bourdieu 1984), in that the women's thinking had been structured according to social surroundings – here, the example and influences of the family. The 'ways of being' that each woman had observed and absorbed throughout her upbringing had then shaped her thinking and acting. Angela had scarce apparent agency and was 'groomed' for a career in medicine, as she herself put it (Transcript 1). That career had continued unabated throughout early motherhood when her family

assumed the care of her young children. She acknowledged that she had felt a degree of resentment but had suppressed the emotion. Anna's narrative indicated that, in her family, the norm was that emotion should not be expressed, with a mantra of 'don't complain, cope'. This had impacted on the trajectory of her career, in that she had been reluctant to ask for formal promotion to recognise the level and quality of her work. Beth was the sole participant who directly referenced emotion as part of her career story. She spoke of the crucial importance of vision and values and identified that problems in her career had arisen from a dissonance between personal views and those of the employing organisation. She also acknowledged that she came from a family whose members liked to be 'right', as she put it in Transcript 2. The stories of these three women illuminate differing impacts arising from the nuances of the emotional landscape and highlight a further strength of this type of in-depth research.

Methodological Contribution

The third distinctive contribution of the study is its application of methodological originality to the study of career. Uniquely, it presents material gathered and viewed through the lens of friendship, via an auto/biographical approach. Whilst the narrative turn has been widely acknowledged for some time in the wider literature on research methods (Goodson and Gill 2011), the specific approach in this study of career, involving friends as participants, has not been taken before. One important outcome is the insight to public and private dimensions of career. As discussed throughout, the concept of friendship as method was used (Tillmann-Healy 2003); Tillmann-Healy's work has been applied to research in music sociology (Nowak and Haynes 2018) and an ethnographic study in sports medicine (Owton and Allen-Collinson 2014), however, at the time of writing there has been no application of friendship as method to the study of career. One of its central tenets is that friendships are drawn from within structural lines, and career is specifically identified as one possible factor within those lines. Friendship lies at the intersection of the personal and the public, as does career. This links with the deliberate choice to work with a definition of 'career' incorporating the personal and public spheres (Arthur et al 1989) which runs throughout the thesis; the personal and public were inevitably intertwined as a result of the decision to work with friends. At the start of the project, the ramifications of that decision were unknown.

Tillmann-Healy's work (2003) was considered alongside aspects of feminist research methodology (Stanley 2017; Oakley 2016, 1981; Stanley and Wise 1983) in the construction of the study, with the

aim that the methodology and methods would encourage the women to discuss their careers in deep as well as broad terms, as the material shows. The choice of friends as participants enabled the collection of rich and thick materials (Geertz 1973) and gave rise to a deep analysis. A full discussion was provided in Chapter 3, followed by detailed exploration in each individual case study chapter. By reference to feminist research methodology, the aim was to establish an equitable and collaborative footing for the project, and this was particularly important in the light of the decision to work with friends. The literature suggested a clear interrogation of the self/other dynamic (Tillmann-Healy 2003) and here there was also synergy with auto/biographical methodology, calling as it does for the close consideration of personal positioning (Speedy 2008). As the study progressed and the understanding of the methodological field and challenges grew deeper, my multiple roles within the project became evident. The boundaries between researcher and friend were permeable and constantly fluid as - even over the course of a single interview - I reacted to the stories that were being narrated. Although different subjectivities were present, friendship was the principal lens in this project. I have personal ties to the three women, and I like them: hence we were friends. There is also an extent to which I am like them, thanks to shared personal history, dispositions and interests. There was thus the need to subject their stories (and my own) to an intense, critical gaze and here it is again appropriate to note that their stories, not the women themselves, were the foci of that analysis (Josselson 2011).

To illustrate this point, and also to return to the impact of emotion on the research process, Beth's story is now revisited. After she had spoken openly about various negative emotional responses that she had experienced at points in her career, I retreated from further exploration of the issues. This is unlikely to have happened to the same extent with a participant who was not also a friend. The episode illustrated the constant negotiation in this study between friendship as a conduit of the research process and friendship as a personal relationship. This could also be expressed as collision versus collusion. To explain this idea, as a result of prior knowledge I knew her personal sensitivities and did not wish to cause upset or harm even though, in hindsight, that was unlikely to have ensued. Thus, there was an extent to which I colluded in her responses to my questions. This was fully explored in the case study (Chapter 6) and is illustrative of the tension between the personal and the private that is a strong theme of this thesis. In the research arena, collusion was not a suitable approach because of the need for an appropriate degree of criticality when considering the research materials. In this study, deep and, at times, difficult consideration was given to the role that emotion had and was continuing to play. Here, the work of Hollway and Jefferson (2013) proved

helpful, specifically the assertion that the presence of emotion would not necessarily indicate that harm was being done to a research participant.

This study was not conceived to test theoretical constructs, but, in its interrogation of career through the lens of friendship, it confirmed Tillmann-Healy's proposals about friendship as method (Tillmann-Healy 2003). In particular, the exhortation for a critical examination of the self-other dimension proved highly relevant and offered a bridge to the chosen methodological landscape of auto/biography. Friendship is a complex construct and, in the study, it was necessary to analyse what previously I had taken for granted with these friends. There was also a recognition of the complicity inherent in the exercise – the taken for granted - and here it is appropriate to return to Bourdieu (1984) and the idea of shared habitus, in that in evaluating the careers and wider lives narrated by the participants, there was an extent to which I was also evaluating my own. I am part of their habitus and it can be difficult to shine the light upon oneself.

The role of a friend is, however, very different to that of a researcher or a research participant yet, in this study, there were areas of overlap and a discernible blurring of boundaries for participant and researcher. At times during the project, it appeared that the women wanted to help me: whilst the desire to help might be symptomatic of friendship, it can also represent the complex power dynamic through which the helper and the helped negotiate subjectivities. This nuanced picture of power was difficult to discern at first and contributed to a reluctance to extend the analysis of the participants' transcripts. I felt especially answerable for the representations being made; each case study saw several iterations, as the analysis developed and deepened over the course of the project.

Another striking aspect of the personal/private divide is that career does not operate in a vacuum, separate from wider life. As they narrated their career stories, the women were also discussing aspects of their private lives, such as relationships within the immediate and wider family group, or with colleagues. It was necessary to make choices about what to illuminate within the thesis: as explained in the individual case study chapters, some collaboration was attempted with the participants but it remained an unresolved process as boundaries had to be imposed to maintain an appropriate level of ethical watchfulness.

In summary, then, the decision to work with friends deliberately and explicitly mixed the public and the personal. One, key, consequence was a close examination of the taken-for-granted, both in

career and in friendship, as exemplified by the interrogation of the self-other dynamic. Whilst this would be always be a necessary component of auto/biographical research (Merrill and West 2009; Speedy 2008), in this study it was especially vigorous.

Summary of Contribution

As explored above, this study makes a distinctive contribution to the field of 'career', including: the need for an attentive and nuanced approach to the theoretical construct of 'career', rooted in the realities of an individual's experience; greater consideration of the role played by emotions in both career and research; and an innovative methodological approach for the field of career that linked auto/biography with friendship, to promote deeply reflexive analysis of material. Notions of 'career' were problematic – and even completely denied by one participant – and that suggests general implications for policy. Contemporary policy focuses on preparing young people for 'career', for example as seen in guidelines issued by the Department for Education (2018), where 'career' is the terminology used throughout. If, as this study found, those in established professional roles, secured following long periods of training and years of experience, were struggling with the concept, there is a question as to the relevance of the term 'career' to younger members of society, or those whose working lives are more fractured. This thesis has not focused on the differences between a career and a working life, save to note that the participants in the study found it far easier to discuss the latter than the former. This could be an indication that 'working life' could be more helpful as a term and certainly suggests that it would be unwise to assume any common understanding of the meaning of 'career'.

The next section contains reflections on the study, covering my personal response to the work and an evaluation of the conduct of the research.

Reflections on the Study

In keeping with the auto/biographical methodology employed, I engaged reflexively with the study throughout its various stages. At the beginning of the research, I wrote an autobiographical piece which was used as a point of reference as the study developed. I also kept a research diary and reflexive material drawn from those prompts was included in each of the case study chapters and is drawn together below. The previous section explained how the decision to work with friends necessitated a particularly intense scrutiny of my own position within the research. The case study

chapters contain material drawn from my own responses to the participants and their narratives; the consequent impact on the research was also explored. For example, in Chapter 7 I identified how my own cultural background had led me to suggest a particular interpretation of Angela's career, linking it via the work of Arulmani (2014) to a more collective culture. With Beth, my own experiences as a manager had initially coloured my view of her own struggles against authority and there was a need to analyse that personal history before a more nuanced analysis could be made. Motherhood is a common state that I share with the three participants; when exploring that landscape, there was an even greater need to attend to Speedy's (2008) exhortation for a careful consideration of personal positioning. This was particularly marked when considering the juxtaposition with career, given my own self-constructed career path and career break around the birth of my daughter, whereas the three participants had continued to work largely uninterruptedly. Anna and Angela had also only worked for single organisations; in a recent development, Beth had begun to diversify her consultancy role.

At the conclusion of the research, then, the unique nature of the study can be emphasised. The decision to work with friends was, initially, a practical decision: I knew the women; they agreed to participate; I admitted them to the study. In that respect, friendship was used in an opportunistic way and, because of it, there was no need to approach strangers to participate in the work. That opportunism also brought constraints, however, in that it introduced to the study existing relationship patterns, prior knowledge and assumptions. Some of those factors were known beforehand, whilst many others appeared as the research developed. There was a high degree of comfort in the relationships; paradoxically, that engendered anxiety during and after the research process as I sought to protect the friendships. As the study progressed, at times it appeared that my allegiances were more closely attached to my role as a friend rather than to that of a researcher; that positioning had consequences for the conduct of the research, hence the discussion of collusion versus collision above. It was difficult, in some instances, to ask questions or to take analysis to an appropriate depth because I was aware of exposing a participant's sensitivities. In reaching an understanding of the effects of conflicting subjectivities and perhaps general ambivalence about being a researcher versus a friend – and therefore responding to the exhortation for 'vigorous' self-positioning (Speedy 2008 p.41) – it became possible to unlock some of the challenges of the study. This was not a positioning that it had been possible to appreciate before the study began and is indicative of the depth of analysis of self that is required of this type of work.

A linked consideration is the ethical landscape of the study. This, too, was a challenging area and reflected a similar ambivalence of positioning. The issue first manifested itself in early representations of the participants' career stories, where there was a tendency to offer accounts that were positive and, to an extent, resolved. The nature of this type of narrative research, and its methodological location within auto/biography, leads to and promotes the study of life as lived. This study focused on career as experienced and narrated. The participants were interviewed at particular moments in time and, inevitably, offered only fragments of their wider life stories. Whilst as the researcher I sought to connect and explore the meaning of the fragments, the limitations of the approach had to be acknowledged, particularly in relation to claims of resolved accounts or situations. My instinct was, however, to tell a resolved story. A consequence of that instinct was that, in some instances, there were aspects of the women's stories that were initially accepted as narrated. That was particularly evident with Beth's material and was linked to the tangible presence of emotion in her transcript and my desire to do no harm. Over the course of the analytical process and subsequent presentation of material in the thesis, decisions were taken about the extent to which material should be presented tentatively and where it was possible to make stronger statements. The points reached reflected the temporal considerations noted above as well as other factors as suggested here. Above all, the research encompassed the personal and the partial and 'a great number of factors that cannot be prescribed, measured, calculated, estimated or anticipated prior to the engagement' (Taylor 2011, p.18). The outcome of this study suggested that analysis of those encounters would necessarily follow similarly amorphous lines.

A further point of ethics arose from the amount of personal material gathered by the author of a thesis in the auto/biographical arena. For example, when I listened to the participants' stories of their families, I found myself interrogating my own and pondered anew the meanings that could be present. As explained from the beginning of the thesis, this study was not, however, conceived as a history of my family or the direct story of my own career, even though they were important and influential elements in my analysis and interpretation of what the participants narrated. In some instances, however, there was direct relevance to the theme in question, as was the case with Anna's narrative. When she spoke of her decision not to go to university, it acted as a prompt for a review of my own educational journey. This led me to reflect that the decision I had taken at the age of eighteen to go straight to university was something that I had, hitherto, taken for granted. Certainly, I had never previously felt the need to examine the possible reasons for that choice. As a daughter, I realised that it was closely linked to my father's educational biography and the subsequent social and economic position of our family. Here, it was helpful to draw upon the work

of Bourdieu (1994) because the decision to go to university referenced my own positioning in social space; it also highlighted issues relating to social and cultural capital. In the thesis Bourdieu's work has been used as a means to explore links between a known action, such as a career decision, and unconscious influences upon it, such as the effects of family background or occupational inheritance (Aldrich and Kim 2015; Inkson 2004; Rytina 1992).

In this reflexive discussion of the ethical landscape of the study, issues of power and ownership are important. Elements of feminist research methodology (Stanley 2017; Oakley 2016; Stanley and Wise 1983) were used to underpin a degree of collaboration within the research. This was particularly important in the context of the decision to work with friends because, as discussed above, I became conscious of a desire to protect the relationships. As the research progressed, it became apparent that this positioning had led to a somewhat conflicted position as, for example, when exploration of the narratives suggested a requirement to probe more deeply into potentially sensitive topics. A further point of difficulty arose when I considered how far the analysis of the narratives should be shared with the participants. In Tillmann-Healy's 'friendship as method', first published in 2003 then extended (Tillmann 2015b), she encourages full sharing of all materials between researcher and participant; her efforts to secure equilibrium and transparency within the relationship also extend to a recommendation that participants' names be used rather than anonymised forms. From the beginning of the project, I was uncomfortable with full sharing, fearing that it might prove inhibitive when it came to the required depth of analysis. I also took the view that I was the author and owner of the research, with the necessary caveats about the respectful and sensitive handling of the narratives. This led to a decision to offer participants full sight of - and control over - their transcripts, but not of the subsequent analysis. I did offer to share the case studies with them but retained editorial control. At the conclusion of the examination process, they will be offered copies of the full thesis. In reaching this position, it seems clear that I was establishing a personal compromise between the twin demands of research and friendship.

A further area to explore in this section is the notion of 'leaving' the research. In many studies, there would be the expectation of a clear delineation and subsequent deactivation of processes and relationships, however that is not possible for research where pre-existing friendships take the central place and that is true of this study, where the findings confirm Nowak and Haynes' (2018) suggestion that the research space cannot be temporary if friendship is involved. Leaving the field had been identified as an area of potential concern, however here smooth transitions back to friendship can be reported, albeit that the parameters of the relationships have been extended and

now routinely include discussion of career-related issues. The interviews with the three women highlighted episodic fragments of their lives and careers: some of the material was already known to me in detail whilst much more was partially known or completely new. Limited discussion tended to take place about career or work within my friendship groups and it is still the case that issues around motherhood and the parenting of teenagers takes primacy. This reflects the 'school gates' that sit in the title of the thesis. Motherhood was one of the few criteria attached to the recruitment of participants and the previous chapter explained how the third research question, about the development of career influences over time, indirectly referenced the advent of motherhood. My personal decision to step back from career before the birth of my daughter was, simultaneously, a reference point and a point of difference, because the other women in the study had all returned to work after brief periods of maternity leave. From the outset of the research, I suspected that those decisions should not solely be attributed to economic factors and I wanted to understand the individual stories. That opened issues around social class and gender because the quest for meaning led to an exploration of issues around the expectations placed on these women – and that the women appeared to be placing upon themselves. This led to a discussion of work-life balance as well as what can be seen in the narratives as the pervasive expectations on this 'type' of women with regard to child-rearing and, especially, the education of children. In the literature there is also now some evidence that the debate is shifting to include normative – and demanding - notions of well-roundedness or well-being (Rottenberg 2014a; Rottenberg 2014b; Slaughter 2016) that women should be able to achieve.

The final part of this reflexive discussion returns to auto/biography. This thesis has focussed on career, which is my professional area as well as the chosen field of academic study. I therefore brought specific knowledge and personal experiences to the project, not all of which were evident when the research began. The adoption of Arthur et al's (1998) description of career to underpin the study has been explored throughout, notably its ability to capture the fluidity inherent in the range of activities that might constitute career. A major finding, explained earlier in the chapter, was that the participants did not acknowledge that broad definition. Following reflexive analysis, however, it appears that my use of Arthur et al's (2012*)* work might have been an unconscious response to my own career pattern. Thus, from the beginning of the project the subjectivity inherent in auto/biographical research assumed a prominent location in the study. Savickas (2011, p.11) proposes that a central aim in career is 'to actively master what we have passively suffered'. Whilst I would not claim personal suffering as a result of career, as a result of the research certain tensions in my working life were discernible. This arose from the deep analysis of the career

narratives provided by the participants, in conjunction with the exploration of a wide range of literature and constant reflection on my own career story, beyond notions of positionality.

The methods employed in the study are evaluated in the next section, followed by a discussion of future areas of work and concluding thoughts.

Evaluation of Collection of Research Materials

In Chapter 3, the decision to adopt narrative interviews and a loosely structured approach were explored, including the overt intention to encourage and enable each participant to tell her career story in a manner of her own choosing. The materials collected via this approach were rich and sufficiently deep to respond to the research questions set. Further, the loosely structured interviews also gave space that led the women to reflect upon the more abstract concept of 'career', even though they had not directly been asked to address it, and this led to important findings about those conceptions of career, as explored in Chapter 8 and earlier in this chapter. Thus, the needs of the project were met, and I believe this to be robust research. The sole reliance on interviews gave primacy to the spoken and written word above other methods of generating materials. As a more experienced researcher and teacher, however, I would now be more open to different methods of collecting stories, drawing on various creative disciplines, and would perhaps have included an activity to complement the interviews and broaden the experience of biographical exploration. Here, the experience of participation in the Embodied Narratives workshop series is relevant, as well as other activities such as collage. Such activities offer a different way of gathering materials; the relationship between researcher and participant is less direct than during an interview and both parties gain some space - perhaps it is generally less intense. Creative work also offers an opportunity to interpret materials collaboratively and, thus, can help with a desire for co-construction of meaning in research (Chant 2019). At the beginning of this study, I would not have been sufficiently confident to lead such work, but it is an area to develop further, not least for the potential of collaboration between researcher and participant.

Future Areas of Work

This section brings together the conclusions that can be drawn from the study and suggests how the work could be developed. This includes the dissemination of the work and ideas for potential research projects. To recap, the overarching aim of this study was to explore the careers of three

women working in senior, professional roles and to seek insights into the meanings that the participants were attributing to their career stories. Adopting narrative interviews as the primary method of collecting material, and working within an auto/biographical methodology, the research questions that I sought to explore in the thesis focussed on the factors influencing each woman's career, the meanings that the women attributed to their career paths and the extent to which the literature was capable of reflecting these women's career profiles. Through its focus upon matters of influence, the study was designed to explore what might lie beneath the outward presentation of the career stories, and to illuminate the overlap between career and broader aspects of life. As stated from the outset, the study focussed on the particularities of each woman's career and did not aim to produce generalities, for example by creating overarching theory; rather, the aim was to explore the lived experience of the three participants as narrated by them and, subsequently, interpreted by me. Throughout, the meanings of the women's stories were explored; in so doing, the particular was celebrated, through the illumination and exploration of personal stories and lived experience. It is through the focus on the specific details of individual careers that this thesis contributes to a more nuanced picture of the experience of career. Though the research was centred on individual stories, that which might be common has been highlighted and explored.

Earlier in the chapter, the contribution to the field made by this study was explained. Three areas were specified: firstly, conceptions of 'career'; secondly, the influence of emotion within career; and, finally, methodological originality. A further point to consider is that, although the work was not specifically located within the field of career counselling, there are implications for work with professional women, especially in helping such clients to come to a better understanding of broader factors that might influence, support and perhaps also impact negatively on their careers. Thus, this work may also be used as a lens in the quest to understand other lives and careers.

In terms of pointers to future work, the first is for further consideration of the way in which the concept of 'career' is understood. As explained in this thesis, each participant struggled to discuss or explain her own career and that strongly suggested that further research could usefully develop this area of work. Whilst it would be of clear benefit to those working with individual clients, there is also a wider consideration. The terminology of 'career' is used by schools and policy makers without, it appears, much questioning of the underlying meanings that it might hold for individuals. The findings of this study indicate that those uncertainties do not necessarily fade once occupational

paths have been established, even where they have led to apparent success in terms of material reward or job title.

The second principal finding of the study suggests that further consideration should be given to the effects of emotion on career. Current literature is limited, yet, as explored here, it is an area that can have a powerful impact on career. This research has illustrated how emotional responses to career incidents also carry the imprints of other aspects of life, such as the parameters set by upbringing, or the impact of gendered expectations around motherhood or working life in general. Given the subject matter, a narrative research study would be particularly appropriate in fostering an in-depth exploration; further, it would be relevant to a range of participants, as emotional responses to career would not be confined to women.

Thirdly, and arising from the methodological contribution that the thesis makes, there is a place for a deeper exploration of working with friends in a research context. This could take different forms, three of which are suggested now. Firstly, since the completion of this study I have been navigating ways in which to 'leave the field' with the participants. This experience suggests that a further, short, study on the experience of the research from the perspectives of participant and researcher alike would make a fruitful contribution to the literature in this field. Secondly, the friendships explored within the current work already existed so did not arise from a research relationship. One of the outcomes of the study was an interrogation of the effects that friendship had on the research process and it would also be interesting to consider the opposite, namely the effects that research has had upon these friendships. Such a study would make a further contribution to the literature on qualitative research methodology. Thirdly, it appears that the majority of published research involving friends as participants has been carried out by women, drawing upon their friendship networks. From a feminist perspective it would be interesting to explore why more women than men appear to choose this as a research method.

Finally, broader aspects of family life could be investigated. This thesis focuses on the career stories of three professional women who are also mothers. Their narratives speak of the intersection between private lives and public careers, and that rich material has been explored throughout. The three participants are also all married and their husbands featured in the narratives, though to different extents. These are individual lives and separate marriages and it is not appropriate to draw

direct comparisons, however what can be stated with confidence is that, in each marriage, wife and husband are following the same career, at a broadly similar level of seniority within the respective profession. A further area of interest could, therefore, be a study with the men in the story; clearly one effect of this would be to illuminate a different landscape of gender but, taken with the women's narratives, it could offer a more rounded picture of the intersection of career and family life, as experienced by three middle-class, professional families in the United Kingdom. This would have the potential to act as a counter-narrative to the extreme representations of life and career often seen within the mainstream media. The thesis has also highlighted the role that career inheritances can play and the residual historian in me is interested in the links between family history and career choice.

Concluding Thoughts: 'For our kids, it won't be so linear' (Anna, Transcript 2)

This study has focused on the careers of three women, interpreted and analysed by a fourth, but there are also seven children who feature directly in the narratives offered by their mothers. At the conclusion of the thesis, it seems appropriate to reflect on what might influence their forthcoming careers. At the time of writing in 2020, the children range from fifteen to over twenty-one years of age and, thus, all have begun to make decisions that will impact upon career choices; the older ones are now following university courses in direct pursuit of career aims. In the spirit of the auto/biographical methodology that runs throughout this thesis, I note that my own daughter will shortly complete her GCSE courses and is considering options for the next phases of her education. In this, she is being encouraged by her school to explore a wide range of opportunities, regardless of gender or other potential constraints, and there is therefore the implicit suggestion of an unproblematic career path. As this thesis has demonstrated, in her progress towards those currently undefined career dreams, she will be able to draw upon significant amounts of social, cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu 1992). It is likely that she will follow a professional path, similar to those taken by the women in the study. In their narratives, the participants described the benefits and detrimental effects of career, highlighting successes and points of frustration. Although the study did not focus on women at the margins of society, or seek to uncover unresolved issues, by offering them time and space to discuss and explore their careers, it uncovered uncertainties around the relevance of 'career' as a concept even for those who had established working lives in the professions.

This thesis has shown that, in career, there is continuous dialogue between the public and the private aspects of a life; such dialogue is influenced by many factors, both within and outside the control of the individual. That situation is unlikely to change for my daughter and others of her generation. The negative effects of career that were expressed by the women in the study generally arose from difficulties encountered as a result of multiple demands upon their time and, here, linear or untroubled progress in career started to fracture. Outwardly, women's career aspirations and trajectories are supported by visible and robust policy frameworks, such as those described in this study by Anna; such is the message being relayed to our daughters. The stories explored in this thesis, however, suggest that the picture is less sharply focussed: reality is indeed 'fuzzy', to return to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.19). Career carries an inherent dualism, in that it is simultaneously a subjective and objective construct and is individual to every person. This research focussed on the light and shade of career, exploring some of the shadows in the narratives as well as the bright foreground. Within career policy and in subsequent counselling, there is an understandable tendency to focus on the latter, however, as this thesis demonstrates, there is also a place for helping clients to explore their hinterlands, in the lifelong quest to find meaning and satisfaction in career.

The initial point of connection between me and the participants was motherhood, hence the reference to the school gates in the title of the thesis. Over the course of this research project, the children have grown up and there is no longer a need to congregate at those gates. This offers a tangible sign of the evolving needs and priorities of family life. Whilst the careers explored in the thesis run in parallel with family responsibilities, they are also the products of personal priorities and individual histories. As the research has shown, the very idea of 'career' is open to multiple interpretations. At the conclusion of the study, I take away a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the field, developed from the participants' narratives and anchored in a broad range of literature. The thesis contributes to that literature in three important respects, via findings on the conception of career; the role and impact of emotion; and methodological innovation. Though it is focussed on the exploration of individual stories, it has the potential to inform wider career counselling practice, notably the need to move beyond the taken for granted. On a final auto/biographical note, I hope that the work will make me a more understanding career counsellor - and an attentive friend.

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Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

This sheet was given to each participant before the interviews took place.

Women at the School Gates: A Narrative Study of the Career Paths of Three Women

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Christina Stead.

Background

The project aims to investigate the factors that have affected your career to date and to look at whether/how these have changed over time. The research is a qualitative, narrative study and is not seeking to test any given hypothesis. I am interested in questions such as:

- how far the existent literature on career reflects the experiences of women
- the interfaces between family and work/career
- to what extent are our careers linked to - or defining - our identities?

What will you be required to do?

Participants in this study will be required to share their career stories with the researcher in 1:1 interviews.

To participate in this research, you must:

Have an established professional career and be a mother.

Procedures

You will be asked to take part in two 1:1 interviews with the researcher. Each interview will be recorded (audio only) and will last for approximately one hour. It then will be transcribed verbatim. You will have the opportunity to comment upon your transcripts, which will then be written up into a case study and further analysed by me.

Feedback

Each participant will receive a copy of her case study.

Confidentiality

All data and personal information will be stored securely within university premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be Retrieved by Christina Stead. Each participant will be referred to by a pseudonym and the names of any employers will be anonymised.

Dissemination of results

The results of the study will form part of my PhD thesis and may also form the basis of academic papers for journals etc.

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any questions?

Please contact Christina Stead by email if you have any questions about the research.

Appendix 2: Sample Transcript

Below is a complete transcript of the first interview with 'Anna'. Please see Appendix 3 for initial notes on a proforma, then Appendix 4 for a worked proforma, drawn from Merrill and West (2009).

Transcript Interview with 'Anna'
Recorded 19 November 2015 at CS's house, 20:40

CS Maybe if we – can we start by you telling me about your first job?

A (Pause) My very first job? Before a proper job?

CS Either, whatever

A (Sighs) ooh very first job: paper round. Then – what did I do after that? Then I progressed to a marker of papers. I wasn't just a papergirl!

CS A marker?

A Yeah! And I had to get up even earlier!

CS Bit of a responsible job then

A Yeah, even at the tender age of 13. Then I worked in [redacted] the shoeshop

CS Oh right

A And then [redacted]

CS Right – quite a bit of retail, then

A Quite a bit of retail, yeah and erm did summer jobs there while I was doing A' levels and then my first proper, proper job was at [redacted] as a trainee tax accountant. (Pause)

CS Ok – how, how did you end up as a trainee tax accountant. What led you to that?

A I er so I did science at school and I really wanted to be a vet

CS Uh huh

A Not intelligent enough to be a vet. Then I wanted to be a doctor – still not intelligent enough to be a doctor. Erm so applied to be a nurse but my father was an accountant and I used to help him in the summer holidays as well and I went to the careers office in Colchester and looked through their vacancies and there was a vacancy for a trainee tax accountant in London and I applied for that as well as my nursing job and erm when – once I'd got both – I could have been a nurse at [name redacted] Hospital – I chose the accountant because, very mercenary of me, it offered more money. It offered that within 3 years I would have doubled my salary. So I went that route.

CS (Coughs) OK

A It was the right decision, I think – looking back because I think that whilst I had aspirations to be a doctor or vet, a nurse is something completely different.

CS Yeah

A I'm not actually sure that would ever have inspired me the way I wanted to be inspired.

CS So the choices that you narrowed it down to were both quite vocational…

A Mmmm?

CS … things weren't they – you know nursing or accountancy?

A What do you mean?

CS Well, in that it was kind of a concrete job and a career path.

A Yes it had a career path, yes, with a qualification, yes. And something I could do without going to university.

CS Was that important to you?

A Er I think the reason I didn't go to university was because my best friend dropped out of school and moved away and we were doing the same A' levels – I still remember it now –we were doing the same A'levels: Biology, Chemistry and Maths and she suddenly moved from the area and I was left on my own. She did go off to University – she went to Poly – and erm can't remember what she did now – lost touch now – but erm we did exactly the same and we talked a lot about syllabus and everything so we didn't lost touch at that stage but I didn't want to go off to university on my own. But I think had we still been together, not that we would actually have gone to the same university, we would have encouraged each other.

CS Yeah

A and whereas it's very normal in her family (she had two older – she had an older brother and an older sister and they'd gone off to university or poly or whatever) neither of my older sisters had – in fact my older sister had but then dropped out to get married. So I suppose the pull of money… my only other friends locally had left school at 16 and gone to BTECs or – I think it was just expectation. Not a lot of money in the family so actually I had to go out and earn some.

CS Yeah- so you were what, 18 then? And commuting to London?

A Yes, commuting to London.

CS Tell me about [first employer] …

A [name of company redacted].

CS What kind of company? Are they still around?

A They're now called [redacted] – no now they're [redacted]. They were just [redacted] when I worked there come to think of it. They still have very Jewish - they're a very Jewish firm.

CS Right

A Yeah Jewish firm. I don't know the relevance of that (comment) really. Er it was it was really good fun, actually. It was like – I'd say it was like a modern day apprenticeship in that there was a group of 6 or 8 of us, that were all 18, all doing the same exams, all working together – so working on the job but also having study leave and going off to college etc. So we had a ball, actually!

CS Yeah

A It was like getting paid but doing studying. We had a great time. I'm friends with some of those people now erm sort of 30 years on. We had a scream, we really did, but worked hard and played hard. It was the days of Fridays you went down to the pub at lunchtime and never came back.

CS Yeah, I remember that!

A That sort of time. So we had – yeah – we had a really good time and actually while I was there I did apply to university because again a couple of the girls there didn't stay. One of them went off and became a teacher

CS Right

A and the other went off and said I actually want to become an accountant because there's this snobbery about whether you're an accountant or a tax adviser. It was all very snobby then, less so now, I'd say and she said if I want to go anywhere in the company, I need to be an accountant. So she went off to university. She went to [northern city]. And I, I thought then long and hard. I'd done the first part of my exams by then which everyone did – we all did it in 18 months – it's a two part exam. The first part I passed it fine and you had to decide whether to go on or not and at that point I decided to apply to do erm (pause) Biology at [southern university].

CS Right – pause – So how did you come to Biology and [southern university]?

A Just because…

CS Why do any of us do anything?!

A Yes, just because I thought I still obviously hankered about doing something sciency, I think, and (pause) yeah I wanted to fulfil that idea and I did get a place but I still didn't follow it up so I clearly didn't manage to give up the money …

CS yeah

A … by that time. Don't know why I didn't go. Maybe I just couldn't see the future and I think that sometimes worried me: what was the future? You go off to university to DO something but what is it after that? Whereas I had a job, with a career path, if I took the next couple of exams I knew I became qualified with letters after my name and it, it was clear what was going to happen.

CS You were already out there

A Yes, whereas to make a jump to do something else, give up the money, give up some of my independence I'd got. I don't know – I just decided no. I've forgotten, actually – another job I'd applied for all that time when I was deciding what to do – was lab work. So I went for 2 or 3 lab jobs.

CS Right

A They were for things like [company name redacted] It was one of the big biotech companies and erm pharmaceutical companies and I got <u>those</u> roles as well so I was going to be a lab technician – you know, testing stuff.

CS So you actually had quite a lot of options in the early days didn't you?

A I did, yes. I remember, I went to one interview – had to go by bus, 3 buses to get there – Harlow I think it was in and erm they tested animals and there was a huge amount of erm protesting outside the office. Funny when you think back – people were protesting outside. Actually even though I got the job I said no. I couldn't go through that every day when you go into work.

CS No

A Anyway so yeah that was another string to the bow! And er stayed at – I stayed at [first company] for another 15 well 14 – I actually call it 15 but if you look on LinkedIn it was about 14 years 9 months, so I stayed there a long time.

CS So you qualified with them and then

A Yes qualified and just progressed. Did various things with them, yes, and I failed my second exam a couple of times actually. Just didn't – I just think I didn't focus. I was having too much fun (giggles) – too much fun!

CS But it was fine?

A I mean eventually I passed and yes it was fine. But they were also the days when those exams they didn't have a pass mark. It's not like everybody – they passed people - 60% of the people that took it – so one of the times I took it there was only a 15% pass rate –tougher than now one might say, or the calibre of students was particularly awful that year, I don't know – but it was a really low pass rate. I don't think they do that anymore.

CS I don't think so

A They make sure that a certain amount of people always get through. So… stayed there a long time and then I remember being there and I worked primarily for one partner ….erm… and I didn't progress. I got to manager very quickly and then I didn't progress for years. The manager, I remember going to an appraisal with him once, and I said, "am I ever going to make senior manager?" and he – he just looked at me and said "I thought you already were". I think that… that sort of, I think it proves that I've always been one of those sort of people – I don't ever ask for money. You know a lot of people would go into an appraisal saying I deserve this, I deserve a promotion, I deserve that. I've always waited for things to happen to me and I think that probably tells the rest of my career: the waiting for things to happen to determine what happens. So I think that's why I stayed there for so long – there was no particular reason to leave, I was earning OK.

CS What kind of work were you doing? (Bearing in mind that I have no background!)

A Well I started with doing - learning personal tax returns.

CS Right

A How to fill out people's personal tax returns.

CS Is that quite technical then? You know, you follow a system?

A You follow a system though I mean you have to learn the tax law to do it. When you first start, really, it's identifying and adding up people's investments. So it was all very manual then, no computers. Er loads of - piles of dividend vouchers, piles of dividend vouchers – clients would send in dividend vouchers and it was very easy for an 18 year old quite quickly to learn that that's the company name, that's the de de de de, you have to put the number in that box. So really not very technical at that point, you were just filling out lots of forms and then you'd progress to well what

does that mean? That then goes on a schedule that's added into the tax return and then you'd have to work out the tax liability on it. Erm and then you progress to other things – people who've got trusts; how do you tax the trusts? Then you've got inheritance tax – how do you deal with that? There's all sorts of stuff

CS Kind of increasingly complex?

A Yes, yes, and that goes with the training, I suppose at the same time – you learn the very basic training to begin with.

CS So were you dealing with individuals or?

A At that point they were all individual private clients, high net worth people, people paying their "super tax" or whatever it was at that point – that was when tax was at 98% if you earned enough! Erm and then so I suppose the technical bit really was (that's the straightforward bit – putting people's income on a return then adding it all up and then saying well your tax and income's this) and then the technical pieces is about what sort of relief they get and what's deducted, what you can't, if they made investments in the film industry or – at that time they had lots of enterprise zones you could invest in – enterprise zones - and they were regenerating Docklands, for example – so and that's the technical bit really and then when you get trusts, how you're sheltering it from tax in the UK.

CS So at this point, we're in what the late 80s? Mid-late 80s?

A Late 80s, yeah. Yeah. (Pause) And then erm and then and then I diverted. It was just the way they did the training then. You started with personal taxes – it was perceived to be easier. It probably is until you get to the techy trusts and offshore planning and then I went into company tax as well so I did a mixed role – company tax. Is it more complicated? I'm not sure it is more complicated; it needs more judgement – more books to read to learn the law behind it erm, bigger numbers! Erm and planning for people that own companies. Do they get dividends, do they get salaries, do they get… that sort of stuff… owner-managed businesses and then more into PLCs. You just start progressing and I suppose it depends where your strengths are, what you quite like doing. I did payroll for a while as well. I did quite a lot of different kinds of taxes. I didn't do VAT. Never done VAT. Hated VAT in my exams (giggles) – absolutely hated it. Just seemed nonsensical. And then I think it's – if you're – if you truly see a career ahead of you, you drop the personal tax. Having said that, my husband's made an ok career out of doing private client work! And I think if you really want to become something you probably focus on the corporate side of it. Mergers and acquisition and you start getting to the more complex stuff and getting involved with lawyers and making sure that deals are struck correctly. I did quite a lot of advisory work at that stage erm out of company takeovers. It was good, yes, it was alright. It was a job. I learned the law and I learned how to deal with it and … (tails off).

CS So you were there for 15 years…

A Almost, yes – 14 – and the last couple of years (I got married at some point in all of that) and the last couple of years I moved to their local office in [south-east town], so I moved out of London, and I moved to [town] and by then I had been promoted – I was a senior manager then – went to the [town] office and led their tax team – that was career progression there. Why did I do that? I suppose I thought I ought to change, ought to have a change and erm (pause) er and I thought being

closer to home when I was going to be married was a good thing rather than commuting an hour and a half each way, every day.

CS Home being your parents' or had you bought?

A I'd moved out. I'd bought a flat in Essex by then.

CS OK

A I did that I was about 21 or 22 actually, so quite a long time before then I'd been living away from home. It seemed the right thing to do I think, the natural settling down and it didn't really work out. I didn't… it wasn't so buzzy

CS "It" the job?

A The job and it was a bit more run of the mill, there wasn't so much erm drive around the office, you know there wasn't the same – I had a good time there but and also interestingly I'd met a friend who worked there – this was before I moved – so I'd met my friend [name redacted] erm I can't remember how we met each other but we bumped into each other at some work do. She worked in the [south-eastern town] office and I worked in London, we hit it off – got on really well – and that could have been another reason why I moved

CS Yeah

A Quite possibly and I remember being really surprised when I went there – she'd worked there a number of years but when I did make the move she then went off to lunch on her own and things like that. It's funny the things you remember! I remember thinking why is my friend not taking me out to lunch every day? So that must have been one of the reasons why I went, thinking that I'd make the most of friendship. It was fine while it lasted and then I got a call, a head-hunter call erm and it all probably happened at the right time erm because my marriage was breaking down and I got this call and they said do you want to come to London? Do you want to come and work for [name redacted – second accountancy firm], a big 4 accountancy firm rather than a top 20 because [first accountancy firm] had at that time changed to [name redacted] as they'd become then was a top 20 firm and [second accountancy firm] was top 4 – I think at that time there was a top 5 or top 6 but there've been a couple of mergers since then and I said yes. There was nothing really to lose. So I did that, there was nothing really to lose. I packed my bags and I still lived in Essex for a while but I started – I went back to London.

CS What – in the same kind of role?

A Same kind of role but exclusively corporate tax now. I'd been mixed tax up to that point, still doing some private client work, still doing a lot of company work but at Ernst and Young you had to choose one or the other and I chose corporate so I then went more into a corporate world and erm yeah – they were setting up their – this is when I probably made the shift into the corporate compliance rather than advisory. Compliance was filling out the tax returns and advisory is more you're given a scenario and you have to tell the client what to do in the future – more future looking; compliance is more that you're given a set of circumstances and you file the tax return and you tell the client what they need to do. So I moved – the reason I moved – so Ernst and Young were setting up their compliance team because they decided to separate the two – other firms mix then up: you do a bit of compliance and a bit of advisory and [second accountancy firm] decided that they would separate the two and I was applying for a role in their newly set-up – or I'd been headhunted

CS yes!

A for a role in their newly set up compliance team erm and we were doing rolling off tax returns and advising clients how to minimise their tax liability. It was a bit more steady, less cut and thrust – less dynamic – it was the more plodding side of the business, but it was alright, it was good, it was interesting because it was a new team.

CS Right

A and I think that then shaped what's happened since, then really, it's quite interesting in terms of a career, I suppose. That was quite a new team, so I helped shape it, helped to design processes, we then rolled out a global process – we decided globally we could do the same thing all over. I went to the US, talked to people there – awful lot of chat with the US about what THEY did – they thought they'd designed best practice and how could we replicate that in the UK, so suddenly my career had gone from yes, being tax-technical but now it was quite process-driven.

CS Right

A Erm and I stayed there 4, 5 years? Erm and I worked on a particular account and I remember working on this particular account and I was completely up to date – I knew exactly what was happening - had a schedule that said what was happening and when it was happening and I was very organised … and the business was growing and growing and growing – quite massive – and I said to a partner that I really thought that this account needed more care and attention from a partner because no one was very interested in it and erm this lady I worked for, this partner there and she said well, I'm happy to have a look at it with you. So we had a look at this particular account, and at the same time they'd introduced – it was an Australian company and they'd introduced a new department in London and she cold-called the department in London and said I really think you need more help. I've got a senior manager here who says you need more help. You're not really looking after what you should, and er I was introduced to the new Head of Tax in Europe for this particular Australian bank and and, and he recognised that the business was growing too quickly

CS yes

A er and he said "what we need, Anna, is you" – again that was Anna moving on to the next job because this the Head of Tax said you're so organised, you know exactly what we're doing, and how we're doing it and why we're doing it. I need you in my business and two months later I moved into the bank. Erm and really, really enjoyed it. I think this was a different turning point. That was a different turning point going in-house to a really savvy bank. I remember being – it was an investment bank – and I remember going to drinks before I joined and it was scary and all I really remember – one of the things I really, really remember - was that everyone was very dapper. You know the men wore pinstripe suits and spoke really nicely, and threw the money around – there was champagne everywhere. The secretaries were very glam.

CS What kind of year are we in now?

A Now we are in – 19 no 2004 or 5. I moved to [second accountancy firm] in 2000. (Pause) I got remarried in 2001, first child 2002, second child 2004, moved to [Australian bank] in 200…6. 2006, yes. So when – a bit of a boom time actually when particularly investment banks were buying, buying, buying.

CS Right

A And that's what this bank were doing. When I moved there in 2006, they only had 50 employees in the UK and I can't remember worldwide – maybe 200 employees worldwide? At their peak they had 2000 employees worldwide and over 200 in the UK erm so it moved from a weenie little business to a massive business in no time at all so I was part of that and that was just really interesting and opened my eyes to something very different erm working in the business, understanding the business more – that is far more interesting than just dealing with lots of different businesses. I felt there was a common purpose because everyone within the business wanted to make money. It was all about the bonuses that these chaps would get at the end of the year. It was all about making the next deal and I dealt with all the tax to do with that and I again – it came back to I was setting up a team – so I'd done that at [second accountancy firm] – it was a new team, it wasn't on my own I'd done that, I'd certainly been part of a team that had grown and had set up a new team and had talked all about structure and things like that so all of a sudden I had become this organised person where different skills were coming out and those same skills were used at [Australian bank] setting up the team across Europe and in those first few months – so I joined in August 06 – and er by – in September/October I went to Malta for a tax conference and then by Christmas I'd gone to Australia - all of a sudden "my stay at home with a couple of kids" had been turned on its head. I wasn't a stay at home mum any more – I was having to juggle being away from the kids, for certainly 2 or 3 nights initially when I went to Malta - then when I went to Australia it was the whole week

CS Yeah

A er very, very different. Very interesting. I was doing - that's I think when I really started working overnight because in Australia – you know – there's a 10 or 12 hour time difference depending on the time of year so quite often I'd have to be in work at 6 o'clock in the morning to be able to have calls with people, they'd want work done so I might be working until 2 the following morning before they got in, or as they got in, so that I could finish off work and I think that's when my working habits changed quite considerably and of course the internet! You know when I started there was no computers or whatever – you had a few bits of post on your desk and that was it!

CS We had the fax machine going!

A Yeah, fax machine, pigeons – whatever – you'd wait for bits of paper to pass here and there. We were now in this world where it was instantaneous. I could work from home – yes, it was on a modem – actually lots of people had better – it took us a long time to get something better at home – but I could work and I could dial up and I could work from home. Hence I could work overnight – erm working habits changed massively er and a husband I suppose that managed to juggle things around it. I wasn't the woman who had to drop the kids off. It was easier when they were at nursery. I could drop them at – you can drop them even longer now but at that time I could drop by eight and pick up at half five I think it started off. I think that same nursery now you can drop at 7 and pick up at 7 so it's incredible really isn't it that change?

CS Yes

A Erm well I didn't I did the 8 to 6 working four days a week and then when the kids went to school I made sure I could leave on time on Mondays and Fridays so I was working until about 2 o'clock every day so I could pick them up on time from school 2 days a week and the other days they went into after-school care. So… we're jumping around a bit. So I was with the bank, started to travel. Where did I travel to? I think I went to Paris as well – we had a big unit in Paris. I think I went to Belgium with them. All short haul

CS So far more of a global role?

A It was, yes. Very exciting – I found it far more exciting. I just found I think it was the dynamism – is that the right word? – around what they were trying to do. I mean they were money-greedy as well, when I think about it, it was all about the next deal, the next bit of money erm how the business was doing, all the time. Where the next quick buck was coming from – erm it was just interesting to work – I mean there was money coming out of people's ears: there were yachts, there were private jets, there were golfing weekends. I mean you never stayed in anything less than a 5* hotel with champagne on tap and the men would go to nightclubs – it was quite grim, actually, I mean the grim bits I sort of kept away from. An awful lot of affairs going on, a lot of unhappy people, a lot of broken marriages during that time as well, but there were good things as well. What do I remember best about that? I think – changing as a person, I think I changed quite a lot there. So I go back to {senior female colleague, name redacted], who I think was a bit of an inspiration. No kids but a lovely lady. Married, now retired so I think she's in her 60s now but when I first knew her she was in her late - probably about 50, about that age when I met her in 2000, so she was about 50 – about the age I am now and I found her quite inspirational. I'd go out to client meetings with her and we'd be round a table of 15 men and we'd be the only 2 women and it's still like that now – less so but still quite like that. She would be able to hold the fort and talk to all these men about – very interesting, her husband was an architect and she used to be able to talk about the architecture or the history of some architecture or the architecture in Spain or you know they'd travelled the world and they'd seen all the different bits and somehow that was her common ground with men and it was something that was not business-related, not sport-related but not namby-pamby girly stuff.

(A attacked by Punch puppet!)

CS Yes, not fluffy

A Not fluffy-fluff, no. And she was well-read as well and she used to talk quite a lot about the things that she'd read whereas my commonality tended to be if they had kids. I could do a bit about sport because my husband was hugely into sport so I could hold my own on sport as well. Yeah, interesting because she was a bit inspiring to me and the first woman I'd come across, actually, who could command herself in – in a room of men and they would listen to her. She was also attractive, you know an attractive woman but didn't use that like some other women I've seen get to the top using their attractiveness in a different way…

CS Oh right, yes! I've seen that, yes.

A Well that take me right back, - back to my [first accountancy firm] days actually when I was away at a conference, interestingly with my current husband. And a partner approached me in the evening and asked me about my career plans. We were talking at the bar, as you do, and we developed my career plan conversation to the point of "and would you like to come to my room to discuss it in more detail Anna?"

CS Yuck. How did you handle that?

A Er I said I didn't think it was a good idea! But I think it was interesting that my husband was there and was watching from afar. Now we weren't – we were only just dating at that stage and he was watching it from afar. But it was pretty horrid. Probably the only time that I've got myself in that situation other than at [Australian bank] where it was almost expected – it was the environment.

CS the climate?

A Yes it was the climate – money, affluent men, power, all of that. There was a chap recruited not long after me when I was at [the bank] who was also employed to do tax and there were certain key people within [the bank] who would only deal with him and not deal with me.

CS Even in 2000-and-wherever-we-are?

A 2006, yes. He could drink (not that I can't!), he could drink, he could swear, he would go to nightclubs – he could go to lap dancing clubs – erm whereas I couldn't or didn't want to – er – yeah – still went on. Yes I didn't play golf! (Laughs) But I would write the same technical paper and get the same accurate answer for this group of people but it wouldn't be acknowledged in the same way. I wasn't part of the gang. I'm not sure it really stopped me doing things, being successful… Erm but that bit of my career ended because [the bank] went bust. They spent too much money.

CS Too much champagne!

A Too much champagne, too much debt. The bubble burst – the bubble burst for them erm and I suppose in some ways it became a bit of an opportunity because my boss immediately left – no future for him, you see – he was earning big money, big bonuses and they just weren't going to happen and really what happens when a company goes bust it then takes a lot of tidying up, an awful lot of closing things down and it was boring for him – he wanted to be out there doing more deals so he moved to [accountancy firm 3] which is another story – it's all linked! – he moved there as a partner and I carried on at [the bank] and we moved from this glossy, glossy building where we spent millions and millions putting in a spiral staircase to connect 3 or 4 floors - it looked like a nightclub when you walked in but it was all about the glamour and the glitz.

CS Were you in the City or West End?

A We were in the City, yes. Yes, and it was very flash, very plush. We had free lunches, everything was free. Everything was on expenses. It was like a different world. I don't think I'd ever expected in my little humble tax trainee days in 1985 that I'd be in this position where people were earning 6 figure bonuses around me – six figure digits, that had never happened.

CS And then the bubble burst…

A The bubble burst, I was left clearing up the mess and that was fine. You got a retainer and probably the reason I stayed? Path of least resistance… it was still quite really interesting. As the team got smaller and smaller we got to know each other better, we still had loads of fun. We got paid really well, we got retention bonuses – not quite 6 figures we're talking about, but we were paid well to stay. And I got promoted if you like. I then got promotion to being "Head of" so on my CV it looked really good. We got counselling – outplacement counselling – where are you going to go next? What are you going to do? That sort of thing. So really two things happened after that. It was towards the end of that stage and I really did go all the way down the line – I was the last person in the office to lock the door – so it was quite interesting to see something to go from nothing – well not nothing but small-fry – to huge back down to zero in a five/four and a half year period. That was quite a rollercoaster.

CS That's quite interesting because people generally talk about redundancy in kind of tones of despair but that's not what I'm hearing here.

A No, not at all. I would have liked to have stayed longer. I'd like the experience to have lasted much, much longer but the experience of seeing that as well was really, really interesting and quite a free time for me. I did have a work/life balance probably then because I could walk in late

and go home early and nobody – I was my own boss, really. Er I was answerable still to Australia. I thought that people were listening to me. I thought they wanted to know what I knew. My information was valuable – really valuable – it was like the big firm that went – what was the big bank?

CS Leeson?

A Lehman Brothers. Same thing. There were people left in there who had valuable information and they were paid to stay an awful lot longer than I was paid to stay at [the bank], but they were paid and I can see the similarities. At the end of the day, I knew where the data was and someone needed to get hold of that. So you can see I became a bit important and it became quite nice to be – so big bosses in Australia that historically probably hadn't really noticed me suddenly were phoning me up at home and saying "do you know what happens here, Anna, and what this is and what that is?" and it gave you a sense of purpose and a sense of responsibility and worth.

CS Recognition?

A Yes definitely. Yeah. Yeah to a point that actually I left – in that I'd been paid off – and they still needed some information from me so they paid me a day rate to still carry on in that capacity. And what happened then? I er so I was made redundant but I knew a long time in advance it was happening. It was extended a couple of times so I had a long time to plan for it and Pat Billingham came back – I was still in touch with her – oh Pat became my adviser, so when I'd moved into in-house when I worked at the bank, Pat Billingham the partner was then my adviser, so my relationship with a partner suddenly became very different because I was a client. So having just been a senior manager and she was a partner, all of a sudden you know she – she had to do what I said. It didn't feel like that but it was very different. I didn't treat it like that but it was very different. And we became really good pals actually through that period and she laughed and she'd come to Malta with us and we'd had a boat up and down the river and danced together until 3 o'clock in the morning and she was good for a laugh as well and she massively enjoyed that time as well, I know that. Erm but she came – when she knew I was being made redundant, she – while she'd retired from [accountancy firm 2] - by then, she put me in touch with a partner who still existed there who remembered me from before and basically I got offered a job back. But I was offered a job back as a senior manager. And bearing in mind I'd left as a senior manager, I'd had 5 years out in an in-house role where I'd been quite important, they offered me a senior manager role back. Erm

CS What's the difference? Is it possible to…

A Difference between what?

CS What does a senior manager do? What does a partner do that a senior manager doesn't? Is it the status and the salary or…?

A It's status, salary and client relationship. And winning business. A partner really needs to be bringing money into the firm – going out and winning business with clients, whereas a senior manager will probably run a portfolio and will find odd pockets of additional fees but on the whole they're responsible for day to day managing something whereas a partner is out there schmoozing, trying to win more work.

CS OK. They offered you senior manager…

A They offered me senior manager. It would have been portfolio-based, running a portfolio and it was fine and I thought yeah you know it's safe, I've been here before but at the same time – well pretty much at the same time, my boss had moved as a partner to [accountancy firm 3] – my boss from [the bank], [name redacted], who took partner at [firm 3], said Anna – you can't – erm you can't go to [firm 2], you need to come to [firm 3]. So he got me through and he said you've got to come in as a director – it's a step up from senior manager. Not a partner, but a director. And, er, he basically said you can't go in as a senior manager, that's ridiculous. So I went through the director track – what they call director track – at [firm 3]. So whereas at [firm 2] I didn't have to have any formal interview – I'd had one chat, didn't have anything formal, didn't have to do any tests online, [firm 3] I had to do it all.

CS I remember you doing all that!

A Do you? I did all that and passed.

CS Successfully, obviously.

A I think I shocked myself! At the same time I'd also gone for some tests – some psychometric testing at (another) bank and I was so nervous about that and I passed those. I couldn't believe that I'd passed them. I think I thought my days of passing exams had gone – or tests – I think I thought by then I was getting slower. What was I? Mid-40s? And I thought…

CS In what way? Generically?

A Yes I thought my brain had definitely slowed - I'm not sure I can get through all these questions I need to get through. But luckily my accuracy was good – my speed was slow but accuracy was good. I was quite surprised. I did do quite a few tests. I got through the [other bank] ones but I didn't get the job there – the job changed. I did get through the [firm 3] thing and I think the honour of being asked to be a director swung it. The partner and [firm 2] – I think I'd strung him out for about 2 or 3 months by this stage, not answering the job offer. The job offers salary-wise were actually identical erm so it wasn't for the salary. So I spoke to the partner at [firm 2] and said I've got to be really honest with you – I'm on director track at [firm 3] – and at the moment that's swinging it for me. And he said look, I can give you the director title if that's what you want. Erm and I decided it wasn't what I want. I decided I didn't want to go back to somewhere I'd been before. I decided they'd only ever see me as a senior manager, as though they hadn't taken any value of the 5 years I'd had away from the firm, the learnings I'd had from what I'd gone through and I decided I needed a new challenge and I went to [firm 3]. And again if you think of all those decisions I've made in my career, none of them have been as a result of my - what I've done or maybe – I do reflect back on this – [firm 1] maybe initially I chose, but then I got headhunted to go to EY – someone else put something in front of me – I got asked to go in-house by [name redacted] at the bank and then yes that folded but the two things that I went to after that, [firm 2] and [firm 3] as an option were both given to me. I didn't actually go and seek the jobs. Interesting. I've never actually pursued what I want to do. I've fallen into these things.

CS I think that's true of very many of us.

A Yes. But I think when I was young, looking back on it, I never expected to be working now. It's not that I don't like working now. It's not that I know what I'd do if I didn't work, but I think when I was 18 I had no concept – my mum never worked, probably since she got married. I don't think it was even kids-related. I think when she got married, she stopped. I just don't think I'd ever

expected or had a thought about that far in advance - what I'd be doing when I was 50 and I think another year passes then another year passes and I've now been working for 30 years.

Pause

CS Yes. I also think that – maybe more so in the current climate – that very few people start on a career track that progresses smoothly in a way that it might have done in the 1950s – if you ask young people now what they think they'd be doing at 50 they don't have the faintest idea.

A Yeah. I think that's more true now. In fact they say now that our children will probably have to reinvent themselves an awful number of times in their career.

CS They do.

A They'll need to recycle or learn or develop or change, adapt.

CS Portfolio career!

A You're right, whereas my Dad had been in the same place for years.

Pause

CS So [firm 3] where you are…

A Yes, still there now.

CS Has the role developed in the way you thought or hoped it would?

A Five years on. I don't think I know what… I know that I absolutely hated it for the first year.

CS Can you put your finger on why?

A Erm I wasn't doing what I wanted to do. I thought I knew what I wanted to do.

CS What, in terms of the actual work role?

A Yeah, I don't think anyone quite knew what to do with me there. Yes, I'd kind of gone in as a director, but what was she going to do? She has valuable knowledge from working in-house but they hadn't really decided what they wanted me to do so I had to do what I thought was the right thing and I think fortuitously quite early on in the process – and I think this is the only thing that's made me stay – was that I was given the [redacted: large global company] account to look after. And when I went out to them to meet the team, because they had to interview me to see if I was good enough – erm I got on really well with the team and they liked my pragmatism and the fact that I didn't – I always looked for a solution rather than finding problems erm and the fact that I'd worked in-house to them meant that I understood some of their challenges was really important – really, really important erm and I just liken the role that I have had and probably have with [large global company] as being as akin to an in-house role as it could be – if there's such a thing. I spend a lot of time with them. I've travelled the world with them. I've been to Indonesia, I've been to Philadelphia. I've been to Italy, I've been to erm Poland, I've been to … where else have I been? I've just been all over the place and yes Ireland – I know these are just nearby places but I basically have gone to places that I've just – Singapore – all over the place with that particular role. Places I would just never have envisaged erm when I joined [accountancy firm 3] and that just makes the role good as far as I'm concerned. Yes I didn't really see the places that much but I have also found that quite exciting. Erm so I think that saved the day. I don't think – I not sure I would have stuck it out if I hadn't been in that role erm and the fact again I was – I like to be – feel that people appreciate what

I'm doing. But I'm sure everybody does. And it's so clear from this woman that I particularly got along with – found my approach so much better than who it had been done by before. And I don't know what that approach was – I don't know what made it different – it was just the way I worked and it worked for her. And maybe it was a woman – she'd had a man before

CS Yeah maybe

A Could have been – people found her a bit of an 'old woman'. I didn't really find her that bad – I've worked with far worse men. Er found her quite straightforward, really (laughs) – erm so I'm still there now. And the role has changed. I still do that account but again I've moved back into setting up teams so [accountancy firm 3] have moved on with their thinking. When I joined we did all this compliance work, so it goes back to what do I do in my day job – corporate tax compliance work, I'd been completing tax returns at this stage. I review, I manage, I train people, I coach people, I mentor, do less of the technical stuff. I rely on the new graduates trainees really who are learning it day to day and I'm there as a sounding board and a challenge. Smell tests – you start working on smell tests – that doesn't sound quite right – are you sure? Show me the legislation, show me what you do, is that right? And then I judge it, rather than knowing it all myself. Erm very different role. Like it. Very much like working with people, training people, and erm seeing the wood for the trees, which I think a lot of people can't.

CS Yes

A But the role again has changed – so they've changed their – so went to the compliance role they er they decided – [firm 3] in its wisdom decided one of its strategic initiatives was to centralise compliance, shared service centres all over the world – I mean all the big companies do shared service centres now

CS Right yes

A People don't work locally anymore, dump things together and say we're going to find the synergies in these processes and reduce the number of people, we're going to get all these things – you know, technology-enabled so that we reduce the number of people that touch things. Erm so we've jumped on the bandwagon – [firm 3] jumped on the bandwagon and said we'll centralise our compliance – so rip it out of each individual office – there are 22 individual offices – and say we'll centralise it and they centralised it in [Scottish city].

CS Right

A Hence my Scottish role! And the reason why I got involved in that? Probably because I probably had the strongest compliance background for the in-house role, the [accountancy firm 1]role is a huge compliance background - even at [firm 2] I did compliance, not advisory – so I end up with this role and started trekking up to Scotland every week, setting up another new team. So there's a bit of it does keep coming back to what have you done before, playing on your skills – what is your skill set? Well I'm quite good at 'teaming', quite good at motivating people, telling how wonderful they are, erm getting things right, so I think I could do that.

CS That's where you are

A That's where I am! After 30 years (sigh).

CS Good! So shall we bring this to a close maybe by – so where you are now sort of with your 30 years behind you, can you, can you kind of distil what you think the biggest influences have been on your career?

A My dad – to go into it initially, else would I have even have thought about that way because I was very science-driven? (Pause) Erm the partner who supported me at [firm 1] even though he didn't think I was a senior manager. You know, he got that wrong! He was a big influence. The lady at [firm 2]. She encouraged me to take the in-house role and I think the in-house role probably made me. I've met her a number of times since – we're still friends – and she said 'you changed so much in that period, that four and a half year period. How four and a half years can change you is incredible and you grow into your skin don't you? I think I, I'm still not a pushy person. I'm still not one who goes in and says 'I demand this salary, I think I'm worthy of that', but I am far more confident. I can stand in front of a group of people and talk. I can't – I couldn't (say) eight years ago. I don't – it doesn't really faze me if someone says go and speak for half an hour in front of 50 people. Yeah, I get a bit nervous. I don't love it, but…as long as I know my subject and I'm passionate about it… In fact, I did a pitch a couple of weeks ago, as you know, and er I was dropped in it at the last minute and I had to do it but when we were doing the testing of the pitches and we had external people testing the pitches, they said the passion that Anna has in this room is bigger than anybody else – any of them! And it's just because when I like my subject I can talk about it, it's all about knowing your subject.

CS It's great feedback though!

A Yeah… yeah.

CS Really nice to be told that.

A And I needed a reference for that and the lady I've worked with really closely at [global company] said I'll give you a reference, Anna, I think you're brilliant! They'll be really lucky to have you – obviously if it works. Those are the sort of things you really hang on to – those are the things that have really influenced me but it is all about recognition and I wait to be recognised. Erm. Do I… er turning points – the things that – the challenge when I had my kids: I did really think as to whether I should change my career. Did think about going again back to a medicine thing. Should I be a midwife? Or maybe a lot of people think that after they've had a baby, I don't know. Should I be a midwife, should I retrain now? Should I go into diet – dietician – it really, really interests me. If I had my time again, I thought that could have been a career... Pause. But to change your career in your mid 30s – I had my kids around that time – too hard, too hard. Learning things all over again – not that I didn't have the ability. Money! By then I was earning really good money. Why would I suddenly go and why would I ever – I would never make the same money again as a dietitian or a midwife. Never. It would be hard slog, so I guess that's an interesting choice of mine – that the money at the end of the day has outweighed what probably would have been more fulfilling. Yes.

Pause

CS I don't think you're alone in that.

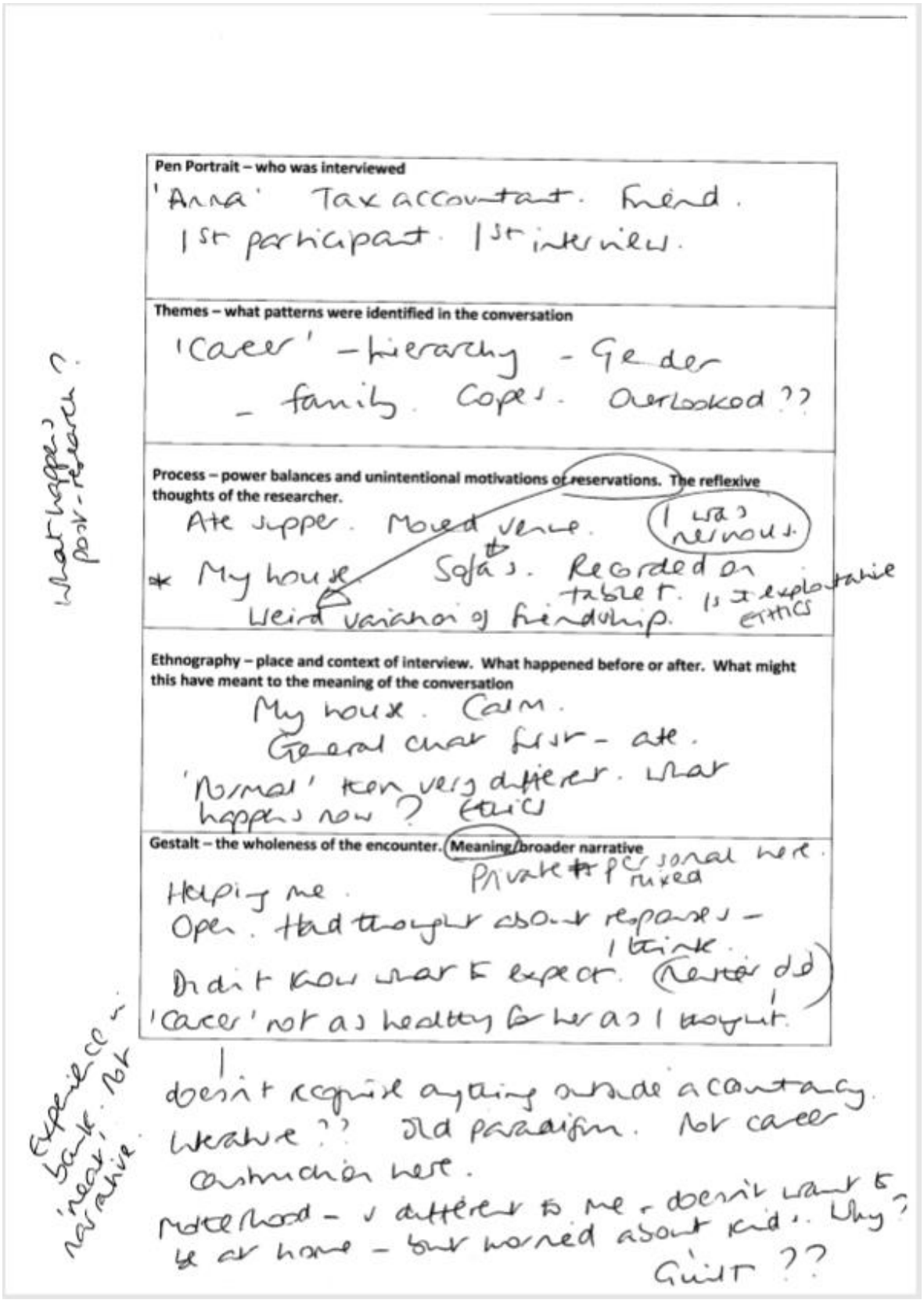
A No. You'd have trained for years. And that's another thing – people challenged me at the time. You've trained for years and you're now earning what you deserve to earn as a result of those 5 years of training initially, reading all those ridiculously long legislation books, persevering and passing those exams that you didn't pass straight away. Doing this, doing that, getting to where you've got to, competing against all these men, balancing of career with kids at home. Why would you give that all up to reinvent yourself if you don't have to? I can read about diet in my leisure, can't I?

CS You can, yes. In all that copious free time you've got. I think that's probably a good point to finish!

A I rambled didn't I?!

Appendix 3: Initial Notes on Proforma

Proforma from Merrill and West (2009). The notes refer to an interview with Anna: full transcript is Appx 2.



Pen Portrait – who was interviewed

'Anna' Tax accountant. Friend.
1st participant. 1st interview.

Themes – what patterns were identified in the conversation

'Career' – hierarchy – Gender
– family. Copes. Overlooked??

Process – power balances and unintentional motivations or reservations. The reflexive thoughts of the researcher.

Ate supper. Moved venue. (I was nervous.)
* My house. Sofas. Recorded on tablet. Is I exploitative
Weird variation of friendship. ETHICS

Ethnography – place and context of interview. What happened before or after. What might this have meant to the meaning of the conversation

My house. Calm.
General chat first – ate.
'Normal' conversation very different. What happens now? ETHICS

Gestalt – the wholeness of the encounter. Meaning/broader narrative

Private & personal here. Mixed
Helping me.
Open. Had thought about responses – I think.
Didn't know what to expect. (Never did)
'Career' not as healthy for her as I thought.

What happens post-research?

Experience v narrative. Not 'neat'.

doesn't require anything outside a contract.
Narrative?? Old paradigm. Not career construction here.
Motherhood – ✓ different to me – doesn't want to be at home – but worried about kid. Why? Guilt??

Appendix 4: Sample Worked Proforma

This detailed proforma is included to display the process of analysis for the examination of the thesis. However before the thesis is made available via library access (and to participants if they wish to receive a copy) it will be reduced in length and parts will be redacted. This action will preserve anonymity and maintain the sensitive and ethical handling of any personal information.