Exploring Careering: Adrift on a Sea of Opportunity?

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This thesis is dedicated to my niece Lauren,

and nephews Eli, William, Jacob, Kieron and Jack.

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Declaration

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

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Abstract

Career theory emphasises the central role of the individual by ascribing a high degree of personal choice and control to career experiences. In contrast, I advocate a theoretical understanding, which takes into account the significance of the context in which careers take place, including the influence of other people. My principal aim is to provide a deeper and richer understanding of the lived experience of careers, by exploring how and why change is experienced.

A narrative based methodology is adopted to capture a broad range of experiences and change events within career stories. In providing a retrospective narrative of their personal stories, interviewees highlight elements of experiences of change which are meaningful and significant to their career.

My findings reveal that whilst career experiences are frequently narrated by interviewees as unique, they are 'uniquely the same'. The career stories highlight that perceived 'uniqueness' arises from unpredictability, and a lack of personal choice or control over, and within career experiences. This occurs due to the complex interplay of a broad range of personal, social and work-related contextual factors. Furthermore, explanations for the unanticipated and inadvertent ways in which careers evolve are frequently attributed to chance and luck.

This thesis advances 'careering' as a theoretical and methodological construct, through which to study and comprehend the development of careers and explore how this unfolds over time, within the broader context of a person's storied life. Careering provides a holistic perspective of careers, challenging the self-determinacy presented within existing career theory and draws attention to both the individual and contextual factors which give rise to opportunities and constraints within careers, overlooked within existing career literature. The focus on change in careering, renders visible 'turning points' between and within sequences of work, to reveal careering as chaotic, interrupted and seemingly out of control.

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List of Abbreviations

AHP	Allied Health Professional
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CQC	Care Quality Commission
HR	Human Resources
IRAS	Integrated Research Application System
KCM	Kaleidoscope Career Model
LD	Learning Disabilities
MH	Mental Health
MHO	Mental Health Officer
NHS	National Health Service
OT	Occupational Therapist
PDR	Performance and Development Review
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

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1 Introduction

1.1 Opening

From the 1990s onwards, a plethora of career concepts have emerged within the field of career studies, and wider academic literature, in recognition of identifiable changes in the world of work and employment. Broadly classified as 'flexible' careers, (Arnold and Cohen, 2008) these concepts endeavour to model the key characteristics of contemporary careers, accentuating the central role of the individual in career management, and emphasising change as a recurrent feature. A singular and idealised perspective of career is presented, which suggests a high degree of personal control, predictability and desirability, and detachment from the context within which it is experienced. For example, the protean career concept is described as a particular orientation or 'mindset' towards career and focuses upon the subjective and self-directed perspective of the individual career actor to emphasis individual autonomy and control (Hall, 1996b). Alternatively, boundaryless career theory emphasises infinite possibilities, which the individual anticipates and seizes in the pursuit of psychological success (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996).

1.2 Research Focus and Aims

This thesis comes to this debate from an alternative approach by focusing upon 'change', a prominent feature within each of career models to be reviewed in Chapter Two. Whilst alternative research has adopted a cross-sectional focus upon specific forms and instances of change, for example, from full-time to portfolio forms of

employment (Cohen and Mallon, 1999), this thesis encompasses a broad range of change events across a career history. Adopting as a starting point a widely cited definition of career; "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al., 1989), this thesis explores change as the connections between work experience within sequences. In so doing, a greater comprehension of how such sequences evolve, are constituted and are experienced, is provided. In fulfilling this aim this thesis develops a richer understanding of how change is experienced within career, to advance or challenge the dominant ideologies of career reinforced through key conceptualisations of career within contemporary theory.

In addressing the research aims from the perspective of the social sciences, this thesis will also, where relevant, draw upon the multidisciplinary approaches to the study of career. Although formally established as a legitimate field of study within Management and Organization Studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s, career had, and continues to be, an area of study within alternative academic disciplines; principally sociology and psychology. From a sociological perspective the notion of career is traced back to the roots of Durkheim and Weber. Weber's work on bureaucracy and bureaucratic organising informs the literature on the organisational career (Du Gay, 2000). Durkheim's interest in the relationship between the individual and social structures, including the division of labour and occupational identities, have been translated from a societal to organisational level (Durkheim, 1984). The ideas of Weber and Durkheim subsequently informed the early research on careers within the sociological field. Everett Hughes is noted as the first scholar to recognise 'career' as a formal concept to be studied developing a sociology of occupations (1958). A sociological perspective on career is concerned with the social structures and structural influences over an individual's working life, examining the interplay between individuals and institutions. It also investigates boundary definition, mobility, status assignment and constraints on organisational choice. Conversely, within the field of psychology the study of career historically focused upon fitting the individual to a particular vocation, stemming from the publication of a seminal book "Choosing a Vocation" (Parsons, 1910). Parsons was passionate about the idea that workers should choose labour carefully and find fulfilment. His ideas were subsequently adopted in matching immigrants and returning soldiers to jobs. Historically the field focused upon vocational theories to predict fit and performance of an individual within a particular

vocation through the identification and measurement of individual differences. However, in the latter half of the 20th Century careers were increasingly recognised as a dynamic and maturing process and developmental theories emerged to understand the steps or stages an individual goes through during the course of their career. Consequently, where relevant, career literature from other domains will be drawn upon to critique, develop and address limitations within the principal body of literature to be reviewed.

In exploring personal experiences of change within career retrospectively, this thesis addresses a gap within the existing career literature, which presents change within the career, as either a means or outcome to one's own active pursuit of career. Alternatively, this thesis seeks to explore change from an individual perspective to develop greater clarity around why and how change occurs and the implications of this for future careering. Specifically, the role played by individuals in shaping and directing change within their careers, and the significance of external influences in presenting both opportunities and constraints in relation to how this is exercised. This challenges the over-emphasis afforded within the current literature on individual agency and adopts a broader perspective in considering what other factors also influence such experiences. Consequently, change becomes contextualised both within the multiple layers of context within which it occurs and in relation to the sequences of work experience from which career is constituted.

In developing an alternative approach to the study of career this thesis makes an empirical and theoretical contribution by advancing the construct of 'careering'. As will be outlined within Chapter Four, the term careering is currently underdeveloped with limited application within career literature. However, its value as a theoretical construct is considered to be twofold. Firstly, the term conveys an alternative sense of movement, potentially chaotic, interrupted, and out of control, than that expressed through orderly connotations of career. Secondly, it holds theoretical value in approaching career as a process to be studied as it unfolds over time and incorporating many different aspects of an interviewee's life. In so doing, a holistic perspective of career is presented, highlighting additional elements which give rise to both opportunities and constraints within career, that are often overlooked within existing

literature. Consequently, the self-determinacy presented within existing career theory is challenged.

1.3 Research Methodology

The empirical focus of this thesis is upon career stories, encompassing a broad range of experiences across different occupations, organisations and sectors. A narrative based methodology is adopted through which to explore change within career and capture the richness of such experiences. The analysis of career stories facilitates a holistic approach to the study of careering. By narrating their personal stories, interviewees gave voice to their experiences, providing a retrospective account across their career history and highlighting the significant and meaningful. Such a research design facilitates the emergence of key themes from within these stories, forming the basis for further analysis and ensuing empirical discussion.

1.4 Research Interest and Motivation

My interest in this research area stems from my prior work experience and listening to the accounts of friends and colleagues. These experiences consist of a myriad of interruptions and obstacles as a consequence of frequently unexpected change. On subsequently engaging with career theory as a mature student, I was struck by the inadequacy of this literature in clearly capturing the diversity I had observed within career experiences. Subsequently I developed a research interest in understanding how, in light of the absence of clear linear career paths and confronted by recurrent change, people chose to navigate through different work experiences. Additionally, in undertaking empirical research at master's degree level, and in the initial stages of PhD study, I was struck by the eagerness of people, in a wide variety of contexts, to share their story upon discovering my research subject. These unprompted, and frequently highly personal accounts, incorporated different aspects of their life and highlighted elements they regarded as significant or noteworthy, including the meaning that they attributed to work and career. These experiences have therefore shaped the empirical approach of this thesis, which employs as its principal focus individual stories as a method to understanding experience.

1.5 Practical Relevance

It is intended that the contribution of this thesis reach beyond the academic community to be of practical relevance in informing the practice of human resource and line managers in supporting the career development of employees, in addition to informing their outlook upon their own careering. The career concepts to be reviewed in Chapter Two accentuate career as self-directed, which raises questions as to the role of managers and organisations in the career development of employees. Conversely, this thesis demonstrates the potential role of such people and contextual factors within the career development of employees. However, it also highlights that this role may arise in unanticipated and unintended ways, and therefore offers an alternative perspective to the formal career management practices and policies featured within existing career literature.

1.6 Thesis Structure

The thesis follows a traditional layout consisted of a comprehensive review of career literature (Chapters Two – Four), a methodology chapter (Chapter Five), and presentation of the empirical findings (Chapters Six - Eight) before concluding (Chapter Nine). Specifically, Chapter Two introduces the current literature on career change and its treatment within contemporary career concepts. Chapter Three reviews the study of change within career and introduces alternative approaches to understanding the role of the individual. In highlighting the approach to be adopted within this thesis, studying change experiences from a perspective of 'careering', Chapter Four outlines how this term has currently been adopted and its potential theoretical and methodological value in advancing a theory of career change. Chapter Five outlines the methods adopted within the study, outlining the use of career stories to understand experiences and discussion of the case and sample selected and an introduction to the organisation from within which participants were recruited. The research findings are presented within the remaining chapters and are brought together within the empirical discussion of Chapter Eight. The concluding chapter (Nine) demonstrates how the research findings address the research aims and connects this back to the literature reviewed in the earlier chapters, highlighting the contribution made by this thesis.

2 Career Change and Contemporary Models of Career

2.1 Introduction

This thesis adopts as its principal starting point a widely applied and cited definition of career by Arthur et al., (1989:8) "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time". This definition originated within the domain of career management but has since gained increasing recognition and application within wider academic literature (Inkson, 2015). In conceptualising the term 'career' in this manner, it follows that to further understand career, and how it is constituted and experienced, this 'evolving sequence' of work experiences requires further analysis and its key features comprehended in greater depth. Accordingly, this thesis adopts as its central theme and subject of study the phenomenon of 'change' within the career.

Change is a key feature within contemporary career theory and this thesis sets out to explore how this change is conceptualised, developing a greater comprehension of how and why change is experienced across the course of the career. The chapter opens by reviewing how change within the career has been defined, before moving to a review of how change is accounted for within career theory, and specifically career models developed within the Career Management literature. The traditional model of the organisational career will be reviewed, to demonstrate the positioning of contemporary research in contrast to earlier conceptualisations. A summary of the shifting organisational landscape is then presented, to contextualise the backdrop against which contemporary research[1] challenges earlier career theory and endeavours

[1] Within career literature there pervades a commonly inferred distinction between 'traditional' and 'contemporary' career theory and research. Considering the lack of clear definition of the distinction between the two, for the purposes of this thesis, 'traditional' refers to theory which developed prior to the mid-1980s, at which point career studies became formally acknowledged as a field of study within Management and Organisation Studies. Consequently, literature published after this point is categorised 'contemporary'.

to address the role of organisations and individuals in managing careers, the domain to which this thesis intends to contribute. A number of key career models which have emerged from within the Career Management literature are introduced. These models endeavour to represent patterns and the key characteristics of career and, as such, demonstrate the prevalence of change as a key theme across contemporary theory. However, the limitations of these models in neglecting to offer a clear conceptualisation of change within the career, and offering insight into how change is interpreted, will be highlighted. In so doing, I will demonstrate that whilst contemporary conceptualisations portray patterns of career as dynamic, discontinuous, non-linear and frequented by change, they are limited in terms of articulating how and why such change is experienced. In addition, change within the career will be demonstrated as an under-researched area within the wider career literature. Empirical research that has been undertaken focuses upon specific and isolated change events, including changes in employer or periods of unemployment, rather than endeavouring to understand this within the context of sequences of work experience. Furthermore, a requirement to broaden the forms of change to be studied will also be demonstrated, to encompass not only major changes in the form of employment but also to consider and understand the impact of seemingly minor instances of change within which the future direction of the individual's career is reconsidered or challenged. Such an understanding would complement and advance the conceptualisations of career offered within the career models to understand how and why such patterns form through an exploration of change as the 'punctuation marks' within sequences of work experience (Duberley et al., 2006b).

In reviewing the literature outlined above this chapter will raise the research questions; *Contemporary models of career portray the overall form or structure of a career, but what is it to experience this fragmentation, dynamism and non-linearity for oneself? How can this be more clearly articulated to demonstrate how apparently linear stages may be experienced in uncontrolled and chaotic ways? How do the career stories gathered within my research differ to how career experiences are depicted or characterised within career theory?* In addressing these questions this thesis intends to challenge the conceptualisations of change within career presented by these dominant models, through an exploration of individual career stories to understand how and why change is experienced within contemporary careers.

2.2 Career Change – Change within or of Career?

The term 'career change' presents some confusion in its definition, referring to both a change *of* career, or a change *within* career. The first application, a change *of* career, is frequently conveyed within a general understanding of the term 'career change'. Typically, within common parlance, career change is associated with a fundamental change in one's overall career direction, for example, in profession or occupation, and consequently represents a significant transformation. This restricted definition is also evident within academic literature, for example, Higgins (2001) conceptualises career change as incorporating three precise elements; a change in employer, a change in job and the individual's perception that the career decision was a career change. Conversely, whilst Ibarra acknowledges a definition of career change as; "any major change in work role requirements or work context", as outlined below this is considered to be one of several possible forms which career change may take (2006:77).

The second application, depicts change *within* the career, and therefore conveys a broader sense of the term. Approaching career change in this manner aligns the concept with the definition of career adopted within this thesis. If 'career' is to be understood as an 'evolving sequence', then 'career change' represents points of potential or realised discontinuity within this sequence. This understanding of career change is taken up by Ibarra who proposes that, for the purposes of academic research and study, career change should be understood as; "a process that may result in a change of job, profession, or one's orientation to work while continuing in the same job" (2006:77). This definition therefore increases the scope and magnitude of change; a change in job does not necessarily represent a major shift in career direction but nevertheless may influence or be consequential to an individual's future career. Ibarra also draws attention to subjective changes in an individual's orientation to work, which are not necessarily accompanied by an immediate objective change, for example in position or employing organisation, but again impacts upon the overall career experience. Interestingly, Ibarra's definition also contains an element of indeterminacy in proposing career change as a process "which *may* result in a change" (2006:77 – emphasis added). This suggestion will be returned to in a discussion of embeddedness and career inaction in Chapter Three.

Career change evidently represents a significant vantage point from which to consider and understand the concept of career. Supporting this proposition, Nicholson and West (1988:117) describe career change and associated periods of transition as 'turning points', at times keeping individuals on a steady course, and at other times representing "junctures at which the entire balance and direction of the life-course shifts". Similarly, Duberley et al., refer to such events as "the punctuation marks in a career story" (2006b:285). The remainder of this Chapter adopts as its starting point the second broader definition of career change outlined above to understand career change[2] as encompassing objective and subjective changes or the potential for such changes and discontinuity to occur within career, to review how career change is studied within the career management literature.

An early contribution to developing a theory of career change is a typology of career role transitions (Figure 1) proposed by Louis (1980). In a similar vein to Ibarra's definition of career change, Louis defines career transition as both a change and the period within which "an individual is either changing roles (taking on a different objective role) or changing orientation to a role already held (altering a subjective state)" (1980:330).

[2] A review of career change within career management literature reveals overlap with career transitions. There is evident confusion in distinguishing between the two terms and in some instances, are applied interchangeably. In clarifying, Bridges differentiates change as situational; for example, a new position or relocation, whilst *transition* is psychological; "the inner reorientation and self-redefinition that you have to go through to incorporate any of those changes into your life" (2004:xii). Conversely, Louis (1982) defines career transition as both a process of change or a period during which an individual is changing roles or orientation to a role already held. These definitions highlight complexity in differentiating between the two terms and accounts for some of the confusion surrounding distinction. This literature review will focus primarily upon the management literature which pertains to career change, however, some scholars have applied these terms interchangeably and so the term 'transition' also features.

Inter-role (objective change)	**Intra-role** (subjective change)
Entry/Re-entry - *changing from a non-work to work role*	Intra-role Adjustment - *adjustment in orientation to a role that an individual makes in response to experiences over time in the role*
Intracompany - *a different role within the same organisation*	Extra-role Adjustment - *Change in one life role leading to an adjustment in orientation to another role (e.g. family and work roles)*
Intercompany - *move from one organisation to another*	Role/Career-Stage Transition - *progression through a sequence of general stages in the total career cycle (as suggested by developmental theories of career).*
Interprofession - *a change in profession*	Life-Stage Transition - *passage through normal stages in human development.*
Exit - *move from work to non-work, with varying permanence and duration e.g. leave of absence, involuntary unemployment, resignation into unemployment, retirement.*	

Figure 1: Louis (1980) Typology of Career Changes and Transitions

Whilst the typology principally focuses upon role transitions, these are also representative of career change and therefore provide a useful framework through which to analyse and comprehend career change. Two principal categories of change or transition are identified within the typology; ‘inter-role’ or ‘intra-role’. Inter-role changes involve a new and different work role being undertaken, resulting in an objective change observable within the individual’s work history. Conversely, ‘intra-role’ changes comprise of a subjective change in an individual’s orientation to work or career, without necessarily displaying objective changes. Louis highlights significant distinctions between inter and intra role transitions; firstly, intra-role changes may occur without the conscious awareness of the individual. Furthermore, intra-role changes present additional challenges for empirical investigation as they cannot be observed in the same way as inter-role changes but are reliant upon understanding the career holder’s interpretation of their experiences and consequently necessitates alternative

research design. However, traditional career research has focused upon objective career changes and offered limited consideration of subjective changes (Stephens, 1994).

Alternative frameworks, frequently drawing upon this typology have also been developed. For example, Nicholson and West (1988) propose a typology of objective, intra-role transitions by drawing upon three key dimensions; change in employer, function or status. In differentiating between downward, static and upward changes in status, the potential multidirectional nature of career is emphasised. Ng et al., (2007; Ng et al., 2007) also contribute to this discussion by stating that career mobility should be constructively differentiated between job change, organisational change and occupational change, rather than the generic application of the term by other academic writers. Such frameworks provide useful tools through which to review the forms of change indicated within both theoretical career models and the analysis of career experiences, to demonstrate the conceptualisation of change within contemporary careers, and to consider how effectively this reflects individual career experiences.

2.3 Traditional Models of Career

Between the 1950s and 1980s within both academic literature and common parlance the terms ‘organisational’ and ‘bureaucratic’ have been adopted interchangeably to describe the dominant construct of career (Edwards and Wajcman, 2005). These terms achieved academic prominence primarily as a result of early commentaries from within Sociology and Management & Organisational Studies. Such insights frequently originated as an aside to the principle research agenda. However, the close association between work, employment and organisational context held significant implications for career and, therefore, was highlighted within ensuing commentaries upon the organisational landscape. Traditionally the organisations within which study was undertaken were reflective of the bureaucratic organisational ideal type observed within the theory of early sociologist Max Weber (Du Gay, 2000). The bureaucratic organisation was premised upon a “hierarchy of authority and selection and promotion based on technical competence” (Clarke, 2013:685). Two key commentaries which offered significant insight into the dominance of the traditional ‘organisational’ or ‘bureaucratic’ career model are presented by Organizational Analyst, William Whyte (1956) and Sociologist and Management Guru, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1990).

Whyte offered an early business and sociological commentary on the traditional organisational career when researching the impact of mass organisation on American society (1956). The study encompassed large scale organisations, including the Church, and collective work within professions such as Law and Accountancy. However, Whyte was particularly interested in observing executives employed within middle management and senior positions within large corporations that dominated the business landscape. Whyte's analysis, representative of early career research and the social context of that period, focused upon white, middle-class males, reflecting the dominant workforce demographic of the period. Significantly, a dominant collective ideology was identified amongst these executives reflecting an emergent 'social ethic' with an imperative to belong. A close spiritual unity existed between the organisation and the individual, to the extent that "we have, in sum, a man who is so completely involved in his work that he cannot distinguish between work and the rest of his life – and is happy that he cannot" (Whyte, 1956:150). Whilst Whyte observed that some individuals chose to undertake radical moves or 'opt-out' of organisational careers, this was interpreted as a "serious maladjustment" by either the individual or the organisation (1956:161).

Similarly, commentating some three decades after Whyte's classic account, Kanter (1990) identified the 'bureaucratic' or 'corpocratic' (corporate bureaucracy) career as having been the dominant career model of large American corporations during the mid-1980s. Kanter defined the bureaucratic career as premised upon a logic of advancement through; "a sequence of positions in a defined hierarchy of positions" acknowledging this as one of three career ideal types, alongside professional and entrepreneurial careers (1990:289).

The key characteristics of the traditional model of career identified by Whyte and Kanter are an employment relationship; based on the exchange of loyalty for job security, within one or two organisations, necessitating skills specific to that organisation for which training is delivered through formal programs. Furthermore, the employing organisation assumed responsibility for career management; significant milestones were age-related, and pay, promotion and status were measures of success (Sullivan, 1999). Such a static and linear view of career may be considered to suggest that an examination of objective features of the career, including hierarchical structures,

occupational position, employees age, length of tenure and number of transitions between employing organisations, would provide a succinct theoretical account of career. For example, traditionally Management and Organisational Studies adopted an objective approach to the study of careers, analysing organisational structures and forms and the types of work undertaken within these, attempting to explain these structures through broad macro level changes in the environment within which these organisations operate. However, narratives such as those provided by Whyte and his recognition of the socially and personally motivated aspects of the career served to reveal the significance of studying career not only from an organisational perspective but also from that of the individual. Accordingly, the importance of broadening an organisational perspective on career to incorporate the individual is highlighted, nevertheless the organisation remains the dominant narrative. In contrast, to early positivist approaches to the study of career it is highlighted as a highly complex concept necessitating research designs founded upon alternative philosophical underpinnings and methodologies.

2.4 The Shifting Organisational Landscape

The traditional model of career described above was premised upon several underlying assumptions including; continued organisational growth, long term employment, a distribution of individuals based on a limited pool of competitors for the higher positions and a willingness of others to remain within the lower levels of the pyramid structure. Therefore, whilst the model experienced dominance within early career literature, as the organisational landscape transformed so too did the concept of career and correspondingly approaches to its study. These changes have been attributed to several factors outlined in the ensuing discussion.

Transformations within work, employment and career have been linked to change within the organisational and wider socio-economic contexts, transforming not only how career is experienced but also the development of career research. Grand narratives of change also stem from transformations in the 1980s within the UK and other industrialised Countries including the rise of neoliberalism (Collin and Watts, 1996). The embracing of Neoliberal principles by governments within the UK and the West, facilitated economic freedom for individuals and organisations through policies

such as privatisation, deregulation, spending cuts and inflation reduction with limited government intervention (Bakan, 2005). Environmental changes such as globalisation and technological advances, particularly within transportation and communications, alongside intensified competition from Japanese companies are also attributed to transformations within this period (Sullivan et al., 1998; Collin and Watts, 1996).

At an organisational level, transformations were conceptualised as a "post-entrepreneurial revolution" (Kanter 1990) or "a new organizational era", necessitating the emergence of a new, more fluid reality for careers "as dynamic organizing supersedes more formal organization" (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996:371). Organisations responded to the imperative for flexibility in reacting to market demands and heightened competition with new strategies for organisation, management and employment. Widespread organizational downsizing and restructuring occurred; organisational structures became flattened (Sullivan et al., 1998) incorporating alternative working arrangements such as project-based work, facilitating greater workforce flexibility (Guest and Mackenzie Davey, 1996; Collin and Watts, 1996). Concurrently, the number of small and medium sized businesses increased, alongside the number of self-employed individuals (Arnold and Jackson, 1997; Collin and Watts, 1996).

As a consequence of these transformations, traditional routes of career progression were superseded by opportunities for non-traditional paths such as multi-directional career moves and flexible working arrangements including freelancing and project-based work. At an individual level, neoliberalism supported strategies of individualism, including strategies of development and enterprise, commiserate with Hall's (1996a) recognition of a shift in focus from 'institutional help' to 'self-help', in which the loci of the career shifted from the collective strategies of the organisation to individual strategies. Further economic pressures as a result of economic recession experienced within both the UK economy and further afield have also had far-reaching consequences for both public and private sector organisations.

The implications for the concept of career of the above changes in work and employment are well documented (for example Hiltrop, 1995; Sullivan et al., 1998; Collin and Watts, 1996). Traditional routes to hierarchical advancement, long-term employment within a one or two organisations and job security are no longer expected, or indeed necessarily desired. Alternatively, an emphasis upon employability and

flexibility has emerged; individuals are responsible for seeking new ways to add value to an organisation and in return "has the right to demand interesting and important work, has the freedom and resources to perform it well, receives pay that reflects his or her contribution, and gets the experience and training needed to be employable here or elsewhere" (Hiltrop, 1995:289). Crucially, the role and responsibilities of the organisation within career management are thrown into question by the establishment of the individual rather than the organisation as central to career and sets the agenda for future career research from an organisational perspective.

In response to this changing world of work and employment, and ensuing research agenda, several scholarly debates have arisen. Some question the degree of change observed, or if indeed early research was limited in its outlook and the extent to which career theory reflected practice. Consequently, whilst many academic scholars portray a clear distinction between traditional and contemporary discussions of career, others question the willingness to dispense with earlier accounts (Guest and Mackenzie Davey, 1996). Furthermore, some question the prominence of the bureaucratic model in the first instance, (Arnold and Jackson, 1997; Edwards and Wajcman, 2005), thereby revealing some of the inherent complexities of the field. Collin and Watts suggest that the traditional model of career was in fact; "reality for few, though a beacon for many" (1996:386) noting the 'essentially elitist' nature of its pyramid structure. This view is shared by Arnold and Jackson (1997) who suggest that its pyramid structure presented limited opportunities, especially within its higher echelons, despite being aspired to by many. Interestingly, Edwards and Wajcman also cast doubt upon its prevalence but suggest that perceptions of its position as the dominant organizing principle of that time facilitate the situating of contemporary accounts of career within the field; "the perception that it was is deeply embedded in our consciousness and forms the backdrop against which claims about recent changes are made" (2005:66).

Nevertheless, from the early 1990s onwards, career research increasingly recognised alternative organisational and employment structures, increasing the scope of research to a wider proportion of the working population and recognising alternative forms of employment such as self-employment and part-time working arrangements. This shift in academic thinking paved the way for career literature which sought to develop career theory and models which accounted for emergent career forms and

approaches to organisational career management alongside an increasing recognition of the role of individuals in adopting responsibility for their own career management. This transformation in career forms is succinctly captured as a transition from traditional linear career paths to non-linear, discontinuous career paths (Sullivan et al., 1999).

The changing conceptualisation of career is succinctly captured within the definition included in the chapter introduction; "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al., 1989:8). This definition is illuminating as it incorporates several key elements in contention with earlier definitions, the most striking of which is the omission of notions of advancement and pattern as essential characteristics. Alternatively, this definition offers a broader conceptualisation of career which is applicable to a broader range of individuals, indeed "anyone who works in employment or self-employment at some stage in their life has a career" (Inkson et al., 2015:13). This definition also encompasses both paid and unpaid work experiences and recognises these as a sequence which evolves over time but that a 'pattern' to this sequence is not necessarily evident, or indeed essential, although it is often desirable (Inkson et al., 2015). Furthermore, it also recognises that careers may move across different occupations as well as organisations.

In summary, the above discussion has outlined both a changing conceptualisation of career and shifting organisational landscape. Consequently, traditional models of career, and particularly the organisational and bureaucratic career concepts, became increasing recognised as outdated concepts which were not reflective of the career experiences of many. Furthermore, an evident shift in responsibility for the management of career, from the organisation to the individual, raised interesting questions in regard to the role of organisations within contemporary careers. Consequently, endeavouring to comprehend the consequences of this changing conceptualisation of career from an organisational perspective, academic scholars responded by developing theoretical models through which the career can be explained and understood. The review will now turn to these key models to understand how change is conceptualised within contemporary career theory.

2.5 Contemporary Career Models and Career Change

As introduced in the preceding discussion contemporary career models have emerged against a backdrop of transformation within the organisational and societal landscape. Resultantly, contemporary models of career emphasise the frequently fragmented, non-linear and dynamic nature of career, and change is a prevalent theme. However, whilst these models accentuate the frequency of change and provide some indication of the forms that this may take, they are limited in their articulation of how change is experienced and interpreted within individual careers. Therefore, as a starting point to developing such a contribution, a review of how change is conceptualised within contemporary career theory follows.

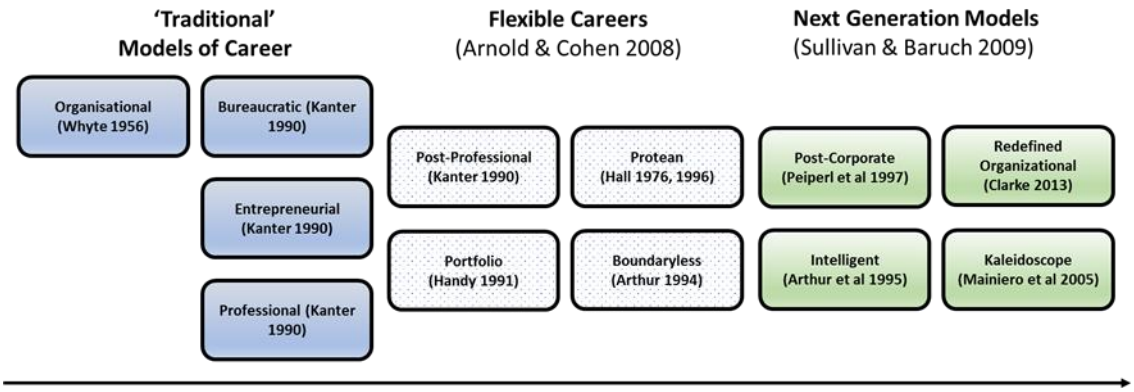

Figure 2: Key Models within Career Studies

The key contemporary models arising within the career management literature are summarised in Figure 2[3]. The continued relevance of earlier contemporary models such as the protean and boundaryless concepts is supported by a review of career terms undertaken by Baruch et al., (2015). The findings revealed that in endeavouring to "describe, explain and more accurately depict the evolving nature of careers", older terms were retained regardless of the continued introduction of new terms over recent years, and hence contributed to the fragmented and complex nature of the field (Baruch et al., 2015:4). The ensuing review will demonstrate the prevalence of change within these theories of contemporary career, affording particular attention to how these

[3] Based upon consensus between reviews by Sullivan et al., 2009, Baruch et al., 2015 and Inkson et al., 2015

models account for change within the career, and the elements from which this is constituted, to highlight the gap which exists within existing career management literature and to which this thesis contributes.

The traditional model of the organisational career reviewed above suggests a single linear and continuous career trajectory, with distinct beginning and end points. In contrast, contemporary career models present patterns of career as non-linear, fragmented and frequently consisting of multiple strands. For instance, protean and boundaryless careers have been termed 'flexible' career models to reflect a complex non-linear process fragmented by horizontal movements, career breaks and periods of unemployment, within a multitude of organisations (Arnold and Cohen, 2008) and this theme continues to be evidenced across subsequent career theory and models.

Central to the development of such models and related to the definition of career as an evolving sequence of work-related experiences, is a focus upon outlining patterns of career to demonstrate changing forms in response to these wider contextual changes, frequently reflective of particular organisational, occupational or employment types. The pre-eminence of a focus upon career patterns within scholarly literature was evidenced within the review of career terms undertaken by Baruch et al., who concluded "it is evident that an enduring feature of the careers literature is the quest for terms that describe the patterns that careers follow" (2015:14). The research findings demonstrated that from a list of fifty career terms identified as having shaped, or continuing to shape contemporary career scholarship, just over one-fifth related to career patterns (Baruch et al., 2015:4). In modelling the key characteristics of contemporary careers these models serve to inform understanding of how, and by whom, careers are to be managed, predominantly from an individual perspective but also in terms of organisational career support and development. However, whilst contemporary career models effectively demonstrate the prevalence of change across the course of the career the ensuing review will reveal limitations in determining how change is experienced in relation to these patterns. Specifically, the models are limited in the insight they offer into how such change arises, and how this is experienced and interpreted within these patterns.

The concept of the protean career model was initially introduced in 1976 as an emerging career form which demonstrated a new self-directed and value driven career

ethic or orientation. However, the concept did not gain widespread interest until the publication of 'The Career is Dead – Long Live the Career' (Hall, 1996a), in which Hall argued that the organizational career was in demise but the protean career was thriving. The term 'protean' is derived from the Greek Sea God, Proteus who could change shape at will, and described a career characterised by frequent change, self-invention, autonomy and self-direction, driven by the needs of the individual rather than the organisation (Hall, 2002). The protean career demonstrates a greater freedom and increased mobility within careers which are marked by psychological success rather than position. A central element of the concept is an individual's need to be self-directed in their own career management, demonstrating the ability to be 'adaptive' to performance and learning demands (Hall, 2002:8). In providing clarification of the concept's earlier definition, Briscoe and Hall (2006) position the protean concept as an orientation to career, focused upon the personal motives underlying a particular career pattern rather than upon its form. The protean career approaches the subject of change from the perspective of individual agency, concentrating upon individual motives for change and an individual's ability to adapt in response to transition. Rather than approaching the subject of change directly, it focuses upon individual agency within the context of change. Consequently, the protean career predominantly focuses upon subjective career changes but suggests this is frequently an outcome of individual adaptation to objective factors including tangible change within the career.

Alongside the protean career, the boundaryless career concept emerged within the 1990s and has dominated much career literature since its introduction. The concept was initially proposed by Arthur (1994), to recognise and characterise a range of career forms rather than emphasizing a single form. Consequently, the boundaryless career is somewhat of an umbrella term, in its broadest sense representing everything that is not a traditional career, demonstrated by Arthur and Rousseau in stating it simply as; "the opposite of the organizational career" (1996:6). This broad definition is primarily intended to convey an independence from traditional organizational career arrangements, but also indicates alternative forms which are non-linear, discontinuous and punctuated by frequent change (Inkson et al., 2015). The boundaryless career is not disparate to the protean career but builds upon this notion by considering the physical and psychological boundaries across which the career is enacted, representing an "independence from, rather than dependence on, traditional organizational career

arrangements" (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996:6). Further clarification of such a form is offered through the proposition of six core elements which illustrate the range of boundaries that are removed or crossed. Accordingly, the boundaryless career involves movement across the boundaries of separate employers, drawing validation and marketability from outside the present employer. They are sustained through external networks and information, and traditional organisational boundaries such as hierarchical reporting and advancement principles are eliminated. The individual may choose to reject career opportunities for family or personal reasons and interpret their career without any perceptions of structural constraints upon their future (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). The concept has been subsequently developed by scholars from a range of academic disciplines and research interests including outside of the domain of career studies (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). The boundaryless career is premised upon the notion of movement, or mobility, suggesting career as a process in persistent flux.

Despite initial recognition of physical and psychological mobility within the development of boundaryless career theory Sullivan and Arthur (2006) have noted that subsequent study of the concept has predominantly concentrated upon types of physical mobility, and more specifically, interorganizational movement (across boundaries of separate employers). Consequently, boundaryless career forms can be understood as being constituted of movement between positions and/or employers, in addition to across occupational and professional boundaries represented as a sequence of movements in multiple directions. Offering further clarification of the boundaryless concept, Sullivan and Arthur (2006) suggest that mobility within the boundaryless career be viewed along two continua to reflect varying degrees of both physical and psychological mobility. Such an approach results in four 'pure' types to reflect high and/or low levels of physical and psychological mobility. Nonetheless, whilst the principal narrative of movement within the concept is suggestive of a broad range of changes it is intra-organisational changes which dominate subsequent empirical investigation of the concept. The boundaryless career does, however, offer a macro level perspective upon change, suggesting that its prevalence is a response to 'a new organizational era', premised upon both physical and psychological mobility.

During the 1990s, the protean and boundaryless career models attracted extensive scholarly attention. These models represented initial attempts to model

‘flexible’ careers, although each model emphasises different aspects of career. Whilst the protean career concentrates upon the self in relation to career, the boundaryless career focuses upon both physical and psychological mobility (Arnold and Cohen, 2008). Since initial conceptualisation these two models have dominated career literature, and in turn have been particularly influential in shaping contemporary understandings of career. However, Arnold et al., express a need for caution, concluding these models “tend to be used too carelessly and (worse) treated as an objective and welcome reality” (2008:2). Nevertheless, these early models subsequently informed the development of a range of ‘next generation’ models (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009) including the intelligent career (Arthur et al., 1995) and the kaleidoscope career model (KCM) (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005) which rather than signifying a departure from earlier theory accentuate and advance elements of each.

The concept of the intelligent career (Arthur et al., 1995) emerged from within the boundaryless career literature to explore the subjective elements of the boundaryless career within the context of the competency-based and learning-centred view of the ‘intelligent enterprise’ (Arthur et al., 1995). Two key themes within the notion of the intelligent enterprise are evident. Firstly, it is a response to an increasingly turbulent environment. Secondly, an organisation’s competencies are grounded in the distributed and developing talents of its employees. The intelligent career model therefore complements the idea of the intelligent enterprise through emphasising the application of an individual’s intelligence in the pursuit of career (Arthur et al., 1995). More specifically; “those with the special skills and intellect that only highly motivated, knowledgeable people can provide” (Arthur et al., 1995). The pursuit of career is embarked upon through a triad of interdependent career competencies or ways of knowing; relating to an individual’s motivation and identity (knowing why), skills and expertise (knowing how) and relationships and reputation (knowing whom). Accordingly, the intelligent career is premised upon “making an individual contribution, working effectively with other people and contributing to both the generation and transfer of knowledge” (Arthur, 2017:xi-xii). Sullivan and Arthur (2006) relate the notion of the intelligent career back to the continua of physical and psychological mobility offered by the boundaryless career concept to demonstrate how two individuals may be in the same line of work, in the same organisation, in the same industry, but have different levels of physical and psychological mobility as a result of

individual career competences. In regard to types of change the intelligent career literature emphasises the changing employment relationship within an intelligent organisation which, rather than being based upon long-term loyalty in exchange for job security, is replaced by short term arrangements in which an individual is not dependent upon any single organisation. Therefore, this model suggests changes within and between organisations as a result of a changed orientation to work and career.

Alternatively, the KCM incorporates elements of the protean career, approaching career from the perspective of the individual. However, in a point of differentiation the KCM endeavours to map the career alongside the broader pattern of the individual's life course. Mainerio and Sullivan (2005) suggest that at certain points in an individual's career, three key aspects, authenticity, being true to oneself, and balance between work and non-work demands and challenge through stimulating work and career advancement hold greater prominence, whilst fading further into the background at others, thus creating the kaleidoscope pattern of their career (Mainerio and Sullivan, 2005). Consequently, the pattern of the kaleidoscope career may change over the life course as it is mapped against other key life events and experiences. In a similar vein to the intelligent career concept, the KCM focuses upon psychological changes in relation to key change events throughout the career, through the study of the shifting significance of three core elements of an individual's orientation to career.

In contrast to the above models, which represent of a break from the traditional model of the organisational career, Clarke (2013) suggests that the concept of the organisational career is merely in need of redefinition. In proposing a redefined model of the organisational career, Clarke argued that the traditional model has adapted and evolved in response to economic and labour market contexts. Consequently, despite the inability to promise stability or long-term tenure "there is the possibility of pursuing an interesting, non-linear, satisfying career within the boundaries of one or a few organizations" (2013:698). The new organizational career model proffered by Clarke is situated midway between many of the characteristics of the traditional organizational and boundaryless career models. For example, rather than promising long-term tenure or employability, mid-term employment continuity is offered. Responsibility for the career lies jointly with the organisation and the individual and success is measured through objective and subjective elements. Implicit within Clarke's argument is an

attempt to bridge the gulf between traditional and flexible models of career, by establishing a middle-ground in which the career remains contextualised within an organisational setting, whilst also recognising the role of the individual in managing their career. In contrast to the contemporary career patterns reviewed above, the redefined model of the organisational career proposed by Clarke (2013) suggests that rather than dispensing with accounts of traditional career forms, modification is required. Resultantly Clarke proposes that in place of a single continuous trajectory, the substitution of long-term by mid-term employment, recognises that the career is still played out within a relatively small number of organisations rather than with a single employer. Consequently, change within the context of the re-defined organisational career is limited to an understanding of physical mobility, particularly in relation to position but also accounting for a change in employing organisation (Clarke 2013).

The above review of prominent endeavours to model contemporary career, demonstrates a focus upon the central role of the individual in shaping and directing their own career, suggesting change as self-initiated, and directed towards the active pursuit of career. In terms of specific forms of change, models particularly focus upon changes between organisations but also acknowledge changes in occupations. Furthermore, the kaleidoscope model offers some acknowledgement in changes within one's approach to career, which potentially manifests in change but also possibly in continuity. I suggest that these approaches portray a single perspective to change and career, which makes assumptions about intent, and elements of choice and control. The development of career is presented as unconstrained, whilst models arise and are acknowledged as a response to the changing organisational context, the on-going impact of this and further contexts within which this takes place is overlooked, whilst over-emphasising the opportunities that this presumably gives rise to. This over-emphasis on self-determinacy within the models is returned to within the following Chapter (Three).

2.6 Concluding Remarks

Contemporary models highlight the frequency of change within the career, but are limited in terms of clearly articulating how and why such change is experienced. Whilst the traditional career model focused upon changes in occupational position within one or two principal organisations, contemporary models more frequently associate a change in position with a change in employer but also incorporate changes in employment types and in and out of employment. Whilst the models recognise both psychological and subjective changes within the career, the identification and exploration of these in conjunction with physical change is more limited and reveals a gap within the existing career management literature. A view supported by Ibarra in commentating upon how, despite a well-documented litany of career trends, there existed an evident scarcity of empirical research on career change and consequently "key theoretical issues pertaining to the antecedents, process, and outcomes of career change remain undeveloped" (2006:77). Career change as described within this thesis encompasses both significant moments and seemingly minor instances within which the current direction of the career is re-considered or challenged, be this internal to the career holder or influenced by external factors, and whether the outcome is observable or unobservable change or continuity.

Evident across the models reviewed within this chapter is a consensus upon career as dynamic, discontinuous, non-linear and frequented by change. Consequently, from an organisational perspective careers are to be understood as complex, ambiguous and unpredictable and therefore the dismissal of traditional arrangements of career management is not reconciled with a revised organisational role. Sullivan et al., (1999) notes how this displacement of traditional organisational career management practices, consequently results in challenges from a management and organisational perspective in identifying positive strategies and practices within the changing work environment and workforce. Whilst the models reviewed highlight the key characteristics of contemporary careers and are valuable in developing our understanding of different career forms, they do not address how and why such forms emerge. Resultantly a greater insight into the 'punctuation marks' (Duberley et al., 2006b) or 'career redirecting turning points' (Nicholson and West, 1988) will potentially contribute to a greater comprehension of the role of the organisation and the individual in the evolving of such

sequences of work experience. Therefore, the following research question arises; *Contemporary models of career portray the overall form or structure of a career, but what is it to experience this fragmentation, dynamism and non-linearity for oneself? How can this be more clearly articulated to demonstrate how apparently linear stages may be experienced in uncontrolled and chaotic ways? How do the career stories gathered within my research differ to how career experiences are depicted or characterised within career theory?*

3 Accounting for the Individual and Context within Career Change

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated frequent change as a dominant characteristic within contemporary career theory and highlighted limitations within career research in comprehending *how* such change is experienced. Accordingly, this chapter will outline how career literature accounts for *why* change within the career occurs, specifically to consider how the role of the individual and context, is accounted for. Firstly, I will review the prominent role that is afforded to the individual in their own career development within the contemporary models of career introduced in Chapter One. This reveals that whilst the changing context of career is drawn upon to explain the demise of the traditional organisational career and the rise of the aforementioned reconceptualisations, the role of context in the enactment of new career forms is frequently overlooked. The review will then move to a body of career literature which begins to move beyond such highly individualised accounts of career to recognise the influence of contextual factors by drawing upon a wider body of academic theory, including embeddedness, proactivity, and theories of structure and agency. However, I will demonstrate that such approaches continue to afford greater primacy to individual action in shaping change within the career and continue to downplay the significance of context.

In reviewing the literature outlined above this chapter will raise the research questions; *to what extent do career experiences correspond with understandings of agency in existing literatures? And to what degree are agency and career experiences influenced by the various contexts including personal, organisational and societal in which the career is enacted?* In addressing these questions this thesis intends to analyse the role of both the individual and context in the shaping of career and reveal how and why career change is experienced within contemporary careers.

3.2 The Individualisation of Career within Contemporary Models

A key premise within each of the contemporary models of career outlined in Chapter Two is the central role an individual assumes in their career development, suggesting control in how this unfolds, and portraying the individual as instrumental in effecting change. The ensuing discussion will highlight how these models emphasise the idea that the individual is self-directed and proactive in anticipating, creating and responding to opportunities by undertaking activities such as networking, skill development and lifelong learning. This is illuminated through the term 'career actor'; prominent within contemporary career models and wider career literature (for example Hall, 1976; Arthur et al., 1995; Briscoe et al., 2006; Inkson et al., 2012) to indicate individual action in relation to career. Conversely, the notion of context as a determinant in influencing or shaping change is offered limited consideration. Rather, it is presented as an opportunity for positive action on the part of the individual in the development of their career and consequently understood as encouraging rather than constraining individual action.

Briscoe et al., (2006) summarise a key distinction between protean and boundaryless career theory, outlining the protean career as focusing upon the subjective and self-directed perspective of the individual career actor. Conversely, a boundaryless conceptualisation accentuates infinite possibilities, which the individual anticipates and seizes in the pursuit of psychological success (ibid). Therefore, protean theory represents a particular orientation to career, concentrating upon psychological aspects of the individual and the underlying psychological processes of transition. A protean orientation provides a guide for action, "a mindset about career" and is closely related to internal aspects of identity and attitude, "an attitude toward the career that reflects freedom, self-direction, and making choices based on one's personal values" (ibid:6). The protean model stresses individual autonomy and control within the pursuit of career and subjective career success, "it is now the responsibility of the individual to be a continuous learner and to adapt quickly as well as to change identities over the course of the career" (Hall, 1996b:338) and its influence can be clearly evidenced within later career theory and models. An emergent need for adaptability and self-generated change throughout the career is illustrated as career paths became increasingly interrupted and episodes of adaptation are prompted by triggers that are either internally motivated, or more frequently in response to external stimulus arising from roles, organisations, or

society (Hall, 1996b). Consequently, a protean orientation to career calls for individuals to exercise two broad meta-competencies; opportunity seeking and individual career management exercised through '*adaptability*', and value expression through altered self '*identity*' (Briscoe et al., 2006).

Although the protean model is frequently summarised as an individual approach to career the relational aspects of the concept, which emphasis an individual that; "is more with oneself, in connection to other people, and with one's work, and less with the organization", are frequently overlooked (Hall, 1996b:343). Nonetheless, Hall intended to advance a holistic view of career, adopting a relational approach to recognise not only interpersonal and transactional qualities of career, but also interaction with an individual's entire social environment. Hence, Hall suggested that whilst the individual assumes responsibility for their own career this plays out beyond the boundaries of career work, encompassing all spheres of activity and corresponding facets of personal identity, within the context of total life. Nevertheless, the potential influence of the wider social environment within which career unfolds is a frequently overlooked element of protean theory and consequently results in critique of an overemphasis upon personal freedom and choice.

Consequently, critique of the protean concept frequently draws attention to its "underlying ideology based on unfettered individualism and free choice" and concerns are expressed as to the significant emphasis placed upon individual agency, choice and self-determination (Arnold and Cohen, 2008:19; Inkson et al., 2015). Despite recognising the organisation as a turbulent and uncertain environment within which career is pursued, and the frequent external triggers prompting the requirement for adaptability, this is not presented as a constraint upon individual autonomy, instead portraying the individual as a 'free agent', employing a term analogous with sport or arts (Hall and Mirvis, 1996).

Furthermore, in advancing his original proposition of the concept, Hall (1996b) questions what of those in the workforce for whom this either does not apply or is not desirable. However, Hall offers no redress to his own uncertainty other than to recognise that individuals may demonstrate higher or lower levels of career involvement, which can change over the course of the career, than other life roles and sub-identities (Hall and Mirvis 1996). This acknowledgement of the influence of other sub-identities

introduces some insight into potential constraint upon the individual in the pursuit of career and career change. Hall and Mirvis (1996) suggest that there is less of a psychological boundary between work and personal life than presented within prevailing career theory and therefore this point is not addressed or developed further within protean theory. However, the kaleidoscope career model (KCM) endeavours to advance this line of inquiry as outlined below.

A boundaryless conceptualisation incorporates many elements of a protean orientation whilst also encompassing the externally displayed behaviours of a career actor which transcend both physical and psychological boundaries in the pursuit of career. Thus, whilst the individual is the central component within protean theory, the boundaryless career concept conflates both the individual and mobility. Furthermore, the individual is positioned as the key determinant of mobility, actively anticipating, seeking, creating and progressing mobility opportunities, and hence directing change across the course of the career. Accordingly, the boundaryless concept incorporates both subjective and objective elements of career. Specifically, Arthur and Rousseau (1996) offer clarification of individual agency involved, illustrating six key components to adopting a physically and psychologically boundaryless approach in opportunity seeking, network building and information gathering. Accordingly, the boundaryless career involves movement across the boundaries of separate employers, drawing validation and marketability from outside the present employer. This is sustained through external networks and information, and traditional organisational boundaries such as hierarchical reporting and advancement principles are eliminated. The individual may choose to reject career opportunities for family or personal reasons and interpret their career without any perception of potential structural constraint upon their future (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996).

In a similar vein to the highly individualistic approach of the protean model, Arthur and Rousseau suggest that career actors are able to interpret their career without any perceptions of structural constraints upon their future (1996). Whilst boundaryless career theory acknowledges the organisational and occupational context of career this is presented as potential environments to be transcended, rather than potential constraints. In emphasising career as boundaryless, the model moves beyond the boundary of a single organisation and consequently Arthur and Rousseau (1996)

highlight the requirement for a greater comprehension of what lies beyond, ascribing new meaning to the term 'environment'. Traditionally 'environment' was understood as the "external conditions outside the boundaries of the organisation" (1996:375). Conversely, Arthur and Rousseau propose the boundaryless environment be understood as "interdependent constituents in a network or value chain" (ibid:375). Within the boundaryless career environment career paths "follow the course that the environment lays" resulting in the opportunity for greater flexibility of experience and movement (ibid:375). Whilst such an explanation affords some degree of influence to the role of environment in shaping career once again this is presented as opportunistic rather than constraining. There has been limited challenge to such an unconstrained pursuit to career, an exception being an empirical analysis of data from the OECD Employment Statistics Database to demonstrate that increased mobility between employers is not as prevalent as the boundaryless career literature portrays (Rodrigues and Guest, 2010). Consequently, Rodrigues et al., argue that a reconceptualization of career boundaries (including occupation, geographical location of work, employment contract and family) is required as, rather than being marginalised or eliminated, boundaries are growing in complexity and becoming ever more significant.

This orientation towards the individual continues to dominate later models of career. For example, the intelligent career emerged from within the boundaryless career literature and is therefore premised upon a boundaryless career environment and specifically the intelligent enterprise. The intelligent career, defined as; "any sequence of work roles undertaken at the worker's own discretion, and with personal goals in mind" (Inkson et al., 2015), again priorities the individual and suggests freedom and autonomy in developing such a sequence of experiences. This is achieved through three core career competencies; knowing how, knowing why and knowing whom, which go beyond technical skills and managerial abilities, through which the individual is free to navigate the boundaryless environment at will and free of constraint (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996). Despite situating the intelligent career within a specific context, the impact of this context on shaping the career is again minimalised, whilst full autonomy is afforded to the individual in the pursuit of such a career.

Alternatively, the KCM, although clearly evidencing elements of the protean career, also recognises that changing personal priorities over the life course ultimately

shape career, introducing the influence of other aspects of the individual's life sphere to an understanding of career and how it is shaped. The KCM model argues that three key elements; authenticity, being true to oneself, balance between work and non-work demands and challenge through stimulating work and career advancement, are brought into focus at certain points throughout an individual's career whilst fading into the background at others (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005).

In summary, contemporary conceptualisations of career suggest that changes within the career are determined and driven by the individual, promoting the notion of unrestrained personal choice and freedom exercised through proactive agency and behaviours directed towards the unconstrained pursuit of career. Furthermore, where the significance of context is recognised it is in the form of presenting opportunities to which the individual proactively responds, and therefore is a positive influence upon career development. However, this raises questions as to the extent to which the individual and their career can be decontextualized, and what this means for those who do not experience such freedom and autonomy.

The review now turns to the wider career literature to consider how this can further inform an understanding of career change in an attempt to address the limitations of the models reviewed above by introducing recognition of the significance of further factors, including context, within career. The first two literature areas to be reviewed, career proactivity and embeddedness, continue to afford prominence to the role of the individual, but the significance of context is also recognised. The manner in which this is approached and considered is particularly insightful in terms of the research conducted within this thesis. Firstly, the potential insight afforded by a theory of career proactivity is reviewed, demonstrating its potential contribution in theorising how individual and situational differences preclude and mediate proactive work behaviour, including career proactivity, giving rise to a range of potential outcomes including at the foci of the individual career. An alternative body of literature is then reviewed which recognises career embeddedness to accentuate the insight which can also be offered by exploring continuity within work experiences alongside change. Such a view challenges the assumption that proactive engagement with career prompts movement, and consequently change, by suggesting that work and career choices are mediated by a broader range of factors than traditionally encapsulated within career theory.

Consequently, recognising embeddedness, as promoting continuity within career, offers an alternative perspective to career proactivity by suggesting that continuity, in addition to change, can also be an outcome of active engagement with one's career. Exploring why this is offers further insight into diversity within career experiences these two sections of literature will then lead into a focused discussion of context, before moving to approaches which consider structure and agency.

3.3 Career Proactivity

As demonstrated within Section 3.2 above, there is an implicit notion within contemporary career theory that individual's act proactively in determining and shaping their own career. This has been recognised and highlighted within scholarly debate, for example, differentiating between traditional and contemporary models of career Rodrigues et al., (2015) highlight the prevalence of notions of proactivity and proactive behaviours within the protean and boundaryless career concepts. Elements of proactivity are evident within discussions of the active role individuals play in developing and managing their own career through practices such as anticipating and creating opportunities and building networks both internal and external to the organisation. Proactivity is also incorporated within structure and agency accounts of career (reviewed in Section 3.6 below); for instance, proactive and reactive modes of engagement between individual action and career (Duberley et al., 2006a). Consequently, career proactivity theory provides a means through which to understand the role of the individual in shaping their career whilst also inadvertently highlighting behaviour which is reactive or passive in nature.

Academic literature on career proactivity and proactive career behaviour is part of a broader research domain concerned with proactivity towards one's work. In reviewing the scope of proactivity literature, Crant (2000) identified career management is a specific research domain and Sonnentag (2017) acknowledged career proactivity as a distinct and increasingly significant domain within the wider proactivity at work literature. Proactivity is defined as "a self-directed way of behaving (or process) that involves thinking ahead to take charge of a situation and to bring about change in that situation or in one's self" whether that be in workplace, broader organisation or one's personal career (Bindl and Parker, 2010:10). Proactivity constructs comprise of three

key characteristics; *future-focused*; towards future opportunities and anticipated problems, and *change-oriented*; influencing and changing situations in a constructive and meaningful way. Furthermore, they are *action oriented*, acting in advance as opposed to passively reacting to changes in the environment or situational cues (Grant and Ashford, 2008; Tornau and Frese, 2013). These three core dimensions of proactivity[4] demonstrate the relevance of this body of literature, offering an alternate perspective from which to understand the role of the individual and context in experiences of career change.

A well-established model of individual-level proactive behaviour (Figure 3), introduced by Bindl and Parker (2010), incorporates theory from different scholars in the domain to provide an informative overview of the key components of proactivity theory; antecedents, behaviours, and outcomes.

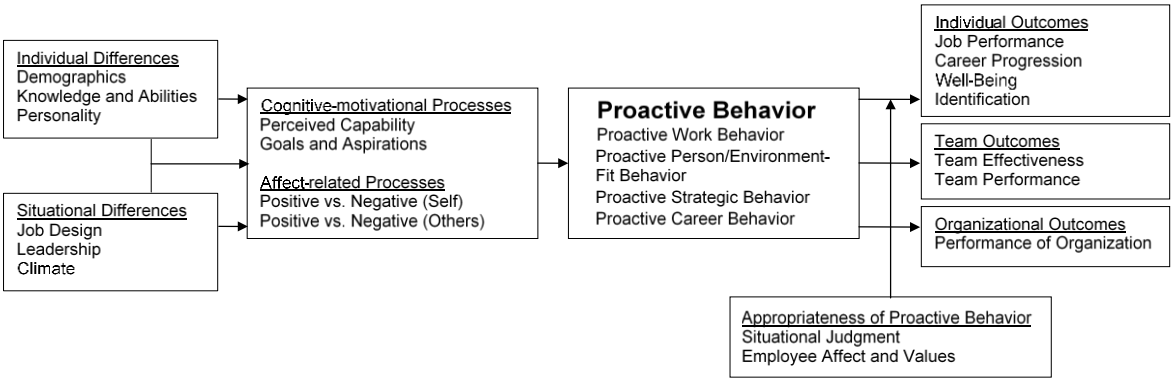

Figure 3: Model of Individual-Level Proactive Behaviour
(Bindl and Parker 2010:72)

Figure 3 differentiates four types of proactive behaviour, of which proactive career behaviour, focused upon career rather than within the context of a designated job, is considered 'a higher order dimension' (Grant and Parker, 2009). Focusing specifically upon proactive career behaviour Claes et al., (1998) made an early

[4] The term 'proactivity' is applied interchangeably within general career literature with 'initiative' to describe observable actions and behaviours. However, Frese and Fay (2001:165) identify personal initiative as a specific form of proactive behaviour, described as "dealing actively with organizational and individual problems and applying active goals, plans, and feedback".

contribution to this literature drawing upon the concept of the boundaryless career concept to identify four forms of essential proactive career behaviour which were either future-oriented – career planning, competence-based – skills development, or social – consultation, and networking. Relatedly, further scholars have proposed alternative ways of categorising proactive career behaviours, including; *preparatory* and *overt* career behaviours (Vos et al., 2009), *job mobility preparedness* and *developmental feedback seeking* (Kossek et al., 1998) and *visibility, networking* and *mobility-oriented* behaviours (Renee Barnett and Bradley, 2007). Such typologies are useful for understanding how individuals demonstrate career proactivity. However, empirical research within this area has predominantly identified and investigated single behaviours within a particular episode rather than endeavouring to understand the exercising of multiple behaviours across experiences.

Figure 3 (p33) also illustrates multiple potential outcomes to proactive work behaviours, highlighting proactive career behaviours can result in outcomes at three levels of loci; *'pro-self'*, the self and personal goals including career goals; '*pro-social'*, towards a team, colleagues, work group or others; and '*pro-organisational'* towards the organisation (Belschak and Hartog, 2010). Relatedly, career outcomes may also arise from alternative forms of proactive work behaviour, for example, behaviour intended to improve the internal organisational environment through an individual adjusting their work role by incorporating different tasks may also produce outcomes for career. This 'spill over effect' has been highlighted as a potential future research area by Belschak and Den Hartog (2010). Similarly, empirical research conducted by Claes et al., (1989) highlighted the potential accumulative effect of career proactivity, for example, a change in hierarchical level (promotion) positively impacted upon further career planning and development. This salient point is not pursued within later career proactivity literature which predominantly adopts a cross-sectional approach to study. This therefore neglects to capture temporal and accumulative dimensions of proactivity and consequently overlooks a significant dimension of outcomes of proactivity behaviour.

So far, I have reviewed the identification of career behaviours and outcomes within the career proactivity literature. However, this body of literature also offers a further contribution, by offering a preliminary consideration of the precursors to change,

in outlining the antecedents to proactive career behaviours as outlined in the ensuing discussion.

Figure 3 (p33) illustrates '*individua*l' and '*situational*' differences as antecedents to proactive behaviour to demonstrate proactive behaviour as; "in part a function of individual attributes, but is also influenced, shaped and constrained by the work context" (Bindl and Parker, 2010:3). Individual and situational antecedents are proposed as 'distal' antecedents to proactive behaviours; general causes with an indirect effect. Conversely, cognitive-motivational and affect-related processes are introduced as proximal antecedents which directly effect upon behaviour and subsequent outcomes. These processes, related to an individual's perceptions of their own capability to achieve change and their actual desire to do so, mediate between distal antecedents and subsequent proactive behaviour.

Proactivity theory and empirical research has predominantly focused upon the research and understanding of the influence of individual or dispositional antecedents on proactive behaviours and related outcomes; particularly through the construct of proactive personality, to measure and predict an individual's tendency to act proactively (for example Seibert et al., 2001). This is despite early recognition by Claes et al., (1998) of the lack of academic insight on the influence of individual, historical and situational characteristics on career behaviour. Resultantly, there has been limited exploration of the situational antecedents to proactive career behaviour and this in turn has been restricted to the immediate work environment. Exceptionally, Claes et al., (1998) conducted empirical investigation into the effects of a range of historical and situational antecedents. Historical factors included early employment experiences (full time, part-time, temporary, combination of work and education and unemployment looking for work) and mobility experiences (internal and external moves). Situational influences comprised of the occupational context; represented through occupational group membership and country or national culture. Claes et al., (1998) drew upon core characteristics of the boundaryless career concept; to recognise that careers increasingly unfold across national boundaries and within new employment settings within which 'occupation' holds new meaning and the occupational group provides "an identity, a culture, a platform for learning, networks, and a model for careers other than the traditional organizational model" (1998:358). Resultantly, alternative working

arrangements, employment options and mobility experiences were demonstrated to both inhibit or facilitate proactive career behaviours. Furthermore, Claes et al., (1998) demonstrated the influence of national culture as an antecedent and mediator of proactive behaviours, highlighting the relevance of cultural factors not recognised within alternative studies. Arising from this, and pertinent to the research undertaken within this thesis, is a question regarding the influence of regional as well as national factors including the socio-economic climate and local labour markets. The research of Claes et al focused upon multiple historical and situational antecedents and types of proactive career behaviour. Conversely, some studies in the field have explored the relationship between specific situational antecedents, behaviours and career-related outcomes. Whilst Claes et al., (1998) investigated the influence of situational factors at a national level other studies have predominantly focused upon situational characteristics at the organisational level, for example; investigating organisational interventions in individual career development to demonstrate the value of HRM practices in individual career outcomes and work satisfaction (Sturges et al., 2002; Kossek et al., 1998).

More recently, additional attention has been afforded to demonstrating the significance of work context as a situational antecedent, to understand why, and how, individuals engage in proactive work behaviours. Grant and Parker (2009) introduced a model of work design and proactive behaviours to demonstrate that work characteristics (including accountability, autonomy, ambiguity, job complexity, time pressure and constraints and routinization) can promote or inhibit employee's proactive behaviours. Of these characteristics, autonomy and job complexity have attracted the most research attention. In addition, the significance of social characteristics of work (including interaction, support and interdependence) were emphasised as important antecedents to proactive work behaviours and, therefore, are proposed as warranting further research (Grant and Parker, 2009). The introduction of social aspects of work is an interesting addition to the literature, requiring alternative research designs for investigation but highlighting a significant additional strand in understanding the precursors to work behaviour. In a similar vein to the proposition by Bindl et al. (2010) as to the mediating effects of proximal orientations, between distal antecedents and proactive behaviours, Grant and Parker argue that individual factors including proactive personality, core self-

evaluation and cognitive ability moderate the relationship between work characteristics and proactive behaviours (2009).

Consequently, it is evident that individual factors cannot be dismissed in the study of situational factors and indeed mediating effects offer some explanation as to the potential diversity of experiences within the same organisational or occupational setting. The research of Barnett and Bradley (2007) is one of a small number of studies which investigates the impact of organisational and individual antecedents simultaneously. The study investigated formal and informal organisational support for career development (OSCD), alongside proactive personality, as antecedents to three proactive career behaviours; (networking, visibility and mobility oriented). Resultantly OSCD, proactivity personality and career management behaviours were all demonstrated to be positively related to career satisfaction. However, whilst career management behaviours mediated the relationship between proactive personality and career satisfaction, they did not do so between OSCD and career satisfaction, confirming earlier theoretical propositions (Crant, 2000; Lent and Brown, 2006) that highly proactive people are likely to achieve greater career satisfaction by engaging in proactive career behaviours. Barnett et al (2007) offered two potential explanations; firstly, that proactive personality potentially moderates between OCSD and career management behaviours. Secondly, that other environmental supports and resources, including those external to the organisation, may also impact upon behaviour but are not captured within the confines of the research design. Therefore, this highlights a potentially significant omission within career proactivity research in which the onus is placed upon dispositional factors rather than turning to the study of a broader range of situational factors to comprehend their influence upon proactive career behaviour and career-related outcomes.

Bindl and Parker (2010) recognise a growing focus within the proactivity literature on work and organisational differences, and their impact (both positive and negative) upon proactive behaviours and outcomes, but call for further research on how this develops over time rather than focusing upon single events and corresponding moments in time. Research in relation to situational or contextual factors within proactivity research is predominantly confined to work and the organisation within which work is enacted at the time of study and consequently focuses upon work or

organisational characteristics to understand the degree to which they enable or constrain how an individual chooses to proceed with work, and job autonomy, complexity and control have been identified as key factors. Empirical studies of dispositional antecedents have demonstrated that, whilst some dispositions promote a wide range of proactive behaviours, others promote specific types and therefore further insight into the relationships between situational antecedents and types of proactive behaviour is required. For example, Crant (2000) identified the organisational characteristics of uncertainty and organisational culture as key antecedents of proactive behaviour. Bindl and Parker (2010) and Parker et al., (2010) highlight job design as a situational antecedent. The models of Crant (2000) and Bindl and Parker (2010) are frequently cited in the context of situating subsequent research which focuses upon the relationship between specific antecedents, proactive work behaviour and associated outcomes rather than on developing an analytical framework from which to study proactive behaviour. This highlights the need for future research in this area, particularly within the domain of career proactivity.

As this is an underdeveloped area within the emerging body of career proactivity literature several avenues for future research have been identified. For instance, Sonnentag (2017) suggests that although the effects of interactions between proactivity and individual and situational variables have been explored, albeit to a varying degree, a systematic review of moderator effects, particularly age and organisational variables, remains lacking. Previous studies have focused upon people in early and mid-career stages, and have not included those with protracted career tenures. Furthermore, variances between organizational contexts, corresponding career management practices and support for employee's career development potentially impacts upon the degree of proactivity within career behaviours; "to arrive at a good understanding of the driving force between an individual's career behaviours as well as their effects, the specific organizational context needs to be taken into account" (Sonnentag, 2017:67).

The above review of career proactivity theory has outlined three core elements; antecedents, behaviours and outcomes, incorporating key empirical studies which explore these elements, either in isolation or as a process, predominantly through quantitative studies adopting survey and questionnaire research designs, and to date

there has been limited recognition of the value of alternative research methods within this field. With exception, Fay and Frese (2001) acknowledged that traditional questionnaire approaches commonly applied to the measurement of personality constructs were not necessarily suited to the measurement of behavioural aspects of personal initiative and consequently introduced supplementary interviews within their research design. However, typically studies are cross-sectional, focusing upon a single point in time from which to study proactivity. Where longitudinal studies have been undertaken (for example Sturges et al., 2002) they focus upon new entrants into the labour market and therefore still neglect to capture the temporal dimensions of proactivity across work and career experiences. Consequently, whilst the proactivity literature offers a valuable contribution in terms of understanding the potential role of the individual, and possible contextual influences in shaping change within career, it neglects to achieve a greater insight into the processes of proactivity and individual experiences. Also evident within proactivity literature is a dominant approach to its study which focuses upon the measurement of dispositional traits or single situational antecedents and outcomes to proactive work and career behaviours to predict relationships between antecedents, behaviours and outcomes. This is undertaken through quantitative research designs, for example, stable and generalised personality traits have typically been researched through self-reporting surveys and questionnaires. Similarly, proactive work behaviour; conceptualised as "a resultant of the interaction of personality and environment" (Tornau and Frese, 2013:5) has historically been empirically investigated based on the informant reporting of informants (peers and supervisors) within a questionnaire or survey format.

The purpose of reviewing career proactivity literature within the context of the aims of this thesis is to demonstrate one approach to further understanding individual action within the career, and specifically career change, which potentially informs some of the limitations highlighted within the earlier review of contemporary career models. However, this approach is still limited in that it again offers a limited perspective of career behaviour as proactive, in effect offering just one potential piece of the puzzle, when considering career agency. Furthermore, aspects of a potential 'spill over' effect, although an underdeveloped stream of inquiry, raises questions regarding the intent of behaviours and actions and the possibility of unintended consequences. However, as with the previous discussions on the contemporary models of career, it is similarly at

risk of over-inflating the role of the individual to the detriment of developing an increased understanding of the significance of context. However, this could be because dominant ideologies of career and the individual influenced how the study of proactivity has been approached and therefore an alternative perspective which advances the study of situational antecedents and incorporates both reactive and passive behaviours would potentially offer greater insight within career studies.

The above literature has emphasised proactivity within career and it is evident how this can be linked to the notion of self-directed change. However, in exploring change, this thesis also wished to consider the counter position; that of continuity, and question whether this points to inaction within career. To explore this juxtaposition further the review turns to an alternative body of literature, within which career embeddedness is theorised, to address the potential significance of continuity within work experiences alongside change. Such a view challenges the assumption that proactive engagement with career prompts movement and draws into discussion a wider range of factors which influence an individual's willingness to undertake change, offering an alternative perspective to that afforded by career proactivity literature.

3.4 Career Embeddedness

So far, the review has focused upon career change, outlining accounts of changes as a prevalent feature of contemporary careers. However, evident within the literature is a limited counter-balance to this position which focuses upon elements of continuity within career and, therefore, challenge the dominant ideology emerging from within contemporary theory. Such a perspective has been considered by a small number of scholars approaching such an idea from divergent research interests. For example, within management studies, Verbruggen and De Vos (2016) propose the need for the development of a theory of 'career inaction', described as the failure to realise a desired change in work-related positions. An understanding of why this might occur and its impact was identified as an area for future research as it has not been developed within existing literature.

Alternatively, a number of scholars have contributed to the development of a theory of 'embeddedness', to challenge the presupposition made within contemporary career models that all are mobile. The construct 'job embeddedness' was initially

introduced by Mitchell et al., (2001) to empirically develop a measure to predict an individual's intent to leave and voluntary turnover proposing job embeddedness as; "a key factor in understanding why people stay on their jobs" (Mitchell et al., 2001:1102). Three core elements of the construct were identified; the *links* the individual has to other people, teams and groups; the individual's perception of their *fit* with the job, organization and community; and what an individual says they would have to *sacrifice* if they were to leave their job. Subsequent empirical studies have included the study of job embeddedness within a professional context to predict voluntary turnover and staff retention within the nursing profession (Mitchell et al., 2001), and across a range of occupational types within a single organisational context, to inform the development of retention plans (Holtom and O'Neill, 2004).

The construct of embeddedness was further expanded by Feldman and Ng (2007:352) describing embeddedness as "the totality of forces that keep people in their current employment situation" and drawing upon Mitchell at al., (2001) identify such forces as fit, link, and sacrifice. Feldman and Ng (2007) suggest that in much the same way as career mobility may incorporate job, organisation or occupational changes, embeddedness can be defined in terms of; job embeddedness, organizational embeddedness or occupational embeddedness. Likewise, Feldman and Ng (2007) suggest the applicability of determinants to job mobility they identified from a review of mobility literature are simultaneously potential determinants of each identified form of embeddedness. This body offers a form of counter-position to that of proactivity, and similarly research focuses upon identifying determinants of embeddedness and predicting behaviour through the development of measures. However, in considering embeddedness from a broader perspective (and likewise proactivity), to study and understand sequences and patterns of career experience, an important feature of contemporary careers is addressed, that of continuity within experiences, whether at a job, organizational or occupational level. Consequently, this highlights what may be considered to be deviation from the dominant ideology of career but conversely could be an important characteristic requiring further research attention. Recognition of embeddedness in relation to career opens up investigation to the context within which it occurs to understand the influence of this upon individual agency

3.5 Careers in Context

Part One of this chapter has highlighted how within Career studies the role of the individual is afforded greater primacy than that of context and has reviewed key approaches to research. This section will review how context is understood in relation to career and more specifically in explanations of change within the career. As outlined within the opening discussion of this Chapter consideration of context within contemporary models of career is not as prominent as the role of the individual in shaping career and career change. However, I suggest that this is a potential weakness of career theory, a view supported by a small number of academic theorists who suggest that context is a critical determinant of anyone's career (Ibarra, 2006) and, correspondingly, a growing recognition of the significance of contextual factors which affect contemporary careers is recognised (Inkson et al., 2015).

Reviewing the wider career literature, Inkson et al., (2015) outline a number of contextual factors which have been recognised to impact upon career to some degree; demographic, economic, labour market, social, organizational, technological and chance. Interestingly, chance does not feature within the core career management literature but is recognised within planned happenstance theory (Mitchell et al., 1999) developed from within the field of career guidance and counselling, and will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four. In addition, Inkson et al., also identified three 'higher-order level' contextual factors within every society; history, culture and ideology (2015:38). An alternative review of job mobility literature by Ng et al., (2007) identified six perspectives related to determinants of mobility (and embeddedness) which ranged from micro to macro levels of analysis to consider the role of personality and personal style differences, personal life factors, work group-level factors, organizational policies and procedures, occupational labour market and structural labour market factors. Following a qualitative assessment of the literature, Ng et al., (2007) asserted that the strongest influence upon aggregated mobility (across jobs, organisations and occupations) was structural factors including macroeconomic conditions. For historically disadvantaged groups, social and legal environment factors had the greatest impact. In terms of occupational mobility and embeddedness the permeability of occupational mobility structures and industry growth was particularly salient. Pension and insurance benefits within the current employing organisation were

greatly influential in organizational mobility and embeddedness. Job mobility was differentiated in terms of internal and external job changes with social capital and support a primary factor in influencing internal moves and predictability of time demands and support in resolving work-life conflict. a key determinant of external job changes.

Whilst there is some evident consensus in classifying the multiple layers of context within which the career is experienced within the literature, empirical research frequently focuses upon the study of specific factors rather than adopting an integrated approach. However, Mayrhofer et al., (2007:223) argue that "while looking at single contextual factors is important, a more integrative picture yields further insight". Accordingly, Mayrhofer et al., propose a multi-layered and multi-dimensional perspective upon career context (Figure 4).

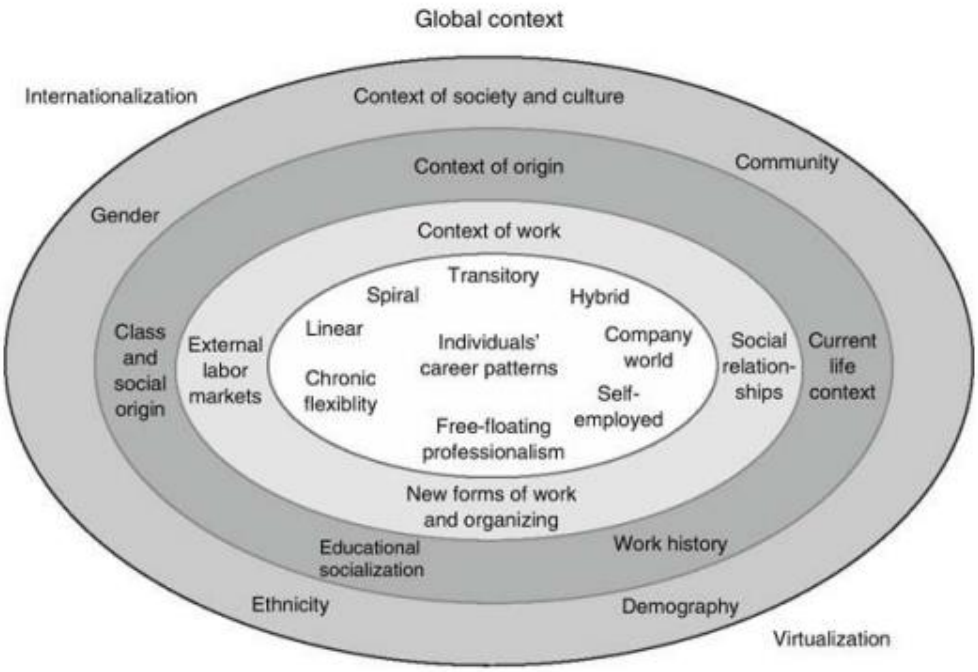

Figure 4: Major Contextual Factors in Career Research (Mayrhofer et al 2007:217)

However, whilst others may outline multi-levels this tends to be by way of situating their own research without one specific level. For example, in an empirical study of career progression of female teachers (Smith, 2011) three core spheres of influence were highlighted; personal, institutional and societal, but the research focused

upon the analysis of personal factors including motivations, aspirations and self-perceptions of capability for agency. Alternatively, Smith-Ruig (2009) differentiate three potentially constraining and enabling levels of influence within professional careers; personal; including gender and family commitments, interpersonal; including formal and informal mentoring, and organisational; opportunities for work experience and training & development, flexible working practices and organisational culture and politics. Commentating upon what they consider to be a dominant focus within career literature upon intra-personal and organisational contexts, Chudzikowski et al., (2009) recognise a gap in the literature on the role of the broader context and, in particular, cultural and national factors and an oversight as to occupational and generational commonalities. This demonstrates similarities within the literature on antecedents to proactive career behaviours reviewed above. Whilst personal level factors such as demographics are encapsulated within individual antecedents, situational antecedents are predominantly situated at the institutional level and are principally related to the context of the employing organisation and the design and organisation of work. However, Claes et al (1998) also explored higher level antecedents, empirically investigating the influence of occupational group membership, and national or country culture.

The significance of *social* context to career has been empirically researched by scholars including Parker (1996) and Higgins (2001). Parker (1996) asserts that some of the most influential factors in career choice relate to events and 'growth enhancing relationships outside work' (GROWs) which occur in the context of 'community interaction' between an individual and the social groups of which they are a member. Alternatively, the research findings of Higgins (2001) demonstrated that, beyond *individual-level* factors such as demographics and work history, the decision to change careers is socially embedded, evidenced through studying the effect of formal and informal advice networks. Furthermore, Arnold and Cohen (2008) propose that further attention to context is required within career research and specifically in comprehending the roles of other people in an individual's career including informal career helpers.

An alternative conceptualisation of the ways in which context impacts career is proposed by Cohen and Duberley (2015), to recognise three aspects or faces of context; proximal events, ideology, and enduring structural features. Drawing upon

participants career stories to understand the interplay of career and context, in their 'career-making'. The empirical findings demonstrate the interconnectedness of these three faces of context and the dynamic ways in which they influence career-making over time.

In endeavouring to comprehend the degree to which contextual factors are significant in the shaping of careers it is interesting to consider the range of academic terms which have arisen to classify their affect. As outlined in the previous chapter, career change has been described as 'career redirecting turning points' (Nicholson and West, 1988:188) or 'punctuation marks' in a career story (Duberley et al., 2006b:285). Similarly, in considering the role of the individual and context in relation to career change, a variety of academic terms have arisen which attempt to portray the contribution of various factors upon career and associate change events. For instance, through empirical investigation of professionals entering the contingent workforce, Kunda et al., (2002) identify 'trigger events", which 'trigger' choice by prompting individuals to consider their options. They also offer a crucial distinguish between 'triggers' and 'encouraging factors'. Whilst 'encouraging factors' such as organizational politics and incompetent management were sources of dissatisfaction with permanent employment these were not sufficient catalysts for change (Kunda et al., 2002). Conversely, layoffs, deteriorating working conditions and the prospect of undesired travel proved to be 'triggers' that led to respondents changing labour markets and employment relations. Similarly, Power (2009) highlights a distinction between internal and external triggers, suggesting that career change is the outcome of an internal and/or external trigger. Whilst internal triggers are "an internal change in interests or priorities", external triggers are external events "that begins or is the articulated reason" for career change taking place (Power, 2009:116). Examples of internal triggers include feelings of low achievement or a lack of stimulation at work, whilst external events include organisational downsizing or government mandated change (Power, 2009). Alternatively, Hall and Mirvis distinguish between; influences which acts upon the individual and their career; 'driving forces behind new demand' and 'factors in the current environment that have potential to help people grow in their careers' (1996:33). However, the potential constraints that these influences present is not acknowledged but alternatively are presented as positive influences leading to "conscious exploration of alternative ways of being and cycles of learning" (1996:33).

Drawing upon the research of Kunda et al., (2002), Ibarra suggests that the key role of 'trigger events' is not necessarily the direct production of change but the triggering of "personal explorations and trial experimentation with new forms of social interaction" which may subsequently lead to change (2006:79). Whilst individuals may choose to ignore 'triggers', dismissing their relevance or validity, equally "what may objectively appear to be a trivial episode may be infused with great significance by an individual on the brink of change" (Ibarra, 2006:80). Similarly, Smith-Ruig (2009) identify influential factors upon career, including the speed of progression, potential hazards encountered, and the different pathways available. Conversely, triggers and mundane events may also lead to significant changes and 'moments of insight' (Ibarra, 2005). Therefore, context as a moderator or determinant of change can potentially give rise to a diverse range of responses to triggers, resulting in what may be interpreted as 'unique' career experiences as individuals from within similar occupational or organisational group respond in alternative ways to external stimulus.

3.6 Alternative Accounts of Change – Bringing Together Structure and Agency

The recognition and discussion of context within the above reviewed career models continues to offer a portrayal of a career landscape within which opportunity is plentiful and the pursuit of career is unconstrained. Exceptionally, the redefined organisational career model (Clarke, 2013) attempts to re-introduce the notion of contextual influences and constraints, implicit within the traditional model of the organisational career, by re-situating the career within multiple organisational contexts over the life course. Clarke argues that although a significant degree of protean orientation is necessary in managing the career the individual is not emphasised as the sole driving force and the significance of the organisational context is recognised. Accordingly, some counterbalance to the prevalent over-emphasis on individual agency evident within the other models reviewed is provided. Nevertheless, this is still limited in scope, recognising only the role of employing organisations. Resultantly, in seeking a more concerted attempt to understanding the significance of context within the career, and career change, an alternate body of research is reviewed below, which endeavours to recognise the role of context within the study of the individual and career.

A number of career scholars have drawn upon theories of structure and agency, and specifically the work of social theorists Anthony Giddens and Margaret Archer, to outline career as an outcome of the interplay between individual agents and the social structures and institutions within which they interact. At the core of such an approach is the recognition of agency and structure as a dualism or duality. Giddens (1984) argues that, at the abstract level, they are to be thought of as two sides of the same coin; a *duality*; 'the constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality' (Giddens, 1984:25). However, empirically both Archer and Giddens agree that elements of agency and structure are to be considered as two separate but inter-related aspects; a *dualism*. Accordingly, several empirical studies have adopted a structure and agency approach to the study of career and career change and, although still accentuating the role of the individual, have also recognised contextual aspects.

For example, a number of studies (including Duberley et al., 2006a; Duberley et al., 2006b) have drawn upon Giddens (1984; 1991) and Barley (1989) to explore career as a process of structuration within which 'career scripts' mediate between individual action and interaction; *the interactional realm*, and institutional structures; the *institutional realm*. Accordingly, structuration theory conveys a recursive process by which institutions constitute and are constituted by the actions of individuals (Giddens, 1984). The model of career structuration suggests that these recursive processes are mediated by career scripts comprised of institutional orders of signification, domination and legitimation. These become encoded within interpretive schemes, resources and norms, which are maintained or transformed by individuals, and in turn act back upon the institutions in an ongoing process of structuration (Barley, 1989). Furthermore, career scripts represent different models of career. Consequently, the individual agent is not acting freely but within the context of institutional structures. Barley extends the scope of institutions beyond employing organisations to encompass the multitude of potentially conflicting social institutions to which an individual may belong at one time (including family, occupational, labour markets and cultural). However, the individual's ability and desire to act both within, and upon, such structures is accentuated and therefore individual control and choice is still afforded prominence over the role of context.

The theoretical model of career structuration (Barley, 1989) has been empirically applied as a sensitising device by Duberley et al., (2006a) and Duberley et al., (2006b), in an endeavour to offer a socially embedded perspective of career agency within two disparate professional groups. Utilised in such a manner, the model encouraged the researchers to consider the complex interaction between context, interpretation and action; illustrating the various contexts individuals saw themselves within, how they accounted for their agency and how they interpreted the relationship between the two. As a result, individual career stories emerged as meaningful patterns rather than appearing random and idiosyncratic. The qualitative studies illustrated how alternative career scripts were drawn upon to account for individual action at different times in life and to explain various aspects of their career. At times these scripts were contradictory and competing and interpreted differently by participants, therefore resulting in a multitude of responses. Furthermore, Duberley et al., (2006b) demonstrated how individuals drew upon institutionally embedded career scripts whilst also contributing to the development of new scripts in both intentional and unintentional ways. This transformative capacity of individual action was evidenced within a study of former public-sector managers who had transitioned from traditional organisational arrangements to portfolio forms of working prompted by a complex range of factors including personal, family and career development.

Duberley et al., (2006a) outlined empirical support for a theoretical distinction offered by Mouzelis (1989) that actors may adopt one of two core orientations to the social structures within which they are situated, a ‘practical’ or ‘routine’ stance, or alternatively a ‘strategic’ or ‘monitoring’ approach. Correspondingly, Duberley et al., (2006a) identified two key modes of engagement between individual action and career; proactive and reactive, demonstrating the degree to which they wanted to initiate change and actions which were intended to maintain, challenge or transform. Significantly, examples of each were incorporated within all the gathered accounts. Exploring the impact of a changing relationship between science and society upon public sector scientists six diverse and intersecting institutional contexts were identified; organisational, science, professional, family, government and national culture. The relevance of each varied across participants. Mediated through career scripts these institutional contexts imposed both constraints and enablers upon career actors and appropriate behaviours in regard to career action. Correspondingly, whilst some

individuals maintained the dominant script, others negotiated constraints through the intentional and unintentional transformation of scripts and therefore acted back upon the social context within which action was embedded, hence highlighting the dynamic process between the two realms.

The empirical studies of Duberley et al., (2006a) and (2006b) demonstrate value in employing a model of career structuration as a device through which to sensitise a researcher to the interplay between institutions and individual action by exploring how individuals consider the contexts within which they are situated, how they account for their own agency and the relationship between the two. Conversely, career is demonstrated as contextual and relational rather than solely a property of the individual (Collin, 1998). Duberley et al., argue this is in contrast to the dominant discourse within contemporary career forms in which "the individual career actor is elevated above the context……..in which he or she is situated" (2006b:282). However, critiques of structuration theory suggest a number of fundamental issues, particularly in regard to applying this abstract theory to empirical research. This includes problematic definitions, such as the defining of social structures as premised upon rules and resources, by Giddens, which creates challenges in delineating between elements of agency and structure, and in maintaining abstract notions of duality. Nevertheless, the studies of Duberley et al., reviewed above indicates empirical value in structuration as a sensitising tool, in demonstrating the contextual and relational nature and the social embeddedness of careers (2006b). However, prominence is still afforded to individual action and its transformative capacity, emphasising the transformative capacity of individual action in acting upon institutions, and thereby deferring a secondary role to context in shaping career and triggering change. Whilst this assumption is supported by the empirical studies, two specific professional groups were selected for study and therefore the applicability of these findings to different occupational and organisational groups is unclear.

Theoretically, the suggestion of such malleability of structures is a point of contention for social realist Margaret Archer and therefore a key starting point for the development of an alternative account of structure and agency (Archer, 1995). Archer introduced a morphogenetic approach and framework to structure and agency to outline the complex interrelationship between the two elements as a distinct and competing

ontology to that adopted by structuration theory. Stones (2005) considers Archer's morphogenetic approach to be the most advanced critique of Giddens work. Archer (1995) summarises the structure and agency debate as a matter of 'conflation', distinguishing between three conflationary approaches; 'upwards', 'downwards' and 'central'. Both 'upwards' and 'downwards' conflation is attributed to traditional social theory in which either structure or agency is denied causal autonomy, whilst the other is granted causal efficacy. Accordingly, 'upward' conflation grants causal efficacy to agency and so "inter-personal interaction is presented as orchestrating the structure of society" (1995:80). Conversely, 'downward' conflation suggests that "social structure is held to organize social interaction" (1995:80). Archer recognises the work of Structurationists, and Giddens as prominent examples of 'central conflation', suggesting that in seeking to transcend the two former positions (of upward and downward conflation) both structure and agency become centrally conflated. Conversely, approaching this debate from an ontological position of social realism, Archer rejects conflationary accounts of social theory in favour of a non-conflationary approach which "accentuates the importance of emergent properties at the levels of both agency and structure, but considers these as proper to the strata in question and therefore distinct from each other and irreducible to one another" (Archer, 1995:14). This conflation debate is insightful, in terms not only of the research undertaken within this thesis, but in understanding the wider literature reviewed above and in the previous chapter. It is not the intention of this thesis to adopt structuration as a theoretical or analytical framework, instead being led by the research findings. However, in exploring the role of the individual, and the significance of contextual factors within career stories, elements of structure and agency emerge within the research findings. Resultantly, Archer draws attention to the need to be vigilant in the treatment afforded to these aspects and presuppositions regarding the conflation of either element above the other. Alternatively, the analysis of these elements and the interrelationship between the two will be shaped by their emergence from within individual career narratives, and in relation to different experiences within these.

In a similar vein to Giddens, Archer proposes agency as a continuous process but illustrates this as a morphogenetic cycle, emphasising both the social embeddedness of agency and the reflexivity of active agents (Figure 5). The three stages of the cycle; structural conditioning, social interaction and structural elaboration relate to the

activities of active agents and the causal powers "which ultimately enable people to reflect upon their social context, and to act reflexively towards it, either individually or collectively" (Archer, 2000:308). These points of distinction serve to differentiate agency from 'action' and therefore provide a crucial advancement of Structuration Theory's interchangeable treatment of the two terms.

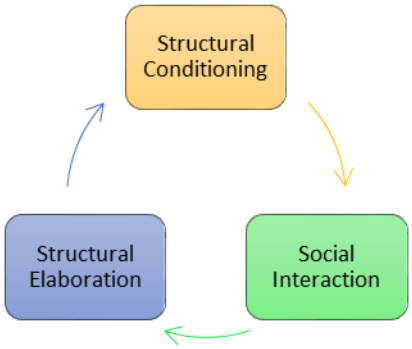

Figure 5: The Morphogenetic Cycle (adapted from Archer 1995)

Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach to structure and agency, alongside a temporal conceptualisation of agency incorporating aspects relating to the past, present and future, introduced by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) inform an empirical study of agency and career opportunity structures within the legal profession (Tomlinson et al., 2013). Tomlinson et al., focus upon the processes through which structural properties and powers mediate and are mediated through individual agency. The study is particularly illustrative in considering the ways in which individual agency can reproduce or transform existing structures. Specifically, a typology of six potential career strategies, articulating different forms of agency were identified; assimilation, compromise, playing the game, reforming the system, location/relocation and withdrawal (including prospective). The career strategies were distinctive in their temporality with certain strategies evidenced more predominantly within certain stages of individual's careers. For instance, 'assimilation' and 'playing the game' were more evident strategies within early careers and 'reforming the system' more prevalent within the later stages of career. Moreover, informed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and their reconceptualisation of agency, the researchers endeavoured to overcome what they consider to be 'impoverished' accounts of agency overemphasising the past or habitual aspects of agency. Resultantly, different forms of agency situated in the past (iterative/reflexive), present (practical evaluative) and future (projective) are identified

in varying degrees within each of the six career strategies. Significantly, only one strategy; 'reforming the system' reflected a transformation of existing opportunity structures whilst the majority resulted in the reproduction and maintenance of existing structures regardless of the requirements or expectations of agents. Consequently, it is demonstrated that, even in contexts populated by highly skilled and knowledgeable agent's, old organisational opportunity structures persist; "the biographical narratives of our respondents illustrate how specific labour market outcomes are not necessarily the result of individual choices but instead reflect different opportunity structures" (Tomlinson et al., 2013:256).

Three core career opportunity structures identified as key structural barriers to progression were evidenced within the study; the requirement to work long and unpredictable hours to demonstrating commitment, the requirement of bringing in new clients and maintaining client relationships and informality in the promotion process. Accordingly, the proclaimed unrestrained capacity for individual agency to bring about structural change is called into question and the constraining and enabling capacity of social structures is highlighted, suggesting processes are more complex than presented within structuration theory. Resultantly, Tomlinson et al suggest that career strategies are critical for understanding the potential for structural reproduction or elaboration within organizational contexts. Accounting for the rarity of structural reform, Tomlinson et al., evidenced structures as being less malleable than structuration theory suggests, "structures were not merely internal, fluidly made and remade" but external forces which respondents needed to overcome (2013:265), supporting Archer's notion of structures as "what they confront-and have to grapple with" (Archer, 1982:463).

The above section has reviewed two alternative theoretical approaches to the application of abstract social theory to the study of agency and context within career research and therefore demonstrate utility in explaining the role of the individual in change within their career. Whilst informative in highlighting forms of agency and offering some indication of the various contexts within which the individual and their career is embedded it still only offers a partial picture of career and career change. Resultantly, this reveals little about individual interpretations of their career experiences and consequently the extent to which it can potentially inform practice is limited. Furthermore, it offers little clarity upon how structures (and hence context) act upon the

individual and their subsequent responses, including prompting, constraining or creating instance of change within the career. More importantly, it does not address how people interpret their actions as being shaped by the context or whether they see as separated and detached. The aforementioned empirical studies focus upon professional careers and draw upon similar cases within their sample so offer limited variety in terms of underlying and contributory factors including occupation, age, gender, and length of career tenure and the cumulative effect of experiences. Doing so may potentially illustrate similarities and differences in those who transform and those who tend to maintain existing structures, and in how individuals interpret such changes in recounting their career experiences. They also offer little insight into why these professions are followed in the first instance, and how this may impact upon subsequent action. Consequently, this raises the question; how do we move from the general perspective of career change provided within accounts of structure and agency, to developing more insight into day to day processes of careering.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has demonstrated the prominent role that is afforded to the individual in their career development within Career literature, and specifically in regard to the development of the contemporary models of career introduced in Chapter One. Career proactivity research was also reviewed, to demonstrate an alternative perspective to understanding career agency as part of a proactive approach to career as suggested by the earlier models. However, proactivity theory also introduces the notion of contextual or situational antecedents and mediators to such behaviours and therefore suggests an alternative approach to providing a more holistic perspective upon career, albeit still emphasising the pre-eminence of individual action and career as an intentional outcome. Nevertheless, the relatively under-researched idea of ‘spill-over effect’, also introduces the potential of unintended or coincidental career outcomes from other work-related behaviours. Finally, the notion of embeddedness, at the level of job, occupation and organisation was introduced as a counter balance to the presupposition of frequent change. The review also turned to a body of literature which endeavours to study elements of the individual and context by drawing upon theories of structure and agency from within the social sciences to provide a socially embedded perspective of agency. Part Two of this chapter has reviewed the treatment of context within career literature

to demonstrate multi-level approaches to its classification and theorising as to the extent of the influence of context upon the shaping of career. Whilst the above accounts provide different elements of comprehension of the role of the individual and context in shaping career and hence change within this, accounts of individual action and agency still dominant. However, this thesis wishes to challenge the extent to which career is determined by individual agency and explore the role that context plays within this, to understand if this presents a challenge to the dominant ideologies of career and how this is then interpreted by those who do not experience such freedom of choice and individual determinacy. Consequently, the following research questions are raised; *To what extent do career experiences correspond with understandings of agency in existing literatures? And to what degree is agency and career experience influenced by the various contexts, including personal, organisational and societal, in which the career is enacted?*

Resultantly, it is evident that alternative approaches to the study of career are required. The following chapter will propose the notion of 'careering' as a potential construct through which greater clarity upon the contextual and personal influences and causes of change within and across the career, can be achieved.

4 Advancing Careering as a Theoretical Construct

4.1 Introduction

In reviewing the dominant models within contemporary career theory and approaches to the study of career and career change the previous chapters have demonstrated an emphasis upon control and a large degree of predictability and self-determinism in career. Consequently, studies focus upon single isolated change events to explore individual agency and proactivity as a means through which to comprehend career. However, if, as outlined in Chapter One, we are to comprehend 'career' as an evolving sequence, comprised of periods of both continuity and discontinuity which are punctuated by change events, then this thesis argues that a richer insight into change within the career is central to understanding how, and why, such sequences of experience evolve in the way that they do, and how individuals interpret such experiences. Such an approach has scholarly support reflecting upon future direction for career research and theory, Arthur (2014) outlines two key perspectives through which to comprehend career as an evolving sequence of experiences occurring across multiple physical and psychological boundaries; "*we can either view those careers as several disconnected segments, or we can view them in a way that seeks to understand the links between those segments*". Correspondingly, this thesis seeks to consider career from the latter vantage point, studying both subjective and objective changes within the career, which represent connections between experiences to ultimately form sequences of work experience from which career is constituted.

Comprehending of career from such a perspective necessitates an alternative approach to its study than those outlined within the literature reviewed in the previous two chapters. Resultantly, this chapter will focus upon the theoretical development of the concept of 'careering' to study the interrelated elements of the processes of career. This thesis will demonstrate that the term 'careering' is dual faceted. Firstly, the term careering potentially indicates frequently overlooked or unacknowledged

characteristics of movement and direction experienced by individuals in the enactment of career. This definition highlights potential elements of spontaneity, unpredictability and lack of control, whilst also drawing attention to the context or terrain within which this occurs and its impact upon such attributes. In common parlance 'careering' is a verb which is generally understood to denote swift and uncontrollable movement. Demonstrating the complexities of defining 'career' Grey (2008) draws upon 'careering'. Originating from the Latin word 'carrus', meaning road or wheeled vehicle, the term 'career' subsequently developed to encompass both a vehicle (or carriage) and the road (or carriageway) on which the vehicle travels and resultantly is understood as either or both (2008:30). Grey acknowledges that whilst each of these connotations provides a sense of career as "an orderly and comprehensible progression", an alternate impression is invoked when speaking of something proceeding in an uncontrollable manner, likened to the actions of "a careering or runaway horse". It is this alternate sense of career, or 'careering', characterised by movement and a considerable degree of uncontrollability, which provides the foundation for advancing the term as a theoretical construct.

Resultantly, I suggest that a second key dimension of the term careering has its value in providing a theoretical perspective from which career is viewed as a process which extends to all aspects of an individual's life, not just related to work experiences, which is characterised by the elements described within the former explanation. The following research question will therefore be addressed; *how can the development of careering as a theoretical construct advance our understanding of what is it to experience career? What does this approach afford that is not provided within existing career theory and models?*

The chapter will outline careering as a theoretical construct by reviewing how this term has previously been adopted within career literature and research. The application of the term 'careering' is not as prominent within career literature as may be initially anticipated. Where the term is evidenced it is frequently incorporated as a catchy title or heading but is not developed beyond this cursory application. For example, articles titled 'Careering through Divorce' (Cook, 2001) studies the effect of divorce on work. Similar examples include 'Careering Downwards? (Thomas and Dunkerley, 1999) and 'Careering Ahead' (McConnell, 2009). Such applications adopt

the term to denote some form of movement or progress within an individual's career; whether 'downwards', 'through', 'ahead' or 'up', but do not develop the term beyond a title or heading. Despite this limited application, its frequent presence provides evidence of the potential further development as a construct through which to approach the study of career. However, in terms of academic application careering is afforded limited attention within Career Studies. Despite its limited and disparate use, five key themes are evident within this literature which will be drawn upon to structure the ensuing discussion. Accordingly, I wish to position careering as; a *process of organising*, as *movement*, amongst and through a *pattern of events*, which is intertwined with other aspects of an individual's *life*, and as both *contextualised and individual*.

4.2 Careering as a process of organising

Central to the development of careering as a theoretical construct is the introduction of a process view to the study of career. The adoption of the verb form of a noun as the primary object of study has occurred elsewhere within Management and Organizational Studies, most prominently in regard to 'knowledge' and 'knowing' (Cook and Brown, 1999) and 'organizations' and 'organizing' (Weick, 1969; 1979). Cook and Brown suggest that 'knowing' is 'knowledge' in action and is an aspect of interaction with the social and physical world and therefore an active process (1999). Furthermore, they argue that knowledge is a tool of knowing and emphasise the value in considering the interplay between the two, which they suggest privileges an 'epistemology of practice'; knowing as action, over an 'epistemology of possession'; knowledge as an individual possession (1999:381).

Likewise, Weick (1969, 1979) advanced the construct of organizing as an alternative lens through which to understand and research organisations. Weick proposed that organisations should not be observed as static entities and studied according to their structures and forms. Alternatively, Weick argued that they are constituted of processes made up of interlocked behaviours and assembly rules which are fluid and continually in a state of negotiation and construction as individuals attempt to make sense of the situations in which they are part. Therefore, processes of 'organizing' were the focus of study rather than 'organizations'. Furthermore, Weick concentrated upon the study of processes of organizing within crisis situations, as he

suggested that it is within instances in which continuity is challenged that the processes are made visible (Weick, 1993; Weick, 2010). This approach is also supported by Nicholson in suggesting; "it could be argued that the underlying dynamics of social process are most tellingly revealed at points of discontinuity and change" (1984:172). Applying this stream of thought to the concept of career, it is evident that attempting to understand a career in practice, as 'careering' rather than as a possession 'to have a career', focuses upon the active process involving interactions with the social and physical world. Consequently, the dynamic and evolving nature of contemporary careers can potentially be captured, by recognising the interaction between the individual, careering and the social and organisational contexts within which this transpires, which are revealed within instances of change or crisis.

Bakken and Hernes (2006) argue that the process perspective advanced by Weick could be usefully expanded by drawing upon the theory of Whitehead, an early process philosopher who whilst sharing many of Weick's ideas differed in his opinion of verb and noun. Whilst Weick argues for the study of verbs rather than nouns in understanding organisation or organizing and sees a constant tension between the two. Whitehead refers to experience (verb) and abstraction (noun) as intertwined and co-evolving and Bakken et al suggest that such an approach could potentially make a significant contribution to the study of organization. Correspondingly, this would suggest that a focus upon careering is not to disregard the concept of career but ultimately recognises the value in studying the verb as a means by which to further comprehend of the noun. As Bakken and Hernes (2006:1600) concisely assert a process perspective offers "a way of thinking about the world while acknowledging the inherent gradualness of the phenomena under study" without assuming that everything is under gradual change but draws attention to analytical distinctions between continuity and discontinuity, constancy and change, entity and flow.

Relating the theory of organising to the concept of career, Weick and Berlinger (1989) recognised career as a form of organising within self-designing systems which Weick (1996) later recognised as central to organising and enactment within the context of continual improvisation and learning inherent within the boundaryless organisation, and this will be elaborated upon further below.

Drawing upon the theory of organizing reviewed above the significance of observing careering as a process is indicated. More specifically, it demonstrates the value of studying change as part of such a process rather than as a single event to be explored in isolation. Comprehending career change (possible or actualised) as a punctuation mark within such processes, an instance in which vulnerability and potential discontinuity is revealed, has the possibility of advancing comprehension of how and why sequences of work experience come to constitute career by rendering careering visible and accessible to study and analysis.

4.3 Careering within (and through) Life

A second theme of careering is its embeddedness within other aspects of a person's life. This notion emerges from within the field of career guidance and counselling and consequently represents a psychological perspective upon career. The 'new careering model' (Miller-Tiedeman, 1999) is founded upon Lifecareer theory (Miller-Tiedeman, 1988), to offer a holistic approach to career guidance which recognises the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of an individual's life within the unfolding of their career. Similarly, Lifecareer theory proposes that career cannot be separated from other aspects of a person's life and consequently argues that vocational guidance should be approached from the perspective of understanding careering as contextualised within an individual's life course rather than as an isolated element related purely to a particular job; "life is career unfolding and, conjointly, career is life empowered" (Miller-Tiedeman. 1985:223). This 'life-career' approach is a process theory which recognises the 'flow' of life which unfolds regardless, whether we want it to or not, and advocates the relevance of career guidance and counselling throughout an individual's life course; in contrast to perspectives which limit its relevance to major transition points such as initial entry into the labour force and exit at the point of retirement (Miller-Tiedeman, 1999).

In seeking to theoretically develop the concept of careering Miller-Tiedeman's theory is insightful in emphasising careering as not connected solely to employment experiences but to be comprehended within the entirety of an individual's lifeworld. This therefore holds methodological implications as it becomes necessary to study careering contextualised within, rather than in isolation from, other aspects of an

individual's life-course. To study careering in such a manner positions the individual, and all aspects of their life including physical, emotional and spiritual, as central to these processes. The implications of this for research design will be returned to within the following Methodology Chapter.

It follows, that in understanding careering as a process which unfolds across the entirety of a person's life and is embedded and entwined with all other aspects of the individual's life, that a wider appreciation of the events or punctuation marks within this needs to extend beyond the study of significant work and career related events. Understanding the significance of other such moments upon these processes and how this is also encompassed within the careering literature will now be outlined.

4.4 Careering through a Pattern of Events

The above has reviewed careering as a process of organising and in so doing introduced the work of Weick, which I wish to return to in reviewing careering as a pattern of events. Demonstrated within the previous two chapters is an understanding of change as frequently arising from key events within the career journey, which either themselves represent change or are the trigger or contributory factors to subsequent change within the career (both subjective and objective). Relating this back to Weick and a theory of organising, Weick argues that it is through such events that individuals make sense of processes and give meaning to experience, and which through empirical research these processes are revealed. Furthermore, individual sense-making around such events impacts upon how individuals' approach and deal with subsequent change. Weick also recognises that change is not limited to large episodic changes but also change which is emergent, incremental and continuous and therefore demonstrates the significance of daily experiences in understanding change. Correspondingly, Weick (1996:40) views boundaryless careers as "improvised work experiences that rise prospectively into fragments and fall retrospectively into patterns – a mixture of continuity and discontinuity".

In understanding this pattern of events, as outlined in the previous section, it is necessary to understand this from the perspective of careering as embedded and entwined within all aspects of an individual's life. Correspondingly this pattern of events is not restricted to work or career events but also suggests careering through a

broader range of both major and minor events which consequently represent a juncture within careering, necessitating a range of responses from self-reflection to key changes in direction. Consequently, whilst the study of change within the career has principally focused upon events specifically related to career, drawing upon the wider career counselling and guidance literature demonstrates the relevance of unrelated and chance events which come to bear upon processes of careering. Specifically, planned happenstance theory (Mitchell et al., 1999) is a conceptual framework extending career counselling to acknowledge career as "a combination of intention and sheer chance" (Inkson et al., 2015:30), and suggests that luck and chance events, unpredictable social factors and environmental factors are important influences which play a role in every career. However, the goal of planned happenstance intervention is for individuals to generate and take advantage of beneficial chance events and therefore happenstance theory addresses the need to furnish individuals with the necessary abilities (including curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism and risk-taking) to recognise the opportunities presented by seemingly coincidental and unrelated events in addition to maximising the chances of fortunate events occurring in the first instance. Nevertheless, Inkson et al (2015) raise a valuable point in expressing caution in recognising that attributing events to luck, serendipity or right place, right time can also be an exhibition of modesty or socially acceptable behaviour, so rather than demonstrating pride in personal achievement, individuals may be reluctant to appear boastful.

Outlining careering as occurring within, through and around a pattern of events, whether these be in relation to work (paid, unpaid or voluntary) or occurring within other aspects of a person's life, connects to the fourth theme to be reviewed, that of movement.

4.5 Careering as Movement

A sense of movement is invoked in two principal ways by the term careering, firstly in returning to Grey (2008) and the portrayal of uncontrollable and frantic movement, and secondly, through the theoretical adoption of a process view which also signifies movement in the sense of flow (Bakken and Hernes 2006).

In the previous discussion of careering as part of the life course (Section 4.3), Lifecareer theory was introduced as a process approach to careering which recognises

the 'flow' of life as unfolding regardless, whether we want it to or not (Miller-Tiedeman, 1988). This notion of flow introduces elements of uncontrollability to the construct of careering, and is counter to the prevalent view of control evident within the contemporary models of career reviewed within Chapter One.

Alternatively, Clarke and Knights (2015) incorporate the imperative for movement, alongside a degree of uncontrollability, by drawing upon Grey's (2008) earlier reference to careering as invoking an image of something proceeding in an uncontrollable manner, likened to a runaway horse. Clarke et al describe the frantic and frenetic nature of the career strategies of Academics within UK Business Schools; "academics were hurtling out of control" (2015:1866). Simultaneously, they also situate aspects of uncontrollability in juxtaposition to the pursuit of; "one specific goal that obscures all else", that of establishing a stable and secure identity (2015:1866). Thereby elements of intentionality and determinism are reintroduced through the concept of careerism (returned to in the following discussion of careering as both individualised and contextualised). Resultantly, careering is outlined as; "a frantic and frenetic individualistic strategy designed to moderate the pressures of excessive managerial competitive demand" (2015:1865). Therefore, for Clarke et al., 'careering' was constituted of the employment of careerist strategies in pursuit of career advancement and the illusive sense of a secure self; or as they also refer 'playing the career game'.

Drawing upon Clarke et al., (2015) application of the notion of careering it is evident that as a theoretical concept 'careering' facilitates a perspective upon career which embraces aspects of uncontrollability and individuality as well as a degree of commonality in individual strategies. The notion of flow, emphasised by Miller-Tiedeman (1988), highlights the continual momentum (or runaway nature) of processes of careering through, around and amongst a pattern of events and highlights the contextualised and embedded nature of such movement.

4.6 Careering as Contextualised yet Individual

The fifth theme to be outlined, careering as both contextualised and individual, helps to bring together each of the other themes discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter. The first two chapters have demonstrated limited consideration of the impact of context upon career and career change within scholarly literature. However,

developing careering as a theoretical construct directs attention to the contextualised nature of careers whilst also sensitising the researcher to a comprehension of careering as an individual journey constituted of differing responses to the multiple different levels of context which interact within this. Consequently, in developing greater insight into the significance of context upon career, and change within, it is necessary to study an individual's interpretation of their own experiences. As demonstrated within the preceding discussion which outlined careering as part of the life-world, Tiedeman (1999) recognises careering as an individual strategy within the context of the lifeworld to demonstrate how it is interwoven with other aspects of the individual's life. The following section will review how other careering literature encompasses alternative levels of context whilst also accentuating the individual nature of careering.

The above-mentioned research of Clarke and Knights (2015) argues careering is an individualistic strategy in response to contextual influences. Specifically, in response to pressures arising from the wider social context within which the professional careers under study are enacted within. Clarke et al., recognise the immediate professional and organisational context as a condition of the wider social context. Managerial pressures upon academics within Business Schools and the public sector were acknowledged as being a consequence of new managerial regimes drawn from private sectors, themselves a consequence of neo-liberal culture. Clarke et al., recognise responses to such pressures as individualised whilst also recognising elements of careerism within each of these individual strategies, to suggest that the professional group under study are in pursuit of a single illusive goal; securing a stable and secure identity (or at the very least ethical subjectivity). The findings revealed that whilst some participants conformed with managerial regimes premised upon technologies of visibility and self-discipline a small number demonstrated resistance and sought a more embodied engagement with their work. Clarke et al., draw upon the alternative sense of careering discussed above to describe individual responses to contextual influences as 'frantic and frenetic' (2015:1865), describing academics as "hurtling out of control" (2015:1866). However, they also propose that individuals were; "heading for one specific goal that obscures all else" (2015:1866) and consequently also introduce aspects of control. This juxtaposition makes an interesting contribution to the advancement of careering as a theoretical construct.

In demonstrating an evident careerist orientation within their research findings Clarke et al., (2015) indicate a high degree of individual autonomy, personal agency, choice and drive in the pursuit of career. However, it is interesting to question the extent to which this outcome is driven by the research population under investigation; and to consider how this would emerge across a broader range of professional, occupational or organisational groups. Academics are subject to rigorous professional entry structures requiring a high level of academic qualification, undertaken over a number of years, prior to admission to professional academic hierarchical structures which provide a clear path to progression. Nevertheless, Clarke and Knights application of careering facilitates a perspective upon career which embraces aspects of uncontrollability, demonstrating the influence of contextual factors arising from multiple factors within which the individual, their occupational group and employing organisation interact, and recognises both commonality and individuality within responses and ensuing strategies of careering.

Likewise, Arthur et al., (1999) recognise the contextual influence of the 'new economy'; characterised by "dynamic, competitive and technology-driven forces in which the creation and flow of knowledge is a key consideration" across a range of occupational groups (1999:x). Arthur et al acknowledge the term 'careering' but alternatively draw upon the construct of 'enactment' (Weick, 1995) as a theoretical framework through which to study the career stories of participants. However, they conceptualise the two as overlapping constructs, to understand; "'careering' or at least the enactment of careers as a process which creates, but also constantly modifies, the structures of institutions and of individual lives" (Arthur et al., 1999:165). The discourse of 'enactment' facilitates the integration of a theatrical analogy to illustrate the enactment of careers upon the stage of the new economic 'theater'; a new employment environment within which employment ties are loosened and become more temporary and organisations are developing wider networks. Arthur et al., draw upon Barley (1989) to suggest that historical institutional scripts fail to equip career actors for the "novel, improvisation parts" they are to enact within the new economy ((1999:18). Thereby Arthur et al., bring together the contextualised but individualised nature of careering by emphasising personal agency within such processes of improvisation in response to the contextual influences of the new economy. The practical value of such an approach is also recognised by Arthur et al., in suggesting that careers can be better

understood by employers if they are considered "not as structures predetermined by the company, but as processes driven by individuals. Like organizing, 'careering' can be regarded as a process enacted by autonomous individuals, linked in turn to other individuals through relationships in networks" (1999:172). Drawing upon Arthur et al.'s study of enactment within the career is evidently insightful in informing the construct of careering, particularly in the way in which it draws upon everyday experiences of career, endeavouring to study how these experiences become linked in patterns which come to constitute career.

4.7 Chaos Theory and the Butterfly Model of Career

Chapter One reviewed how dominant models conceptualise contemporary careers as non-linear, and fragmented, whilst also emphasising the dynamic role of the individual in determining their own career experiences and shaping change within this. Chapter Two has then highlighted key approaches to the study of these experiences. However, I have suggested that they are limited in their explanation as to how and why these patterns occur, and therefore do not elaborate upon the chaos within career experiences but still appear intent upon presenting career as an orderly and manageable phenomenon. Alternatively, this chapter has endeavoured to demonstrate the value in approaching study from the perspective of careering and five key themes have been outlined. In attempting to further inform this approach, the review will now turn to a separate body of literature which draws upon chaos theory to inform an alternative model of career. I propose that has significant value in comprehending the process of careering but is not represented within mainstream career management literature. The Butterfly Model of Career (Pryor and Bright, 2003; Pryor, 2011) is developed from a chaos theory of career (CTC) arising from the domain of chaos theory (Lorenz, 1963; 1993) and has received recognition and praise for demonstrating the pragmatic value of CTC both empirically and practically (McIlveen, 2014:3). Pryor and Bright (2014:4) felt that prevailing theories of career development "did not relate very well to life as it is lived" and sought to develop a theory which accounted for *chang*e (everything is always in a state of flux and change can be non-linear), *context* (career as holistic), *complexity* (as opposed to the over-determined nature of career development), *connection* (emphasising the recursive nature of the world, rather than being segmented and partial) and *chance* (the impact of unplanned and acknowledged limitations of all

human control and knowledge). The butterfly model is principally recognised within the field of career counselling and as such approaches the study of career from the perspective of the individual, and career education and guidance practitioners, and therefore is limited in its acknowledgement of the role of management or organisations in the development of the individual's career and is not featured within the mainstream career literature.

Nevertheless, the butterfly model was recognised as one of fifty key career related terms which have shaped or continue to shape career studies between 1990 and 2012 (Baruch et al., 2015). The review authors (Baruch et al.,) expressed surprise at its inclusion as the term has attracted limited attention within the career research community but has nevertheless endured within the field of career development, and amongst a small group of scholars (Baruch et al., 2015). The model was developed as a practical tool, for example Borg et al., (2006) propose the butterfly model of career as a practical technique to convey abstract and complex ideas about the world of work with clarity and utility to school and college leavers. However, I suggest that the butterfly model addresses some of the outlined theoretical limitations of mainstream career models and provides a clearer understanding of what it is to experience career through the myriad of changes and transitions from which it is constituted (Pryor & Bright, 2011). Principally it approaches an understanding of career as a pattern of motion within which stability (a discernible emergent pattern) is intertwined with inherent uncertainty (Pryor and Bright, 2003), and consequently encompasses many of the key characteristics of careering outlined above. The concept is illustrated through the silhouette of a butterfly to demonstrate how the planned (the likely) and unplanned (contingent and luck) are brought together within the career. Each of these elements are represented by the wings of the butterfly and it is the bringing together of these two elements which is of particular interest as the model is unique in affording significant attention to the 'unplanned', elements of which arise from influences and chance events arising from the wider context, represented by almost half of the total area of the silhouette, rather than treating it as an aside or anomaly. However, as intimated above, this model is limited in its application and has not been applied as a framework or empirical tool within the study of career, or recognised within the career management and organisational literature but alternatively is limited to a career education technique "to facilitate students' thinking about the nature of contemporary careers" (Pryor and

Bright, 2014:6), illustrating how planning and contingency can be linked, understood and utilised in career decision making for those embarking on early careers. However, potentially recognition of the influence of unplanned and chance elements on career development would enable individuals, managers and organisations to recognise the significance of such events within processes of careering and equip individuals with the relevant skills and support to recognise, navigate and create new opportunities from such occurrences.

4.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has outlined five themes emerging from a review of how the term careering has been applied within the current career literature. Whilst its use within this literature could be considered somewhat disparate, the recognition of these key themes demonstrates the potential in advancing careering as a theoretical construct. Therefore, I propose 'careering' as *a contextualised but individualised process throughout an individual's life-course, that is closely intertwined with further aspects of their life. This dynamic process incorporates both proactive, passive and reactive actions and responses, which at times may include elements of uncontrollability, unintentionality, unpredictability and spontaneity, and gives rise to an evolving sequence of both work and non-work activities and experiences*. In positioning careering as such, neither the individual or context is prioritised within the determining of career patterns and change, but alternatively the potential of each is recognised without being assumed. Furthermore, flexibility is provided to understand how the role of each may change across the life-course and indeed within specific moments or events throughout the career. This raises the following research question; *how can the development of careering as a theoretical construct advance our understanding of what is it to experience career? What does this approach afford that is not provided within existing career theory and models?*

In addressing this question, this thesis will contribute to existing career literature by demonstrating the empirical and analytical value of advancing the term 'careering' as a theoretical concept to enhance the study and understanding of the processes of career. The implications of such an approach in terms of research design and methods will be developed within the Methodology Chapter.

4.9 Research Questions

The preceding three chapters have reviewed key literature from within the career management literature and wider career research. It has been demonstrated that, despite a plethora of contemporary career models and the widely accepted frequency of change within the course of individual careers, there remains a lack of understanding of how and why such change is experienced within individual experiences. Prominence is afforded to the self-directed and proactive role individuals adopt in shaping their own career, with change presented as both an outcome and a means of achieving this. The literature has also demonstrated an emphasis upon studying specific forms of change adopting a cross-sectional approach and therefore takes a very narrow perspective upon such events and fails to recognise the impact of undergoing such experiences across both the course of the career and wider influences including past experiences and contextual factors.

To summarise, this literature review has raised the following research questions;

Contemporary models of career portray the overall form or structure of a career but what is it to experience this fragmentation, dynamism and non-linearity for oneself? How can this be more clearly articulated to demonstrate how apparently linear stages may be experienced in uncontrolled and chaotic ways? How do the career stories gathered within my research differ to how career experiences are depicted or characterised within career theory?

To what extent do career experiences correspond with understandings of agency in existing literature? And to what degree are agency and career experiences influenced by the various contexts, including personal, organisational and societal, in which the career is enacted?

How can the development of careering as a theoretical construct advance our understanding of what is it to experience career? What does this approach afford that is not provided within existing career theory and models?

The following chapter will outline the methodological approach to be adopted in addressing these questions.

5 Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The aim of my research was to explore experiences of change within career, to develop a clearer understanding of the role of the individual and additional factors in creating and shaping such change, and the impact of this upon further careering. To advance a holistic approach to the study of careering a narrative based methodology was adopted. As will be outlined further below a narrative approach was chosen to enable interviewees to give their own voice to their experiences and highlight what they considered to be relevant and meaningful within these, rather than as a specific response to questions formulated by the researcher as is the tendency within traditional interview methods. Resultantly, this thesis is experientially driven, with key themes emerging from the narratives forming the basis for analytical discussion. Career stories were gathered to provide a retrospective account across the totality of interviewees careers, encompassing not only their current work but also prior experiences. Part One of the Chapter opens with a discussion the philosophical underpinnings of my methodology, situating my position as a researcher and providing rationale for the research design adopted. Part Two introduces the research organisation (Baycastle Trust) from within which interviewees were recruited. The gathered career stories encompass a broad range of experiences across different occupations, organisations and sectors. However, as the interviewees were all employed within Baycastle Trust at the time of interview, some background detail provides useful context to the research design and findings. Part Three outlines the research design employed to gather career stories and provides reflection upon the empirical process. Finally, Part Four describes the data analysis process from which key analytical themes emerged to form the basis for the research findings presented in Chapters Six to Eight.

5.2 Research Methodology

The ontological and epistemological positioning of my empirical research will now be outlined, prior to introducing the story-based methodology adopted by way of exploring the lived experience of career and change.

5.2.1 Philosophical Underpinnings

The outlined research questions (p68) and the selected research methodology provide some indication of the philosophical position assumed within this thesis, and myself as researcher. In drawing upon career stories to gain insight into interviewee's experiences of change this thesis is underpinned by a philosophical position incorporating key elements of a relativist ontology; a belief in the nature of reality as comprised of multiple 'truths' and 'facts' which are dependent upon the viewpoint of the observer (Easterby-Smith, 2012). Furthermore, as stated by Collins "what counts for the truth can vary from place to place and from time to time" (1983). Accordingly, career and experiences within this are defined and experienced differently by different people and this research endeavoured to draw out these differing viewpoints through the application of a narrative-based methodology. Resultantly, the research embraces a diversity and uniqueness of experience. This is in contrast to the traditional position of realism which assumes a single reality and seeks to ascertain a generalisable and singular description of the phenomena under investigation. Correspondingly, in drawing upon interviewee's understandings and interpretations of their careering the study is positioned within a constructivist epistemology, an interpretative approach representative of study "where the aim is to explore people's individual and collective understandings, reasoning processes, social norms and so on" (Mason, 2002). Savickas lends support to approaching the study of career from such a perspective, arguing that; "in short, career could be viewed as an interpretive construct built by a person to give meaning and mattering to their work life" (2009). Specifically, in exploring experiences of change from the viewpoint of participants and providing the opportunity to narrate the elements of careering which hold personal significance, careering is comprehended as a socially embedded process, and the notion of career as socially constructed.

The purpose of adopting a narrative-based methodology is to capture individual experiences in participants own words, permitting the freedom to highlight

what is significant to them and to draw upon both personal and contextual factors which are not necessarily work related but have influenced or impacted upon their career. In giving voice to their career history, and presenting personal connections and sequence between experiences, individual narratives offer rich insight into how change is experienced, interpreted and made sense of within the process of careering. This reflects an epistemological position incorporating key elements of social constructionism, acknowledging multiple perspectives and recognising that "human action arises from the sense that people make of different situations, rather than as a direct response to external stimuli" (Easterby-Smith, 2012). Constructionism derives from multidisciplinary sources including sociology, literary studies and postmodern approaches and adopts the view that "knowledge in some areas is the product of our social practices and institutions, or of interactions and negotiations between relevant social groups" (Gasper 1999:855 in Young and Collin, 2004).

Constructionism is frequently posited as antithetical to positivism (for example (Bryman, 2008). Positivism is an epistemological approach which has traditionally underpinned empirical research of career and historically informed social policy and professional practice in areas such as career counselling and organizational behaviour (Young et al., 1990xii). Positivism is founded in the assumption that the same principles that are applied to intellectual inquiry within the natural sciences can be transferred to study within the social sciences, negating to consider subjective aspects of career and the context in which it occurs in favour of uncovering universal truths to explain the objective elements of career. However, critiques have highlighted issues regarding definition and terminology, the limited integration of individual and contextual factors and a failure to adequately deal with the complexity of human action, consciousness and agency (Young et al., 1990:xiii). Consequently, as the field of Career studies has continued to develop it has become increasingly acknowledged that traditional career theories do not accurately reflect practice and the value of alternative epistemologies has been recognised (Young and Collin, 2004). This increased diversity in epistemologies is not representative of a rejection of the positivist tradition, but as suggested by Young et al., (1990) presents both a challenge and significant opportunity in bringing together alternative approaches and developing a comprehensive understanding of career.

5.2.2 Story-Based Empirical Research

The research questions highlight the importance of understanding experiences of career to build upon the understanding of change presented within existing career theory and models (reviewed in Chapter Two). Consequently, individual career stories are drawn upon to reveal greater insight into the turning points and events through which individuals' career and experience change. Furthermore, different forms of change are identified, alongside explanations of how they arise, and the significance of the role of the individual and the organisational and wider social context within this is revealed. Consequently, a focus upon career stories is intended to reveal not only career histories but also the meaning which interviewees attribute to these experiences. Relatedly, this parallels a distinction between 'life history' and 'life story', terms which are frequently adopted interchangeably but are distinguishable in terms of emphasis and scope (Atkinson, 1998). A life history is an objective 'factual' account, requiring the corroboration of facts through multiple research sources. Conversely, as in the approach adopted within my research, a life story is a biographical account from the perspective of the narrator. This provides a history imbued with meaning, and offers in-depth insight into an individual's life rather than rigid adherence to the recounting of key dates, positions and employing organisations. Correspondingly, the life story interview is "a qualitative research method for gathering information on the subjective essence of one person's entire life" (Atkinson, 1998:3). Similarly, the narrative-based methodology adopted within this empirical study seeks to reveal the essence of one's careering within the context of both their entire life and external environment through the analysis of stories. Whilst the term 'biographical narrative' (Chamberlayne et al., 2000) is also an appropriate description for the chosen research method, Cohen et al., (2001) suggests that the label 'story', carries familiar everyday connotations which are missing from attempts to be 'scientific' and providing a reminder of the manner in which life experiences are continually cast and recast in different contexts and to different audiences. Resultantly the term 'story' will be favoured within the ensuing dialogue.

The relevance and value of stories and narrative to career theory has been acknowledged (Collin, 1998; Bujold, 2004; Cochran, 1990) and story-based methodologies drawn upon within empirical career research (Smith, 2011; Arthur et al., 1999; Cohen and Mallon, 1999; Duberley et al., 2006ba). Several narrative based approaches to research have developed, including life history methods, biographical

narratives and the analysis of organisational stories. Early studies within the Chicago School of Sociology advanced the life history approach to extend the scope of career research beyond work and organisations by applying a heuristic view of career to a broad range of situations and social organisation. Resultantly, life history developed as a method through which deviance could be documented and studied from the perspective of the deviant, and classic accounts studied the career of dancers and marijuana users (Becker, 1953) and asylum patients (Goffman, 1968). Goffman reflected upon the value of an individual's retrospective account of their career; "an important aspect of every career is the view the person constructs when he looks backward over his progress" (1968:135). Nonetheless, career studies have predominantly employed positivist approaches to study, drawing upon quantitative methodologies to study and measure objective features of career. However, Chamberlayne et al., (2000) recognised a notable 'biographical turn' within social sciences. This resulted in the greater prominence of interpretive procedures for relating the personal and the social, and personal and social meanings as bases of action. Similarly, Inkson et al (2015) highlight a growing interest in stories as a means of understanding within constructionist (and constructivist) approaches to study. From such a perspective individual's actions are understood to be premised upon their own view of the world and personal knowledge is constructed based upon personal experience. Correspondingly, stories describe experience(s) with emotions (Boje, 2008), provide access to and an appreciation of context, through a temporal ordering of ideas, a focus on sequential patterning of events and the role of actors, and building a picture of social situations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Consequently, a career story may be a unique personal account or contain elements that are shared collectively by different people, or across society, and the search is for uniqueness rather than abstractions or generalizations. Furthermore, Cohen and Mallon (2001) demonstrate the suitability of a narrative based methodology in addressing the research questions of this thesis in outlining four key contributions of such an approach. Firstly, stories establish sequence and a chronicle of events. Secondly, they reveal contradictions and inconsistencies within experiences. Thirdly, stories pay attention to the process of retrospective sensemaking. Finally, stories enable insight into the relationship between individuals and social structures, providing a lens not only through which the researcher can glimpse how people experience and make sense of themselves and their own world

but also in elucidating "the relationship between individual action and wider social and cultural contexts" (2001:49).

Story-based methodologies have previously been undertaken within the empirical study of career to focus upon specific professional groups or to study singular change events (Tomlinson et al., 2013; Cohen and Mallon, 1999; Duberley, 2006). Furthermore, empirically investigating a transition from full-time employment to portfolio working within a group of professionals Cohen et al., (2004) recognised that participants were unable to explain this change event in the abstract or understood in isolation, and without reference to non-work aspects of life. Consequently, participants needed to situate the event within a meaningful context, which was both temporal (the sequence of events leading up to the transition) and social (including important people and events which influenced the decision), and therefore narrated retrospective accounts of their careers to contextualise the transition. Similarly, the empirical research of Smith (2011b) and Arthur et al (1999) adopted a longitudinal approach to study individual strategies of career agency and the core characteristics of the boundaryless career concept respectively. However, the empirical research undertaken within this thesis offers a number of points of differentiation from the above in that it sets out to understand the sequencing of career across the entire history, to demonstrate how earlier experience influence subsequent events and decision. In addition, rather than focusing upon specific aspects or events, it embraces a holistic view of career and is directed by interviewees as to the most significant elements of their experiences in developing a picture of careering, capturing the potential complexity and messiness rather than attempting to impose order. Lending support to such an approach Cohen et al state; "story-based career research allows for a rounded, deep, and multifaceted exploration of career that recognizes its dynamic, evolving, and often ambiguous, even contradictory, character" (2001:56). Approaching the study of career from the perspective of careering necessitates revealing the flow by which such a process unfolds, to understand how patterns of career are formed and the turning points and punctuation marks within this (Duberley et al., 2006b). Individual career stories will potentially reveal a multitude of change experiences ranging from visible career events, for example as outlined within a CV, to seemingly minor career instances, which do not result in observable career changes (such as in position, employer, profession etc.) but give rise to subjective change which may come to have bearing across the overall

pattern of careering. The selected methodology and research design are intended to reveal the essence of such changes and understand them as a significant element within the process of careering, which are both socially embedded and part of the individual's total life sphere.

5.2.3 Storytelling as a Process

Cochran suggests "to describe a person's career is to tell a story" and likens the absence of depth of perspective afforded by story as a research method as analogous to walking into a movie at the end, and not knowing what went before, and what is at stake (1990:72). In the process of narrating their stories participants not only recount their experiences but also actively engage in a process of retrospective meaning making (Cohen and Mallon, 2001). Cochran proposes that it is through the natural form of story that we put things together including people, places and events, and make them understandable, and consequently the power of story is in revealing meaning. Resultantly, a distinction is made between the narrow perspective of a participant within a moment or experience and the broader view afforded to the narrator in participating in storytelling. The latter enables a richer evaluation of events in context of the total and requiring more comprehensive judgements that go beyond single events; "spectators are able to savour, recount, and embroider, assessing events in light of all the interests, desires, sentiment and ideals they can relate it to" (Cochran, 1990:76). Narration as a research method positions meaning as the central subject of career, to reveal the meaning of career as lived; "in pursuing a career, we live meanings, and lived meanings make a career narratable, intelligible and coherent" (1990:78). The significance of reflexivity afforded through the process of storytelling in the personal construction of reality, is also highlighted by Atkinson; "we increase our working knowledge of ourselves because we discover deeper meaning in our lives through the process of reflecting and putting the events, experiences, and feelings that we have lived into oral expression" (1998:1). In the telling and defining of a story, and giving it spoken meaning, Atkinson suggests the individual can be knowing it for the first time, and furthermore, the researcher also becomes part of the meaning making process. Such meaning making was evidenced within the narration of career stories with some interviewees making connections between different events and experiences which they

had not previously identified, and therefore actively reflected upon the significance of this within their narrative.

5.2.4 Implications of a Narrative-Based Methodology

In gathering career stories, rather than career histories, this thesis moves beyond the surface of careers to appreciate and understand the underpinning features of each individual's experiences. However, it is also appreciated that to gain such insight is dependent upon the willingness of the interviewees to engage in such an undertaking, and the researcher's ability to draw out such detail. Inviting the participant to recount their experiences is anticipated that the data will move beyond a simple chronology; "a purely sequential description of an event or period of time", to fuller richer narratives which provide knowledge of how individuals "think, feel, and do: who have aims, beliefs, and values" (Cochran, 1990:77). This forms the basis of a story and reveals a 'plot' which brings together these details "into a unifying temporal organization" (*ibid* 1990:77). Therefore, to elicit such narratives consideration was afforded within the research design as to how such a level of detail could be prompted, particularly through the building of rapport and trust within a short period of time between interviewer and interviewee, and this will be returned to in further detail in Part Three below. However, before outlining the research design, an introduction to the research organisation (Baycastle Trust) is provided, by way of contextualising this design, and the processes undertaken. The empirical focus of this thesis is the career stories of individuals, and in retrospectively narrating their experiences a variety of organisations are discussed. However, as the employing organisation of all participants at the point of interview, it is useful to provide some contextual information through which to understand the context of participants current careering.

5.3 The Research Organisation

5.3.1 Baycastle Trust

The primary empirical focus of this thesis is upon the career stories of participants recruited within 'Baycastle Trust'[5], a public-sector organisation within the National

[5] Names of all organisations and people have been changed to afford anonymity.

Health Service. This organisation provided the opportunity to recruit participants across different occupational and professional groups (including traditionally under-researched groups) to provide multiple perspectives upon careering. As a public-sector organisation it also offered the opportunity to explore careering within an area traditionally considered to be afforded greater protection from the impact of wider social and economic change but with increasing acknowledgement that this no longer prevails, if it ever did to the extent propagated. In addition, prior research I have undertaken within a different NHS organisation at Masters level highlighted the potential diversity of career experiences within the sector and suggested the need for further research. Although the empirical investigation was undertaken within a single organisation, the principal focus of this research is upon individual experiences of career. In retrospectively narrating their career stories, interviewees described a variety of organisational and professional contexts within which they had careered (in addition to non-work-related contexts). The individual is the principal unit of analysis within the study, investigating experiences of change across the course of their career and not confined to experiences within the case organisation.

Baycastle Trust was the second organisation within which access was granted, following the retraction of access to a different organisation at short notice. Initially, access was secured within a NHS Estates and Facilities Management organisation. However, due to large scale organisational change and associated restructure within the Senior Management team, access was rescinded the week prior to interview commencing. Access to an alternative organisation was quickly secured through a contact from a previous research project who had recently changed organisations, and whom was able to negotiate access on my behalf. Baycastle Trust is a regional NHS Healthcare Trust providing mental health and learning disability care to a local population of approximately half a million through hospital and community-based services and employs approximately fourteen hundred people.

Baycastle offered a large sample base covering a diverse range of organisational functions. Participants were employed within one of six clinical directorates, or within corporate functions that provide administrative and clerical support to the range of directorates. The workforce encompasses a range of roles including clinical (e.g. nursing, psychologists and occupational therapists), managerial

(e.g. Heads' of Directorate and Team Managers) and support functions (including Human Resources and Training) offering a multitude of perspectives from which career can be studied.

Although Baycastle Trust was not the original intended research organisation, upon subsequently reflecting upon the career stories collected, this organisation produced a greater richness of data than would potentially have been gathered within the original organisation. In particular, the organisational history, specialised healthcare functions and regional base all provided fascinating layers of context and contributed to a deeper level of insight than may otherwise have been revealed.

5.3.2 The Broader NHS and Healthcare Setting

During the interviews a number of key contextual factors emerged as particularly relevant to understanding careering within this organisation and the wider healthcare sector within which it is situated (Appendix A contains a brief summary). Whilst such factors are reported in relation to individual careering within the research findings, a brief introduction follows to contextualise the interview process and research design. The organisation is one of fifty-four Mental Health Trusts in England. It was established as an NHS Trust in 1994 following the merger of four directly managed units providing adult and older people's mental health (MH), learning disability (LD) and primary care services. A number of participants had also been employed within these predecessor organisations and transferred into Baycastle Trust on its establishment. In some instances, career stories provided an extensive history of changes and events, extending across over thirty years, and highlighted as significant to both the establishment of the Trust and individual stories of careering. Prior to its formation, MH and LD were distinct services provided by separate organisations and individuals studied specialist qualifications to work within one of these areas. Training was undertaken within the institution they would subsequently be employed by upon qualification. These institutions were large 'asylum' style hospitals within which care was primarily administered on a residential basis, frequently within secure wards, and often on a long-term basis. Wards were segregated by age and gender, and training for qualification was undertaken through rotation across different wards.

Throughout the 1980s a number of changes at both a local and national level led to the reform of MH and LD services resulting in the eventual closure of the two main institutions within the Trust between the late 1990s and early 2000s and transfer of care to a community setting. Although some healthcare continued to be administered within a residential setting this was transferred to specialist homes within community settings. More recently, specialist care has returned to some extent to an institution setting, albeit to a changed service and within a closer proximity to the home and family of service users. These changes are attributed to multiple factors including advances within the relevant specialist fields as to the nature and treatment of both MH and LD, most notably demonstrated through a transition in focus from control by medication to alternative forms of rehabilitation. Key incidents including the injury or fatality of patients within similar settings, has also resulted in government intervention and policy making which is also linked to these large-scale forms[6]. Furthermore, media interest and coverage either as a response to, or a catalyst for, increased public interest in such affairs can also be observed to be connected to such change. As a result, the amalgamation of separate organisations within the locality in the mid-1990s brought together professionals within these two areas of specialised care, and whilst they were still organised within distinct directorates within the new organisation, new opportunities for collaborative working and retraining were created.

As an NHS provider organisation, the services of the Trust are commissioned and funded by two local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). The Trust works closely with local authorities and agencies which support people with mental health and learning disability issues. Furthermore, Shared Services are provided into and purchased from other local NHS organisations. At an individual level these networks provide additional career opportunities for employees within the organisation including inter and intra organisational secondments and project work. Staff training is supported through partnerships held with a range of educational establishments within the region.

The Trust is financially directed by, and financially accountable to, government via the Department of Health and is regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which regulates health and adult social care services in England

[6] See Appendix A for a timeframe of relevant historical events and publications.

and ensures standards of quality and safety are being met within the provision of care. A poor inspection by the CQC prior to the empirical study and a subsequent follow-up audit scheduled for shortly after its completion arose within some interview discussions, particularly in cases where this had resulted in additional responsibilities, project work or secondments to alternative roles. On a practical note, it also necessitated the completion of the interviews in sufficient time to prevent interference with organisational preparations for the upcoming inspection.

5.4 Research Design

5.4.1 Access and Recruitment of Participants

In accordance with Baycastle Trust and the NHS's research procedures the recruitment of participants was undertaken through an appointed gatekeeper. Although recruitment via a gatekeeper can have implications in terms of sample selection bias, in this instance it was considered to positively encourage participation, particularly as the gatekeeper was a long-serving member of the organisation who had been employed across a range of clinical and managerial support roles, and therefore added credibility to my role as a researcher. Participants were recruited through 'volunteer sampling'; the gatekeeper distributed an email through a designated contact within each Directorate, inviting individuals to volunteer to participate and including the participant information sheet and details of the study. Such an approach to recruitment is a form of non-probability sampling, regarded as such because of the impossibility of determining "the probability of any member of the population being sampled" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012:228). However, as the aim of this research was to capture individual experiences, and embrace the diversity presented, rather than an emphasis upon representativeness, this was not considered to be restrictive in terms of the career stories to be gathered. Mindful of the need to reach employees without regular email access, line managers were also requested to disseminate the information throughout their teams to ensure maximum coverage of the workforce. Interested participants were requested to contact the gatekeeper directly to schedule a convenient time and preferred location across a range of Trust properties (a schedule of dates over a two-month period had previously been agreed with the gatekeeper).

Once interviewing was underway 'snowball' referrals (Bryman, 2008) were sought from other interviewees who were often influential in encouraging colleagues to participate by providing reassurance about the interview process and so providing access to individuals who would not necessarily have responded solely on the basis of the recruitment email. Therefore, the process of snowball sampling facilitated access to those who had not initially volunteered to participate and consequently broadened the range of interviewees.

The range of the respondents was reflected upon by myself and the gatekeeper at frequent intervals throughout the two-month period of recruitment and additional prompts in the form of a reminder email directed towards under-represented areas such as particular directorates and occupational areas. However, whilst it was originally intended that the sample demonstrate clear representation across each directorate, it became evident once interviews commenced that this was not as significant as initially anticipated as many participants had worked across a range of areas within their career. Similarly, whilst it had initially anticipated that research data be grouped according to employment within professional, managerial or support roles, a number of participants had transitioned between these groups, either within their substantive post or through secondment and project opportunities. This provided particularly interesting narratives from those that had changed between professional clinical roles and managerial as will be outlined within the empirical findings. Therefore, although the sample contains diversity in terms of function and occupational group, the present employment of individuals within each of these is not as significant in achieving a representative sample as initially envisaged.

5.4.2 Sample

The initial intention was to recruit approximately forty participants from across the organisation as it was anticipated that this would demonstrate a breadth and diversity of experience whilst also potentially displaying the existence of recurrent themes. Consideration was also given to the temporal and financial resources necessary to undertake qualitative interviews with this number of participants, particularly when the aim is to collect a rich depth of narrative within each individual's career story. Participants were recruited over a two-month period, enabling frequent reflection upon the sample size and composition, and the quality of the gathered narratives, identified

as being both rich and extensive from the outset. The methodology adopted is particularly well suited to small scale studies, as a large sample group risks diluting the impact of the rich and extensive narratives gathered. Furthermore, the aim of such a methodology is not to reveal general consensus but to recognise and embrace the uniqueness of experiences and incorporate different perspectives. Therefore, the emphasis was upon diversity within the sample rather than representativeness. Consequently, whilst it was recognised that initially a high proportion of the sample were female, and due to retire within the next three to five years, further understanding of the workforce demographic obtained through the gatekeeper confirmed this was representative of the organisation. However, in the interests of ensuring diversity within the sample, the recruitment of younger, and male participants was actively undertaken, aided to a large extent by my presence on site and snowball referrals from other colleagues.

In total, the sample consisted of forty-one participants, employed in a range of functions within and across the core directorates of the Trust. The career tenures ranged from under one year to thirty-six years, and varied in terms of time spent within the organisation, the wider NHS, other public-sector organisations and the private sector. The sample also contained diversity in terms of professional and occupational roles, including those employed within clinical and non-clinical roles, and a number who had transitioned across both. The sample also encompassed individuals within administrative and support roles which are frequently overlooked within academic studies which tend to focus on specific professional or managerial groups. In sum, it is acknowledged that whilst diversity is demonstrated within the sample, its composition was restricted to some extent by the process of recruitment and organisational workforce demographic. However, this can also be demonstrated to have made a positive contribution to the empirical study, for example the inclusion of a high proportion of individuals who were approaching retirement, within both the sample and the Trust's overall workforce, produced richer data in terms of extensive career histories from which to observe patterns of careering.

5.4.3 Interview Setting

The organisational context provided an interesting setting for conducting empirical research. Interviews were predominantly conducted within two locations, offering

employees working within the community or across different sites, a choice of two venues. The Trust Headquarters resembled a standard office building on a business park and offered limited insight into the primary work of the organisation. Conversely, the second location was the main hospital of Baycastle Trust. Additionally, a small number of interviews were conducted within two community-based locations, one of which was within the grounds of a former asylum referenced in a number of interviews. This range of venues, in addition to time spent waiting within a combination of open plan office spaces and service user waiting areas, provided a useful and insightful immersion within the organisation, both past and present. Interviews were predominantly conducted within meeting rooms or offices although a number occurred within more unusual settings, including a 'dummy' training ward complete with mannequin patients, within which the interview was conducted at a 'patient' bedside and again served as a reminder of the specialised context within which careering occurs.

Correspondingly, at the onset I had not appreciated the significance of the extended settings within which interviews would be conducted but offers interesting reflection in retrospect. As my research focused upon engagement with employees in a meeting room setting, I had perhaps a little naïvely not considered my possible engagement with service-users of the Trust. However, two particular situations arising during my time in the organisation initially caused surprise, and then embarrassment, as I felt inadequately prepared for handling each of these instances. The first arose on my first visit to the hospital, waiting in the main reception area for a scheduled interview. A young adolescent male who was a patient on an acute ward was wandering around this area and chatting to people as they passed. Because of my formal dress and laptop bag he assumed I was a solicitor. I awkwardly explained that I wasn't, and that I was waiting to speak to a member of staff, to which he responded by asking if I was looking to have someone sectioned. I found this conversation uncomfortable as I was unsure how to describe my presence. I also felt he was perhaps testing my reaction by recounting a different mental health condition for each letter of the alphabet which he had allegedly been diagnosed with and describing his physical restraint by ward staff the week prior. Over the course of the interview period, I encountered this young man several more times, and gradually became more at ease in conversing but felt embarrassed at my initial discomfort. A second notable instance arose upon entering a secure assessment unit to undertake an interview. Whilst a staff member located the

participant I was scheduled to meet, a young adolescent male service-user entered the room, and without speaking, walked over and embraced me. A member of nursing staff who followed made light of this, suggesting that I possibly looked like I needed a hug. Nonetheless, I found this a difficult and somewhat intimidating situation because I felt unprepared and uneasy about how to handle such scenarios. Whilst such experiences gave me some clarity on the complexities of the research authorisation process (Section 5.4.7), they also demonstrated my personal lack of knowledge of the healthcare context within which the organisation specialised. On reflection, whilst I recognise my lack of awareness, I also consider the organisation, and gatekeepers, as potentially accountable for ensuring external researchers are prepared for similar situations, particularly in the interests of service-users. However, the gatekeeper had extensive experience within both mental health and learning disability care and resultantly, I would suggest, did not recognise the significance of such experiences to external visitors. In terms of my personal development as a researcher these experiences highlighted the importance of recognising and appreciating the research context outside of the immediate research focus and incorporating this into the planning stages of research design.

In addition to being allocated appropriate space within which to conduct interviews I was also provided with desk space from which to work between interviews in an open plan office environment at Trust Headquarters. This proved useful, not only in providing a greater appreciation and understanding of the work undertaken within the organisation, but also in recruiting further participants, as employees became familiar with my presence and consequently expressed an interest in participating. My continued presence also facilitated additional dialogue, for example a time after conducting their interviews, two interviewees approached me to discuss new positions that they had secured. Significantly, this was not conveyed as a factual update but as a consequence of having entrusted me with their narrative and a high level of personal detail, therefore recognising that I understood the personal significance of these changes within the context of their wider story.

5.4.4 Interview Process

The interviews were conducted over a two-month period, and participant recruitment continued within this time. I conducted a pilot interview with my original organisational contact prior to commencing the main period of interviewing. The purpose of the pilot

was to test; the interview schedule including the sequence and clarity of prompts and follow-up questions, the audio recording equipment, and possible duration of the interview. Undertaking the pilot with an interviewee known to me facilitated open discussion about the interview on its completion, including the clarity of interview questions and the use of a timeline as an interview tool (outlined in Section 5.4.6). Consequently, minor adjustments were made to the interview schedule, including rephrasing of some questions for greater clarity, and changes to the sequence to improve overall flow within the interview. The pilot interview also demonstrated the relevance of seating arrangements, to ensure that both the interviewee and myself were able to clearly reference the timeline tool. I continued to reflect upon and review the interview design and schedule on commencing further interviews.

Each interview was recorded, with the interviewee's permission, to prevent the interview becoming fragmented by note-taking and to provide an accurate record of the conversation. The recordings were transferred to a password protected PC as soon as possible after each interview before being transcribed for the purposes of data analysis.

5.4.5 Interview Schedule

Within each interview opening I provided a brief introduction to my research and provided some detail regarding my own history, to demonstrate my interest in the subject. The disclosure of a small level of personal detail provided a useful opener in recognising the surprise of some interviewees at being interviewed by a 'mature' student whilst also being able to clarify that I had no connection with the organisation. This also helped to open up conversation and put interviewees at ease in sharing their own experiences. I remained mindful of not influencing or biasing interviewees responses by imposing definitions of career, or assumptions as to experiences, including the occasion and frequency of change.

The interview schedule consisted of two key segments. Within the first, interviewees were invited to share their career story, highlighting the experiences and changes which they considered to be significant with minimal prompting from myself as interviewer for further explanation or clarification as necessary. The term 'career' was employed loosely with interviewees invited to share their career or work experience history, not directed to a specific starting point but invited to start where they chose. In

so doing interviewees are afforded the flexibility to take ownership of the interview (Nelson 2010). The majority started from the point of leaving higher education but often then reflected further back upon early aspirations and influences. A small number started with their entry into Baycastle Trust but subsequently returned to earlier experiences to demonstrate their contribution to later choices and opportunities. In granting such freedom, I sought to extract personal interpretations of career and ensure the expression of an 'authentic' voice (Atkinson, 1998:74). Furthermore, Nelson (2010) reflects upon how interviewees may delay narrating emotionally sensitive events until rapport has been successfully developed with the interviewer and this was evidenced within the course of my interviews as interviewees passed over or offered simple explanations for some experiences, before returning later in the interview to provide in-depth or alternate explanations. Typically, this initial segment occupied over half of the total interview time but frequently addressed a number of later questions and appeared to place the interviewees at ease as they narrated through their experiences.

The second segment of the interview followed a semi-structured format, enabling deeper exploration of key areas including some of the changes they had experienced, the personal significance of careering within this and exploration of factors which influenced or impacted upon this. As themes emerged within earlier interviews, such as the narration of key people within their careering, additional questions were incorporated within this section to explore these themes further. The adoption of a semi-structured format ensured the coverage of key points whilst affording adaptability and flexibility to follow the natural course of the conversation and explore relevant information as it presented itself (Kvale, 2009). The primary objective of this section was to explore further the experiences of change highlighted within the initial section but were not previously developed as this would impact upon the organic flow of the narrative. This included questions such as; what other events have occurred over this timeline which may have directly or indirectly impacted upon your career or work history?, why would you describe these as significant or important? Please can you tell me more about these? During this section the timeline drafted within the first section (Section 5.4.6) was invaluable in prompting discussion around particular changes and events that had been referenced previously. This section also focused upon the personal meaning and significance of career, for example; "What does career mean to you?", and "How have you shaped your own career?". In the final stages of the interview

interviewees were provided the opportunity to contribute anything else which they would like to add. This sometimes led to revisiting earlier parts of the discussion or commenting in more detail on the interview as a process, both of which were insightful. Additionally, it was recognised from the onset that adopting an approach to career histories within the first half of the interview which is adopted from life history interviews, could potentially be a challenging technique. Eliciting stories requires both and a willingness on the part of the interviewee to engage in this method and particular skills from the interviewer to encourage participation. Therefore, it was important to ensure that if the first section of the interview did not unfold as envisaged the interview schedule to be adopted within the latter portion would potentially ensure each interview contributed to the empirical study. Fortunately, interviewees demonstrated clear engagement with the interview design and the career stories were readily forthcoming, and both rich and extensive in nature.

This two-stage approach within a single interview facilitated the production of an uninterrupted narrative as the pivotal focus of analysis, supplemented by responses to additional prompts and questions once the initial narrative was concluded. This replicated the design of a biographic narrative interview outlined by Wengraf (2000).

5.4.6 Timeline Tool

At the onset to each interview I introduced a timeline as a research tool to aid interviewees in reflecting upon their history and to provide a visual representation of each story within subsequent data analysis.

The timeline tool is a modification of a range of research tools termed ‘calendar methods or instruments’ or ‘timeline techniques’ developed within the life history tradition (Glasner and Vaart, 2009). Although originally developed to capture quantitative data within large-scale life course research, the value of such techniques in the collation of qualitative data in “producing a nuanced longitudinal account” is increasingly recognised (Nelson 2010:414). For example, within social research, calendar methods have been drawn upon to foster insight and achieve a clearer understanding of the issues under investigation, including the study of young adults’ educational trajectories (Nelson, 2010), applied gerontology (Feldman and Howie, 2009) and the working lives of older people (Porcellato et al., 2016). Glasner and Vaart

(2009) asserts that such participatory methods lead to enhanced researcher–participant interaction, as the participant is actively engaged in co-producing meaningful data. Furthermore, Porcellato et al., (2016) suggest that such interaction within their empirical research facilitated a positive and enjoyable research experience which consequently had a positive effect upon both the accuracy and reliability of data (Galner et al., 2009, Porcellato et al., 2016).

The timeline was centrally positioned during the interview so it could be easily viewed by both the interviewee and myself. Such positioning signified that its population was a collaborative effort. As interviewees narrated their career histories and experiences, I noted key events on a timeline (a black line drawn horizontally across the centre of a blank sheet of A4 paper, landscape orientated). The illustration of the timeline was a relatively uncomplicated process undertaken using pen and paper, rather than computerised techniques, to ensure visibility to both parties throughout the interview and flexibility in the completion process. Alternative materials have been employed by scholars in previous empirical studies including the use of easel paper, coloured pens and stickers (Glasner and Vaart, 2009). However, for the purpose of my research I considered this would be potentially disruptive to the primary intention of developing a coherent career narrative focused upon understanding 'how' and 'why' change had been contemplated or occurred. An A4 sheet proved somewhat limited for longer histories and the visual representation of the narrative was continued on the reverse. However, on occasion this prompted insightful reflection by the interviewee upon how at the onset they felt they would not have much to recount but in creating the timeline they realised their experiences were more extensive than initially thought. Some interviewees also commented upon how the 'messiness' of the timeline reflected how they pictured their career progression.

Career changes were noted along a central temporal line, including details of organisations and positions held to indicate salient 'landmarks' (Nelson, 2010). Events, key people and other points of interest related to work experiences were noted underneath the line whilst those associated with other aspects of the participant's life were noted above. This interpretive approach is representative of an unstructured format introduced within qualitative research. Conversely, traditional life history calendar methods adopted a highly structured format comprised of a pre-printed grid.

Traditionally, the horizontal axis was divided into sections representing particular time periods, e.g. months or years to enable an accurate recording of the timing of events. And the vertical axis was divided into multiple predetermined domains to be investigated e.g. family and work. However, within my research, the purpose of the timeline tool was not to produce a detailed recording of 'when' which could result in an unnecessary emphasis upon the recollection of precise dates and fragment the narrative. Correspondingly, in exploring the 'how' and 'why' of change, a less structured format was employed, to capture explanatory information and individual heterogeneity, and interactions between history, biography and context, whilst preserving the flow of narrative (Porcellato et al., 2016).

The purpose of the timeline as an interview tool was twofold. Firstly, it provided a visual recall aid, enabling both the interviewee and the interviewer to cross-reference information across multiple domains. For example, referencing personal information and events with work histories has been evidenced to reduce discrepancies (Porcellato et al., 2016), and aid in clarifying dates or time periods that might otherwise be guessed or roughly estimated, with minimal disruption to the principal narrative. The visual representation of the career also aided both the interviewee and myself in identifying potential gaps in information, or confusion or overlaps within the sequence of events and provided the opportunity to confirm or revise information during the course of the interview. This proved particularly valuable when interviewing participants with extended career histories in helping to organise and sequence historical experiences. Secondly, the timeline provided a visual prompt for myself as interviewer of points of interest to be returned to within the later stages of the interview for further clarification or explanation, and for this purpose were indicated with a discrete asterisk. I endeavoured to populate the timeline in a concise manner to minimise disruption to the flow of the narrative. However, I also recognised that on occasion this provided useful pause points or moments of reflection for interviewees, particularly when narrating particularly complex or emotional experiences, and therefore enhanced the quality of the data collected. The timeline provided a significant focal point within the interview that aided in removing possible barriers between myself and interviewees by generating a joint sense of purpose. Whilst some participants had expressed their concern at the outset that their stories would not be relevant or useful to my research

(discussed further within Chapter Six), the visible recording of their story provided reassurance that their stories were of interest and contributory to the study.

In subsequently analysing the gathered career stories the timelines were not a specific analytical focus. However, they provided a concise overview of each career story, offering a valuable visual summary, which succinctly capturing the messiness and complexity of career. Hence, they were a useful tool within the data analysis process, enabling quick identification of specific narratives and a visual representation through which to identify initial emergent themes. Specifically, the timelines clearly highlighted discontinuity and change within career histories in addition to periods of continuity and overlap within experiences and connections between different key events within the multiple layers of context within which careering ensues. They also demonstrated that careers undertaken within a single organisation also contained much complexity and change. Two interviewees had less than ten years career experience, and hence produced shorter timelines, however, they also provided an enhanced amount of detail as they were able to readily recall early work experiences and career influences, including people and factors that had shaped early choices and opportunities. These shorter stories also facilitated the contrasting of future expectations of career development with more developed career stories. On completion of the timelines, or in concluding the interview, some participants themselves reflected with surprise upon their experiences, expressing how they had found the process to be interesting or cathartic, as they ordinarily would not have the opportunity to observe a visual sequence of their experiences.

5.4.7 Ethical Approval and Consideration

The empirical research was undertaken in accordance with Lancaster University Research Ethics Code of Conduct. In addition, as the research organisation is part of the NHS it also underwent an extensive authorisation process through an Integrated Research Application System (IRAS). As this system is principally designed for the authorisation of clinical research it is consequently a rigorous and timely process, requiring the submission of a considerable amount of supporting documentation. Consequently, this process, in addition to the withdrawal of the initial research organisation contributed to delay in the undertaking of empirical research.

In accordance with each of the above research frameworks, potential participants received an information sheet and consent form before agreeing to participate. In addition to outlining the research, the information sheet advised that participation was voluntary, withdrawal from the process was permitted at any time up to two weeks after the interview has been completed and anonymity would be granted within the thesis. Participants were also informed that interviews would be recorded and later transcribed for the sole use of the researcher. This was re-iterated within the opening of each interview and the participants requested to sign the consent form if not already completed.

5.4.8 Reflexivity upon the Interview Process

The interviews proved to be an extremely interesting and insightful process and I felt incredibly privileged that interviewees demonstrated a high degree of openness and honesty in sharing their career stories and personal experiences. On reflection, this was a result of having created an open relationship with interviewees within a relatively short period of time to gain their trust, through both our initial introductions and the opening stages of the interview. The value of creating such relationships also manifested in snowball sampling as interviewees subsequently encouraged colleagues to also participate. Throughout the empirical work I kept a research journal to reflect upon my experience in addition to noting and developing ideas and emergent themes. My key reflections upon the interviews included the significance of positioning myself as researcher, as detached from the organisation, recognition of the sensitive nature of exploring career stories and the potentially cathartic nature of the interview process for interviewees. These factors are now outlined in further detail.

Emergent within the interviews (and discussed in further detail within Chapter Seven) was the influence of the organisational context of Baycastle Trust, and the wider NHS, and specifically organisational governance through a culture of audits and investigations. In developing the research design, the significance of clarifying my position as independent researcher detached from the Trust, the wider NHS and associated organisations became evident. Alternatively, within the opening to each interview I emphasised my research focus upon individual stories and work histories, supported by my academic position within the Department of Organisation, Work and Technology at Lancaster University (also indicated by the participant information

sheet). Furthermore, in indicating that I had some prior experience of working in an administrative capacity within two different NHS organisations[7] I was able to demonstrate some familiarity with NHS abbreviations, processes and initiatives such as Management for Change programmes and Agenda for Change pay-banding, enabling interviewees to recount their personal experiences without interruption to explain general detail.

During the interviews I remained sensitive to the potentially personal nature of a career story, recognising that an individual's career is frequently closely entwined with other aspects of their life. Interviewees responded to this level of exploration differently and so as a researcher I was required to remain vigilant to the sensitivity of the interviewee whilst also ensuring the depth of data obtained. A number of interviews proved to be emotional for interviewees, demonstrating how closely the career is interwoven with many other aspects of an individual's life and also the meaning attributed to such experiences. As an interviewer I felt invested in these narratives, experiencing the highs and lows of an individual's story and consequently was surprised by the emotionally demanding nature of these accounts. On occasion, interviews became so emotionally laden, I reminded interviewees that they did not need to share anything they felt uncomfortable doing yet on each occasion they chose to continue, and I felt privileged and trusted as a listener that they did so. The most frequent example of this was in discussing the loss of a parent which often led to reflection upon their future career and present work life balance. On reflection, I considered the extent to which the professional roles of some interviewees, particularly nursing and therapeutic backgrounds, contributed to their engagement with the method. Interestingly, not all participants were engaged so actively in sharing their story. For example, one interviewee, a professional psychologist, firmly adhered to an account of work-related career events and offered limited elaboration upon factors outside of the work or professional context which may have contributed to change experiences. Schein (1993) acknowledged that self-reflection upon career experiences and events can lead to a more explicit understanding of an individual's priorities and values. Therefore, the interview process has the potential to be an enlightening experience for interviewees and it would be mutually advantageous if the process were to present such "ethically important

[7] A Primary Care Trust and a regional division of NHS Property Services.

moments" (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Many interviewees narrated in an open and frank manner, frequently revisiting earlier explanations or experiences unprompted and provided an interesting and sometimes insightful alternative account (demonstrated within Chapter Six). Often these instances were sensitive or emotionally laden issues and represented ethically important moments. This included experiences such as incidents of physical assault, family breakdown, bereavement and negative work experiences which were revisited as the interviewee became increasingly comfortable and increasingly at ease within the interview.

The significance of the process of narration was evidenced in relation not only to specific experiences within careering but also in regard to their overall career, particularly during the final stages of the interview. A number or interviewees expressed that they had enjoyed the experience of reflecting upon their career, an opportunity which they would not ordinarily have, describing such an undertaking as interesting and specifically referred to as being cathartic or therapeutic. This reflection has been noted by Porcellato et al., (2016) upon undertaking a similar methodology consistent with the reflection upon the use of occupational calendars in capturing lengthy and complex working lives.

This section has outlined the research design employed in undertaking the empirical research necessary to address the research questions raised within this thesis. The data analysis process through which the research findings were interpreted and presented will now be outlined.

5.5 Data Analysis

In outlining the data analysis process undertaken this section opens with a summary of the data collected and outlines its preparation for analysis. The stages of data analysis will then be explained, including the application of computer aided qualitative data analysis software; Nvivo. Thirdly, the emergence of key analytical themes is discussed to provide the basis for the presentation of research findings within the ensuing empirical chapters.

5.5.1 Summary of Data Collection and Preparation for Analysis

A total of forty-one career stories were gathered from interviews varying in duration from forty-five to ninety minutes, producing an average of sixty minutes recorded material and a hand drawn timeline for each. Interviews were conducted over a two-month period, with three-four interviews conducted each day, over one or two days a week. This staggered approach facilitated continual reflection upon the interview process and the opportunity to make minor modifications to the interview schedule including the incorporation of emerging themes within the latter semi-structured segment of the interview. The timing also enabled ongoing transcription and preliminary data analysis throughout the interview period and permitted time and space to experiment with different approaches to analysing each story, including trialling different visual methods and coding structures. Whilst the interview transcripts formed the primary data source, the timelines were also drawn upon within the analysis process as a visual representation of each story.

The interview recordings were transcribed and uploaded to Nvivo, a computer aided qualitative data analysis software, (discussed further in Section 5.5.2). My application of this software will be introduced, prior to outlining the stages of data analysis undertaken, to demonstrate its utilisation as a supporting tool within this process.

5.5.2 Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)

A high volume of in-depth qualitative research data was produced within the interviews and consequently the use of software facilitated the structuring and organising of the data whilst affording flexibility in developing and following the flow of new ideas. In seeking a system through which to undertake thematic analysis of the data, I attended introductory training sessions for two packages (Nvivo and ATLAS.ti), supported by the university. Whilst both software packages provided the necessary functionally, I selected Nvivo because of its user-friendly interface and undertook subsequent training sessions.

The application of Nvivo, and alternative packages to aid in the analysis of qualitative data, is a significant point of discussion (see Spencer et al., 2014). For instance, Bringer et al., (2006) describe the tendency of some researchers to undertake

a quantitative content analysis rather than developing an exploratory model from the research data, and likewise Easterby-Smith et al., (2012) caution against drawing conclusions from quantitative tools within the software, for example counting the frequency of categories, at the expense of understanding the quality of ideas and experience. Easterby-Smith et al., (2012:191) state this is not a substitution for the researcher's judgement, who is still required to; "provide intellectual input and make sense of what is being observed". However, the benefit of functionality in terms of the visualisation of data, including charts, coding stripes and modelling tools, is in highlighting and indexing patterns and trends which warrant further interrogation of the data by the researcher and in enabling the timely retrieval of such data for further analysis. In addition, Bringer et al., (2006) highlighted an assumption by some researchers that such software be utilised at each stage of data analysis, as a further potential drawback of the application of such software and alternatively emphasise the requirement for time and space in which to think and develop ideas. Correspondingly, within my own process of data analysis it was recognised that some tasks may be simpler or more intuitive by hand. Therefore, alternative approaches including mind mapping ideas with coloured pens and paper were incorporated to facilitate flow, enable engagement with and reflect upon the career stories in their entirety, which would otherwise have been constricted by the limitations of the software. Similarly, whilst Nvivo provided the functionality to reconstruct and formalise the timelines completed within interviews it was decided that retaining and reflecting upon the originals provided a clearer visual representation of both the interview and the participants interpretation of their career story. The original timeline incorporated the process of storytelling, including revisions, connections and later additions, and therefore demonstrated the flow of each interview and reflected the complexity and messiness of each story.

I have benefited from a greater closeness to the data through the utilisation of Nvivo than permitted through traditional techniques. Specifically, the utilisation of CAQDAS software has enabled greater flexibility in terms of data analysis, enabling exploration of different ideas and themes as they emerge, and facilitating a closeness to the data. It has also provided increased accuracy, transparency and overall rigour within the data analysis process. On reflection my limited capabilities within the software have ensured I have utilised its capabilities to address data queries I identified from the

emerging findings, as opposed to being induced by the vast array of functionality on offer. Therefore, whilst mindful of the critiques and limitations of utilising CAQDAS within empirical research, its utilisation has made a positive contribution to the formulation of research findings to be outlined in the ensuing chapters.

5.5.3 Data Coding and Analysis

Two key approaches are generally applied to the analysis of narratives and stories, drawing upon narratives as a means of addressing research questions or as the object of the research itself. For the purposes of my empirical research career stories are analysed from the perspective of addressing the research questions. However, consideration is also afforded to the way in which the story is constructed and presented by the interviewee, as it was anticipated that this reveals something about how the individual interprets their own career experiences and particularly the positioning of themselves within key events. Supportive of such an approach, Wengraf (2000) advocates an analysis of both 'the lived life'; the chronological sequence of 'objective historical facts' and the 'told story'; the way the narrator presents themselves, by selecting certain events and handling them in a certain way. Wengraf (2000) suggests that whilst these are to be analysed separately, they then need to be brought together, to contextualise the told story within the history of the lived life.

Correspondingly, scholars have suggested that stories should be analysed as both a whole, and as parts (Atkinson 1989) and likewise as form and content (Lieblich, 1998). Whilst the meaning of the story is in the whole an understanding of the parts is important for recognising patterns and themes which constitute the whole. Consequently, the analysis of the research data is approached from each of these perspectives to address the research questions. The narratives are analysed as a whole, to understand the meaning attached to the career and their story by the individual, recognising the structure of the story including its plot, temporal sequences, surrounding events and the key characters and their roles. Silverman (2014) proposes considering what type of story the narrator places themselves within, how they position themselves in relation to the audience and in relation to key characters. The parts of the story are also thematically analysed to identify key themes within the data, particularly surrounding instances of change within the career including commonalities and divergences between narratives. Although analysis of the whole and parts of a story are

outlined above as two separate stages of analysis, in engaging with the research data it became apparent that it was necessary, and indeed beneficial, to continually move between perspectives, remaining mindful of how the parts were constituted within the whole, and vice versa. This stage involved an 'immersion' within the narratives, to appreciate the inherent patterns in the data (Marshall, 1984:116). The timeline tool was particularly useful within this stage, acting as a visual point of reference when dealing with extended transcripts which were frequently narrated out of sequence and therefore the timeline provided some degree of order.

Following transcription of two initial interviews, I manually coded emergent themes and began to develop a preliminary coding system. This first step facilitated an iterative process of analysis, enabling me to work between early empirical insights, the research data, my research questions, the reviewed academic literature and my prior experience as a researcher.

Subsequent transcriptions were coded within Nvivo through a process which involved further addition, modification and refining of codes. As the coding system developed, and relationships between different codes emerged, these were reflected upon and codes structured within potential groups. Initial grouping of codes revealed a number of key themes within career stories and the narration of change including types of change, key events (both work and non-work related) and different descriptions of careering. In addition, the agency of interviewees, other people and contextual factors emerged as key themes and were sub-coded to identify specific elements within each. Appendix C provides a summary of the coding structure. In this initial stage of data analysis agency and structure approaches to career studies reviewed within Chapter Three were drawn upon as a sensitising device. This aided in the consideration and recognition of factors of agency and context within career narratives but without assuming a deterministic role, an approach advocated by Barley (1989) and empirically adopted by Duberley et al (2006). Consequently, the identification and classification of factors and the different forms within which they were exhibited was empirically led; directed by their emergence from within the career stories, rather than determined by the current literature. This approach yielded a broad range of forms and types as reported within the following empirical discussions in Chapters Six to Eight. This stage of analysis also highlighted complexities in isolating different factors and conversely

demonstrating how closely they were entwined within experiences of change and careering. The use of Nvivo was particularly valuable within this stage of analysis because of the degree of flexibility it offered in modifying and merging codes. The continual development, and refinement of codes prompted frequent referral back to earlier coded transcripts and consequently rather than a linear sequence, this was a complex and dynamic process of data analysis.

The second phase of coding comprised of the identification of key analytical themes, particularly through the identification of groups of codes, resulting in the development of a comprehensive coding structure comprised of approximately 10 first-level codes, and 200 sub codes (Appendix C). A number of unanticipated themes were identified and further investigated within this phase. For example, the frequent reoccurrence of references to luck or chance as a contributory factor in careering, which necessitated a return to the academic literature to understand if, and how, this had previously been accounted for within career theory. This indicated the value of permitting an inductive process of analysis led by the research findings, rather than the adoption of a pre-existing analytical framework. This second phase of coding also permitted further refinement of codes, cross-checking for duplication or overlap and the splitting of high frequency codes into further sub-codes enabling further data interrogation. These two initial phases of data coding prepared the transcripts for further analysis, providing a systematised recording of emergent and recurrent themes and prompting further consideration of the relationships between. Specifically, the gathered career stories highlighted that interviewees described their role in careering in a variety of ways, whilst some felt they had played a significant role in seeking and creating opportunities, a greater number reflected upon careering as a response to contextual factors, the agency of other people, luck and chance, or having simply evolved or fallen into place. Each narrative was comprised of a number of different personal approaches to careering, and whilst a small number of stories exhibited a principal form, the majority displayed a complex array in response to different events and occurrences. Correspondingly, different explanations of agency were coded and analysed within the career stories and supporting narrative to provide greater understanding of personal agency and careering. Furthermore, analysis revealed variety in personal agency across the course of career within each case. These findings demonstrated complexity in determining the extent of the role of the individual in careering and career change, as

this shifts not only over time, but between, and as a result of different situations and experiences of change within this. Consequently, the coding of each transcript resulted in a number of forms of agency, within multiple types of change experience, which the ensuing stage of data analysis endeavoured to explore further.

A third phase of analysis worked to establish connections between themes coded in the second phase, and relevant aspects of career theory. Thematic analysis was principally conducted through the creation of framework matrices. This Nvivo functionality enabled cross-case analysis by tabulating thematic nodes and cases which were sortable by key case attributes. I opted to populate the cells within the table manually, writing a brief summary of the intersecting content, and including insightful or interesting quotes. Whilst Nvivo has the capability to populate the table with the raw data, I recognised a risk of isolating the coded data from the story within which it arose. Conversely, in summarising the data myself, I developed greater familiarity with the content and could consider this within the entirety of the career story from which it arose. Cross-referencing between coding queries and career stories was greatly aided at this stage by referral to the completed timelines. These activities prompted further ideas and exploration of potential connections and themes through observation of common patterns and conversely instances where interviewees went against the trend. This stage of analysis was extremely valuable in bringing together elements of the opening career stories of interviewees, and their subsequent responses to questions raised within the latter half of the interview. This phase also involved experimentation with different themes, aided by the flexibility offered within the software, which enabled the automatic population of further framework matrices with the manually created summaries for each code. Several framework matrices were produced for different emerging themes including the meaning and significance of career to participants and explanations of chance, luck and fate and inform the ensuing empirical chapters.

Whilst the above is presented as three distinct stages, moving beyond the raw data to develop meaningful understanding and insightful research findings, it was necessary to frequently revisit data analysis, to understand patterns and interactions between and amongst themes, and therefore these processes rather than being distinct stages were overlapping cycles. Furthermore, it was also necessary to return to the academic literature to understand how this might further inform the emerging data and

‘categories of understanding’ and therefore achieve a greater depth of understanding (O'Leary, 2010). In addition, the value of individual stories in their entirety in communicating key themes became increasingly apparent throughout processes of data analysis. Consequently, each of the following empirical chapters opens with one interviewee’s career story by way of introducing each chapter’s principal theme. This was considered significant in terms of preserving the richness of the narratives shared and relating the abstraction of key themes from which theory can be built to the lived experiences of individuals.

5.6 Reflection

Throughout the processes of data collection and analysis I have remained vigilante as to my dual position as both researcher and a subjective being. The chosen methodology and my role in the interview process means that it is not possible to separate myself as a subjective being, with preconceived notions, assumptions, experiences and knowledge, from the collation and analysis of research data. Alternatively, as outlined by O’Leary (2010), it is important to recognise any presuppositions and identify potential biases and reflect throughout the process upon how this may potentially influence interviewees’ responses and the generation of research data. Specifically, my personal career experiences, as well as my engagement with career theory and literature influence how I define and interpret ‘career’. However, interviewees, also as subjective beings, hold their own interpretations and assumptions which I sought to elicit within the interviews and consequently needed to remain mindful of not influencing responses, particularly when introducing the research and myself within the opening stages of the interview.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

In summary, the research methodology and design outlined within this Chapter focuses upon individual experiences of careering, to advance a greater understanding of change. In so doing, it seeks to advance a prominent yet constricted perspective of change within career presented within contemporary career theory, as reviewed within the preceding chapters (Two-Four). Adopting an interpretative approach to address the research questions the diversity of individual experiences are drawn upon, reflecting a

philosophical grounding within a relativist ontology, to observe the nature of reality as comprising of multiple truths dependent upon the viewpoint of the observer. In embracing such diversity the research design facilitates the emergence of significant themes, facilitating analysis of how these experiences differ, or reflect the conceptualisation of change within career theory. Adopting an interpretative stance to understand career stories from the viewpoint of the interviewee as they retrospectively recount their career or work experiences, gives voice to the factors and themes which they consider to be of significance, permitting these to emerge from the data rather than as determined by a theoretical framework. Through their stories, interviewees offer rich insight into how they make sense of experiences, both in what they narrate and how they do so. Resultantly stories reveal how, and why, change is experienced across the course of the career, the role played by the individual, key people and events and various contextual factors within such experiences, highlighting processes of careering and developing our understanding of career change. The gathering of supplementary narrative through a complementary semi-structured format in the latter segment of the interview also facilitates further explanation and clarification of key and emerging points. Additionally, the timeline as an interview tool clearly captures the messiness and complexity of careering as narrated by interviewees, revealing careering throughout sequences of events and experiences, as part of the individual's total life sphere.

The recruitment of participants within a single organisation provides a point of congruence across all stories whilst also encompassing a broad range of occupational types and professional roles. Furthermore, in retrospectively narrating prior experiences the diversity within stories is extended whilst also expanding scope for the identification of common patterns and themes.

As outlined within the preceding literature review, where changes within career have been empirically studied researchers have adopted a cross-sectional approach to specific change events rather than taking a temporal perspective to study change across the career history. Therefore, this thesis intends to make a methodological contribution to the study of career by focusing upon processes of careering. Relatedly, the research design facilitates access to the five characteristics of careering outlined in Chapter Four. Firstly, stories provide a retrospective account of the entirety of the career within which sequences of work experience and patterns of events are demonstrated to

be a dynamic and complex process, intertwined with other aspects of a person's life. It also recognises that career journeys are highly individualised, whilst also contextualised, and endeavours to demonstrate the diversity within such experiences.

The research findings are now presented within Chapters Six and Seven, and are brought together within the empirical discussion of Chapter Eight. Finally, the research findings will be concluded, and related back to the earlier reviewed career literature in Chapter Nine.

6 Careering Out of Control?

6.1 Introduction

The empirical research produced a diverse range of career stories, outlining a variety of career patterns constituted of many different experiences and forms of career change. These stories emphasised the messy and complex nature of career, incorporating a wide variety of key characters, defining events and contextual factors. Two key themes emerged from experiences of change within the career in accounting for the evident messiness and complexity; a frequent lack of personal choice and control over, and within, such experiences, and the recurrence of unanticipated events (both work and non-work related) within, around and between which careering occurred. These key themes are summarised in Figure 6 below.

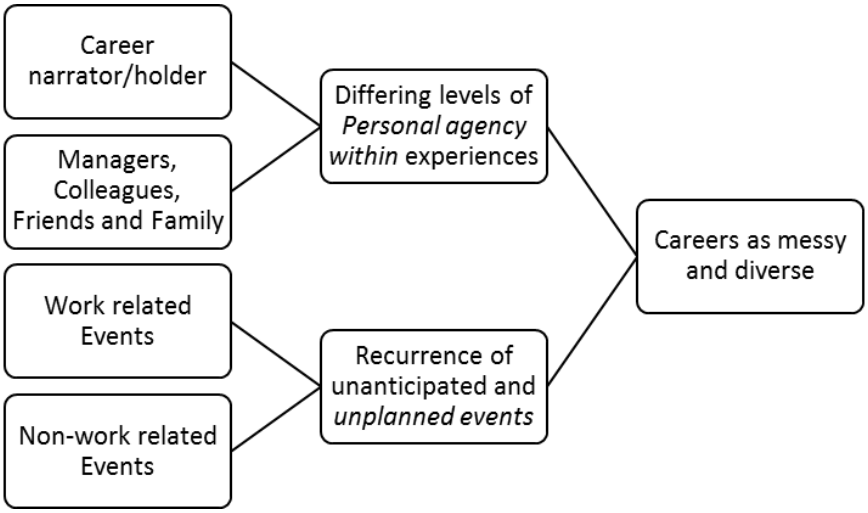

Figure 6: Accounting for Messiness and Diversity

The career stories revealed a variety of forms of change (Appendix C), most frequently in terms of position but also within work roles, work settings, organisations, professions and sectors. Furthermore, interviewees narrated how their subjective approach to careering changed across the course of their careering as a response to both work and non-work related factors, frequently accompanied by one of the

aforementioned objective changes in career. However, the stories also highlighted continuity, frequently in the form of organisational embeddedness, and particularly within Baycastle Trust or the broader NHS as an umbrella organisation.

As an initial step in understanding how and why such change or continuity is experienced, and hence patterns of careering are formed, the ensuing discussion will focus upon how interviewees narrate their agency in relation to career change. This chapter will take an initial step in addressing the research question; *to what extent do change experiences correspond with understandings of personal agency in existing career literature?*

The chapter opens with the career story of Lee, outlining the different forms of agency he has exercised within experiences of change throughout his career. Lee's story demonstrates that at times, and particularly once he recognised his developing interest in aspects of Human Resources within his work, he proactively sought opportunities to undertake professional development and work within the HR field. However, he has also exercised alternative forms of agency throughout his story, including reacting to the agency of other people, responding to changing circumstances and key events, and sometimes either choosing or being constrained from acting. Throughout the chapter, additional stories are introduced to further illustrate different forms of career agency and to support a core finding of this research; individuals do not exercise self-directed and proactive career agency within experiences of change or overall patterns of careering to the extent that they anticipate, or as suggested within career theory. Alternatively, rather than initiating and directing change, individuals often experience limited choice and control within such instances. Furthermore, as highlighted within Lee's story, in retrospectively recounting career stories interviewees on occasion attempt to construct a rationale and logical account which supports dominant ideology. Nevertheless, the adopted methodology reveals greater complexity within accounts.

Following exploration of the personal agency interviewees narrate within experiences of change, the latter part of this chapter illustrates how the agency of other people influences or shapes such experience. The relevance of context to career stories and change is then outlined within Chapter Seven, prior to bringing the presented findings to a conclusion within Chapter Eight by demonstrating how the convergence

of the agency of interviewees and other people, and contextual factors, gives rise to individual interpretations of careering as unique or different.

6.2 Lee's Story

Lee is a HR professional and has worked within Baycastle Healthcare Trust for five years, and the NHS for ten years. He has nineteen years work experience having undertaken a variety of roles and occupations within both the private and public sector. At the time of interview Lee was serving his notice before moving to a similar HR position with a private manufacturing company.

Early Education and Work Experience

Lee is a philosophy graduate and on leaving university had no clear career plan. He spotted his first position as a pay per minute telephone tarot card reader whilst signing on for unemployment benefits at the local job centre. Lee spent approximately four months working in this position, and initially explained seeking an alternative opportunity because of increasing dissatisfaction with the work. However, he later narrated a particularly uncomfortable client encounter; an individual sought guidance on a serious domestic situation resonating with his own childhood, prompting Lee to reflect upon the moral implications of his work.

Although Lee still did not have a clear direction, he explains that he had always thought that working in a pub or bar would interest him; "*I naïvely liked the idea of the philosopher barman who stands behind the bar and solves everyone's problems, like in Cheers…, I wanted to be Ted Danson in Cheers*". Consequently, he successfully applied for a position as a trainee assistant and relief manager with a national pub chain where he remained for approximately two years. Lee initially enjoyed this experience before being transferred to another pub with different clientele. He also realised that working every weekend was negatively impacting upon his social life, and he was losing contact with friends. On reflection, Lee explains that he does not consider these two initial experiences to constitute career as he did not have a clear plan or intended direction but instead responded to opportunities as they arose.

Early Professional Experience and Unanticipated Events

Seeking a new opportunity, Lee applied for a graduate management trainee scheme with a national cinema chain advertised in a national newspaper. He was initially unsuccessful but instead was offered an assistant manager role. Lee describes this as signifying the beginning of his career, and; "*a step into a far more professional world, going to work in a shirt and tie and a suit was really nice, and then getting to go home at the end of the day"*. During the five years he remained in the organisation he was relocated several times to different sites. Initially this enabled him to move in with a new partner but when this site later closed he was again relocated. He describes this as "*a horrible horrible working experience",* despite belonging to a brilliant team. This difficult situation, alongside the breakdown of his personal relationship, prompted Lee to request a further change in location, where he remained for approximately two years. This change was initially positive but he became increasingly disillusioned as although the work was enjoyable he did want to progress as a manager. Alternatively. he recognised that he was motivated by the operational aspects of the role, including managing employees and addressing customer service issues, rather than dealing with strategic tasks such as budgeting. Lee also acknowledges the impact another manager had upon his own managerial approach during this time;

> "*he was the first manager that I came across who had a more relaxed demeanour, and he wasn't like ultra-button-down shirt, he was far more relaxed, he was good for having a laugh and a joke with the people he was working with, whereas the people that I had met prior to that had been very much you know in their sixties and harking back to the 1950s and the golden age of cinema, and insisted on being called Mr……*it *was during that time that I kind of became the manager that I wanted to be and his approach definitely shaped my outlook on a large number of issues*".

At the same time the organisation started working towards Investor in People status and Lee became increasingly involved in staff training, Performance and Development Reviews (PDR), recruitment and other employee related tasks. This started to develop Lee's interest in Human Resource (HR) management, further consolidated when undertaking a skill-matching exercise from a career self-help book gifted to him by his father. Lee emphasises this as '*fundamental'* in shaping his future direction. Resultantly, within his next PDR, Lee raised the possibility of organisational support in terms of

professional development and a change in role to pursue his growing interest in HR with his line manager. This was refused "*no, absolutely not, and in fact he fell off his chair laughing when I said I wanted to go into HR*". This contributed to Lee's growing disillusionment with the organisation and he initially explains this as having prompted his next move into a HR role within a public-sector organisation. However, again he later revisits his account to explain that a serious incident in the workplace, in which he was the victim of a knife-attack by a customer, was the principal reason for his decision to leave the organisation with immediate effect. With no alternative employment to move to, Lee moved back to his mother's home, describing this as a difficult decision to make in his mid-late twenties.

The Agency of Others and Initial Entry into Professional Field of HR

A friend working within a Local Authority organisation assisted Lee in securing a temporary position, undertaking entry level administrative work, and consequently facilitated his initial move into the public sector. Shortly afterwards, Lee successfully applied for an internal vacancy in the HR department. He attributes securing his first HR role to;

> *"luck and who you know…. I probably would have struggled to get that HR post if I hadn't already had my foot in the door by working with social services and had people in the organisation to give me a reference, that carried a lot of weight for sure".*

Professional Development and Career Planning

Subsequently, Lee changed roles within the organisation and started studying for a postgraduate HR qualification. Some employees had received organisational funding to undertake professional development, however Lee observed how they subsequently remained within the same positions for many years. Consequently, rather than being obligated to the organisation he chose to self-fund his studies, recognising that it would be advantageous to seek future opportunities outside of the organisation to ensure his qualification was beneficial. On nearing completion of his course, Lee successfully applied for two operational HR positions, each within public sector organisations, as he believed his previous public-sector experience gave him credibility and '*a foot in the door'*. Although he did not intend to remain within the sector for a prolonged period as he considered it to be *'risk averse'*. In selecting between the two, Lee observed that

within the local council he would be a big fish in a small pond, whereas the NHS had a reputation for investing in employees and he would be a smaller fish but with more significant opportunities. Resultantly, three months prior to graduation, he entered the NHS, intending to develop his skill base through having the opportunity to handle more complex cases and situations; "*and then when you've got that under your belt you've got something to sell the private sector"*.

Proactivity and Professional Progression

Lee joined a large NHS hospital as an HR advisor and remained for two years but felt increasingly '*pigeon-holed'*. Opportunities for progression were limited as employees were promoted internally based upon length of service, and Lee describes; "*there were other people that I knew were ahead of me in the queue*". Furthermore, tasks within the department were allocated according to an employee's pay-grade, and consequently Lee found the role increasingly unchallenging and repetitive, and unable to gain exposure to more challenging issues without promotion.

Resultantly, he successfully applied for a similar position and pay grade within Baycastle Trust, with the understanding that he would be exposed to more complex but still operational work within a smaller team, facilitating further personal development within the role. Lee was required to relocate for this role but welcomed the opportunity as a prompt to move out of his mother's home, where he acknowledged he would easily have remained if he continued to work locally and moved in with his new partner.

Organisational Change resulting in an 'Involuntary' Change in Careering

A year later Lee successfully applied internally for a HR adviser position on a higher pay grade, initially as a fixed term contract but subsequently becoming permanent. However, this was closely followed by a major restructuring of the organisation's corporate functions. Lee was resultantly redeployed into an alternative HR role and expresses significant dissatisfaction in this involuntary change, describing it as a strategic role including; "*all the stuff that nobody wants to do gets dumped in here*". Lee does not gain satisfaction from working at a strategic level, favouring the operational duties of his previous HR generalist role. He acknowledges being motivated by the ability to solve problems at an operational level; *"it feeds the ego if I'm frank*". This dissatisfaction, created through an involuntary change in position, has prompted Lee's

recent decision to leave the organisation and he was serving his notice period at the time of interview, having secured a HR position within a private sector organisation.

Future Direction

The extent to which Lee has proactively sought his upcoming change is a little unclear, and his narrative contains an element of contradiction. Initially he narrates having actively sought opportunities outside of the NHS, in addition to interviewing with other NHS organisations, to facilitate a return to the operational aspects of HR which he enjoyed. However, he later describes how a former colleague posted the vacancy on social media, and he observed knowing the individual's calibre, and her six-year history within the destination organisation, as commendation of the organisation and its HR function. Therefore, in narrating his agency in securing this role he reveals;

> "*it's almost a bit of a knee jerk thing, it's the first thing that came along. I'm excited to go there now, which when I first put the application in it was kind of speculative*".

Offering further insight into the background of this upcoming change, Lee explains he had always intended to return to the private sector, and had not envisaged remaining within the NHS for so long, through concern at becoming '*pigeonholed*', and therefore explains the personal significance of having reached the ten-year milestone within the NHS;

> *"moving into the private sector was something that I felt I ought to be doing, kind of consciously, once you break that ten-year barrier, there's a lot of employment benefits that go along with having ten years' service in the NHS. You're going to be more loath to lose them after ten years plus I think there's probably a perspective in some areas of the public sector that somebody with ten years NHS experience, how transferable is that?"*

Lee currently has no plans beyond his upcoming change, although he recognises that the work he currently finds interesting in terms of operational or strategic roles may shift.

Summary of Agency Illustrated within Lee's Career Story

Lee's story illustrates different approaches to careering within his various experiences of change. These approaches are differentiated between the extent to which he exercises personal choice within and between opportunities, and his willingness and ability to

exercise control. Furthermore, the extent to which choice and control is directed towards career development or other aspects of his life also shifts, accentuating a different perspective upon careering at various stages throughout his story. Lee reflects upon career as not being significant to him but exploration of the narrative demonstrates that his principal understanding of career is closely aligned to the notion of hierarchical progression. Alternatively, Lee's story demonstrates that his careering is premised upon gaining satisfaction from his work, achieved by developing a wealth of practical knowledge within a role, and becoming the 'go to' person within the department. Thereby, achieving a sense of contribution through problem solving at an operational level whilst also maintaining balance, evidenced not only within his current role, but also his prior experience;

> *"I don't consider it* [career] *to be important, I think whenever I've had a PDR or an appraisal, people seem to constantly be surprised that I don't have this ambition to be the next HR director which I find odd to be honest. It's not all about money, it's not about status, for me it's always been about job satisfaction. I spend forty hours a week here and I don't object to that. And if I have to spend an extra ten hours a week working on stuff at home I don't object to that because I enjoy it. I see some of the pressure that the other guys are under, I don't need that".*

The key forms of agency evidenced within Lee's story can be summarised as follows;

Responding; to Opportunities, Contextual Factors and the Agency of Other People

Particularly within his earlier careering, Lee can be evidenced to respond to opportunities as they arise, and premised upon circumstances at the time, with little if any consideration and plan towards any future career direction, and tellingly does not consider his early experiences (tarot card reading and bar manager) as career. Lee responds to opportunities which arise, having some degree of choice between possible outcomes but limited to terms of the possibilities which are presented within and by the immediate context within which he careers. Furthermore, he exercises control in influencing or directing these early career events. Lee summarises "*I was not exactly a victim of circumstance, but I was adrift on a sea of opportunity*". Lee also attributes his initial entry into the public sector, and qualification as an HR professional, to the agency and support of other people and luck. However, this is only revealed after he endeavours

to provide a logical explanation for such change, premised upon the ambition to develop within the HR field and a lack of organisational support from his employer at the time. In so doing, Lee endeavours to account for his careering in line with how he believes it should be experienced (and potentially as he would have presented his history within his recent job interview). However, the research methodology served to reveal greater complexity and revealed a range of unexpected contributory factors which have both shaped and constrained the agency which Lee has exercised.

Proactively Seeking Opportunities

Within subsequent segments of work experience Lee demonstrated an increasingly proactive approach to shaping change, however this has continued to some extent to be shaped by circumstances and events arising from the agency of other people and the context within which he careered. Lee considers his entry into the cinema chain as signifying the beginning of his career as this was a managerial position with a clear progression route, within a professional environment. Upon developing an interest in Human Resources, Lee has actively sought opportunities to undertake professional development, to progress within the field and across organisations. From this point onward, he describes the exercise of greater personal control within careering, resulting in self-initiated change but still in response to changing circumstances. His decision to leave the Cinema Group was prompted by a key incident and an inadequate organisational response to this. Alongside, he had a growing interest in HR but a lack of organisational support to pursue this. These factors, in addition to an already growing dissatisfaction with his role and the breakdown of a personal relationship, cumulated in a key turning point in his careering. Subsequently, Lee has actively pursued opportunities and undertaken personal development and professional qualification within his chosen specialism gaining a professional HR qualification and accreditation;

> *"it was only when I left Odeon that I shaped my own, that I took control and made some positive decisions about what I wanted to do, because not only moving home was a big step psychologically but I was going from earning twenty, twenty-two grand a year depending on bonuses to minimum wage again. To be doing that in your mid-late twenties, you're starting from scratch all over again. And I'd just built up that reputation and then you come out of the cinema industry and nobody understands the job that you did, and nobody values the skills that you've got, because they're not applicable anywhere else".*

Limited Agency

Lee's story highlights several change experiences within which he experienced limited personal choice and control. This includes several changes in the geographical location of his work initiated by his employer within his early careering which resultantly necessitated relocation within his personal life. On occasion, this aligned with changes in his personal relationships and therefore Lee was willing to undertake such change. However, other changes in location were not as desirable but Lee underwent this to support his development and potential progression within the organisation. These relocations resulted in negative work experiences, alongside his growing dissatisfaction with the organisation, and the breakdown of a personal relationship. Whilst these factors contributed in some way to Lee's decision to leave the organisation, it was a key unanticipated event (a serious customer incident) and poor organisational response, which finally prompted Lee's departure. In retrospect, the resultant change in organisation became a pivotal moment within Lee's story, leading to specialisation and professional development within the field of Human Resources, and this has consequently shaped his subsequent and future work experiences.

More recently organisational restructuring has effected a change in position, an experience of change over which Lee has had no choice or control. Instead, he has exercised agency in response to his dissatisfaction with this new position by responding to an opportunity outside of the organisation presented by a former colleague, and consequently will experience an upcoming change in employer.

In addition to the agency described above, Lee's story demonstrates the relevance of key people in shaping his careering. This includes a manager; in shaping his leadership style, a friend; assisted in securing entry into a new organisation, and a former colleague; in presenting a new opportunity. In addition, Lee's story illustrates how his personal life is closely interwoven with work and career, and key events such as formation and breakdown of relationships factor within experiences of change. Further events such as two critical and challenging client interactions, which could not have been foreseen, have also shaped Lee's careering. Whilst such circumstances may appear to be unusual, the persistent of such themes across a range of career stories will be demonstrated across the following chapters.

6.3 Personal Agency within Careering and Change

Contemporary career theory and research suggests that individuals adopt a proactive approach to career and consequently play a significant role within their own careering. In contrast, as exampled above and supported by the below research findings, on occasion some individuals proactively seek opportunities to pursue both short and long-term career goals, however alternative forms of agency which significantly impact upon careering patterns are frequently evidenced and therefore warrant further comprehension.

To simplify, the forms of personal agency evidenced within the career stories can be considered as situated along a spectrum, ranging from proactive forms of agency such as actively seeking or creating new opportunities, through to limited agency, with reactive and responsive forms of agency sitting midway between the two (Figure 7). These approaches also differ in terms of choice and control, with proactive approaches demonstrating a high degree of personal choice and control in contrast to minimal if any choice and control evidenced within limited approaches to career agency.

Proactive Career Agency	**Responsive/Reactive**	**Limited Career Agency**
High Degree of Personal Choice and Control ←		→ Low Degree of Personal Choice and Control
Actively Seeking New Opportunities – through work or personal development	Reacting to the Agency of Others	Limited or No Personal Career Agency
Creating new opportunities i.e. projects and new initiatives, or changes within work role	Responding to Opportunities and Contextual Factors	

Figure 7: Personal Agency with Careering and Change

This model is useful in illustrating the range of personal agency evidenced but also risks downplaying the complexities of career agency in a number of aspects. As outlined within the ensuing discussion agency was often directed towards other aspects of an interviewees work or personal life, which in turn influenced careering. In addition, adopting a retrospective methodology revealed the extent by which the exercise of

personal agency was influenced by past change experiences or current events. Furthermore, each story displayed a range of agency and this was sometimes in contrast to how participants reflected upon their own role. Therefore, distinguishing between different forms of agency is more complex than may be initially appreciated.

A comprehensive exploration of alternative explanations of career agency narrated within the career stories is presented below, alongside an examination of the dominant themes, to demonstrate the inherent complexity in comprehending of careering and change.

6.3.1 Proactively Seeking or Creating Opportunities

Proactive approaches to careering within career stories were identified as personal agency exercised through personal choice and in the proactive pursuit of career. Proactive elements of agency was identified within the majority of stories and the principal forms evidenced were individuals actively seeking opportunities through either the work undertaken or personal development. A further form of proactive career agency not identifiable within Lee's story is the creation of new opportunities and interviewees achieved this by proactively developing new projects or initiatives or developing their existing work role, resulting in the creation of new opportunities through which to develop their career. For example, Shirley combined her personal interest in human behaviour and alternative treatment methods, which was enhanced through an organisational opportunity to attend the Institute of Applied Behavior Analysis in Los Angeles, and her professional clinical role. As a result, she developed a course for registered staff and healthcare support workers and delivered this across the organisation. This was alongside her existing role within a community team, and resultantly created subsequent organisational opportunities within her careering. Nevertheless, rather than being directed towards career development, Shirley narrates the creation of this opportunity as a consequence of experiencing boredom and frustration within her role at the time;

> *"so that sort of kept me going, kept some interest in it, but that, even having the teaching, at first it's really interesting, you're doing it, and then once you get to about 3 or 4 years it was just like I've done that and thinking I need it have something more than this"* (Shirley).

Although proactive elements of career agency were evidenced within the majority of stories only five interviewees explained their overall careering as predominantly shaped by the proactive pursuit of career, describing change as being experienced through personal choice and without constraint. Four of these interviewees had been employed within Baycastle Trust for under two years, suggesting a high occurrence of change between employer as might be expected. However, two of these interviewees had only recently qualified as clinical professionals and had less than three years work experience in total. They had each entered Baycastle Trust in their first substantive posts and described their careering (both past and future) solely in terms of proactivity. Furthermore, they described their future careering within their respective professional fields as self-directed. For example, Judy was nearing the completion of her nursing qualification and clearly outlined her next steps;

> *"My future, since the first year I've always wanted to be a manager, I'm going into community so what I want to do as soon as I can really is my mentorship training, which means that I can help train other students. I'll do that within twelve months, well you have to be qualified for twelve months. I've discussed with my employer that I do want to be a manager, I want to manage my own team one day. I always thought that I wanted to do it on the wards, so I'd want to be like a ward manager, but after working on community just team manager and then see where it progresses really. I'm quite career focused whereas some people, like in my cohort are just like oh I'm not bothered about that. But I'm always one step ahead, what I can work towards, so my next thing is going to be becoming a Band 6 and a senior community nurse hopefully"* (Judy).

These interviewees had limited experience to draw upon and this was reflected within their future expectations which were premised predominantly upon their knowledge of established career paths within their professional fields. Their future ambition demonstrated limited anticipation of potential constraints and challenges to their career development. Whilst one interviewee recognised that limited internal hierarchical structures for her professional role could potentially necessitate pursuing opportunities outside of Baycastle Trust, the other acknowledged that having a family in the future may alter her career development plan. Such concerns aside however, their narratives demonstrated future expectations aligned with the self-directed and proactive approaches to career emphasised within career theory.

A further three interviewees also described a central role in proactively developing their careering. However, as a greater number of experiences were recounted within their stories, further analysis also revealed other forms of agency. These stories are therefore significant in understanding both how and why a proactive approach to careering is not always undertaken, and the personal and contextual factors which may challenge this. To illustrate, Jayne had a thirty-year career tenure and described the role she has adopted within her own careering in terms of self-determination despite challenges arising from within her personal life;

> *"I have definitely, definitely, by my determination, especially up to this timeline here, I definitely shaped my own career, that was a bit wayward then, but now I'm back to try and shape it to where I want to go".*

Within this narrative, Jayne references a difficult point in her careering which was significantly impacted by events within her personal life. Issues within a personal relationship, and the implications of this for her mental health and wellbeing, resulted in a personal breakdown, followed by a period of unemployment, and observable repercussions in terms of her careering. Similar situations in the careering of other interviewees, involving the impact of aspects of their personal life, sometimes resulted in a subjective change in career focus (explored in further detail in Chapter Seven). However, to Jayne it was important to regain her earlier determination and progress in her originally intended direction. Her subsequent career progression became a personal marker of having overcome personal difficulties and regaining control not only of her careering but other aspects of her life, and consequently was imbued with further meaning and significance.

A further two interviewees with extended histories narrated very different stories but were unified in positioning themselves as central to shaping their career. Katie orchestrated multiple changes; in occupational type, roles, organisations and forms of employment within her thirty-four-year career. Katie narrated how this was shaped through her active pursuit of work which interested and challenged her, and her personal choices, rather than the influence of others. Alternatively, having spent thirty-two years within Baycastle Trust, Charlotte has experienced changes in position but had remained within clinical roles. She has continually strived to improve within her work, undertaking further development and training within each role and achieving rapid progression by actively seeking internal opportunities. Although the organisation has

supported with funded training and provided opportunities for progression, Charlotte emphasises her proactive role in seeking such opportunities rather than as a response to opportunities being presented to her. The contrast between the two stories highlights that, although they both adopt a self-directed approach, they each ascribe different meaning to their careering. Katie is motived by a desire for interesting and challenging work, which she has found within multiple work contexts, whereas Charlotte has sought to develop and progress within her chosen professional field and therefore their resultant patterns of careering are disparate.

The above examples demonstrate how a select number of interviewees described their careering and change principally in terms of self-directed and proactive agency. However, as demonstrated within Lee's story in the chapter opening, career stories were predominantly constituted of a range of different forms of personal agency which were exercised in relation to different experiences across the course of the career. To illustrate, Lacey describes how she currently needs to be "*a master of her own fate*", and after twenty years working within HR and training within which she narrates many changes and experiences over which she had limited, if any control, has begun training to become a podiatrist which was an unfulfilled early ambition.

6.3.2 Personal Agency as a Response

Analysis of the career stories demonstrated that frequently change arose as a response to opportunities, events and contextual factors, at both a personal and broader level. This is differentiated from the proactive approaches outlined above, in that interviewees respond to a situation rather than creating or controlling it. The term 'response' is applied rather than 'react' to emphasis a thought out and conscious response to a situation or external trigger rather than a rapid reaction premised upon an immediate emotional retort with limited if any consideration or thought. Specifically, interviewees narrated their career agency as a response to the agency of others, contextual factors or through alternative explanations such as luck, chance or fate. A wide-range of forms of career change were experienced as an outcome of responding to such factors. However, of particular prominence were change events which were narrated as key turning points and pivotal moments within the interviewees overall careering. Such situations frequently resulted in unanticipated changes not only in objective aspects of careering, such as role and employing organisation, but wider reaching elements including

profession and future aspirations. The various contexts from which such events arise will be explored further in Chapter Six, however the ensuing discussion explores how people responded, and how they described this in terms of careering.

Each of the career stories incorporated examples of change arising as a response to something other than a proactive approach to careering. However, six interviewees explained their overall approach to careering as having reacted to opportunities as they had arisen or been presented to them. Interestingly, these interviewees had all worked solely within the NHS for the entirety of their careers, and in clinical roles (with one interviewee having now moved away from a clinical role), revealing the significance of organisational or professional context. As discussed further in Chapter Six, frequent organisational change is a dominant feature of the NHS, and employees recognised the implications of this in terms of their own careering and the resultant lack of control they were able to exercise. Interviewees acknowledged that whilst at times their career had been constrained by Management for Change programmes it had also afforded many with unforeseen opportunities through which to career. In such instances, interviewees described having little choice or control about resultant changes but also recognised the potential for both positive and negative consequences. Katie reflects upon her responsive approach to careering;

> *"as opportunities have come up I've taken them. I wouldn't say I've orchestrated them. I haven't ever orchestrated it. I've always been, in fact when I first qualified I thought that was it, I don't want to do anything else. I didn't want to do anymore studying, I didn't want to do anything else this is it. That's enough now. It's just as things have come up, but I've never orchestrated it and I've never had this blueprint that I'm going to be like, I interviewed somebody the other day and they said my aim is I'm going to be director of nursing. I've never had that, I've never had that ambition".*

Having adopted a similar approach across her thirty-four years' within Baycastle Trust Donna describes her careering as "*a natural progression*", which has occurred when she has felt ready, which she contrasts with colleagues who have really wanted things. In the following excerpt Denise describes having 'just drifted';

> *"I've never been a person to have a five-year plan and sit there and say in five years' time I'm going to be doing x, y, and z. And obviously once you're in an environment sometimes you see other people doing certain roles and getting*

> *paid a lot of money and then sometimes you think well I could do that, and so when it comes up. But predominantly I've been forced into doing it through restructures and whatever. So, I suppose some people will frown on that kind of thing at you, but really, it's kind of supported my career, and it's kind of pushed me."*

Denise's narrative above emphasises a combination of both responsive and limited forms of personal agency within her story, and limited agency is now explored in further detail prior to exploring the factors and agency of others that are being responded to within such accounts.

6.3.3 Limited Agency and Career Change

Interviewees described change experiences over which they had exercised 'limited' personal agency. The term 'limited' is adopted within the ensuing discussion to emphasise that, although interviewees described not taking a significant role within some experiences, by recognising and reflecting upon the limitations of such experiences, including making a personal choice not to act, they were consciously aware of inaction and therefore exercised a degree of agency however limited. Two key explanations for exercising limited agency were narrated; an *inability* to act or exercise control in creating or shaping a situation, or a personal *choice* not to act. The following discussion explores these explanations further.

An inability to act or exercise control was narrated by interviewees as they described having change imposed upon their careering. This is particularly evident in experiences involving a change in work role, or duties and grading within their role at the time arising as a consequence of key organisational figures (Section 6.4) or organisational change (Section 7.3.2). For instance, Keith narrates the frequency of 'enforced change' across the course of his careering; "*I've not applied for many jobs but I've done a number of roles through enforced changes*". Similarly, Maureen has experienced no personal choice in several changes of work role as an outcome of various change management programmes; narrated as; "*being thrown into jobs that I didn't want*". Interviewees demonstrated that an accumulation of experiences of imposed change (as clearly demonstrated within NHS experience) resulted in an acceptance of the inevitability of such situations, whilst also giving rise to a change in perspective upon careering. This is highlighted within the story of Donna who has

experienced careering change as an outcome of organisational changes throughout her career within Baycastle Trust, recognising she has adopted a less active role within the latter period;

> *"towards the end it's been more a matter of these are the opportunities, and the organisations shaped it as a result of what they've wanted, rather than what I've necessarily wanted. I don't actually mind that much, I'm quite philosophical about it all, because nothing that's happened to me has been that terrible, so I can't really complain. I might say it's not for me and I don't want to do it, but actually once I've got into it, I'll get on and do it" (*Donna).

The accumulation of past positive, or at least satisfactory, experiences of imposed change result in an on-going acceptance of the inevitability of future situations. Nevertheless, Shirley also highlights the potentially "*damaging*" personal effects of such experiences which left her feeling devalued and impacted upon her future outlook on careering; *"I didn't actually care, because lots of these changes were just done to us, and that doesn't feel very comfortable".* Lee's story also demonstrates how imposed change can prompt further careering change in response, such as how a forced change in his work role has led to dissatisfaction and informed his decision to leave the organisation.

Conversely, imposed change is also narrated in a positive light by providing interviewees with an opportunity to trial alternate work or gain experience in a different area. Following the closure of a healthcare site within Baycastle Trust, Callum was redeployed from a healthcare support role to an administrative position, a significant shift in his careering. Within his new role, Callum supported the set-up of a new ward-based service, drawing upon his prior disparate experiences within healthcare, and IT and graphic design, to develop a new web-based programme to improve patient experience. Thus, as a consequence of imposed change, Callum was able to exhibit proactive agency in the creation of a new opportunity for his future careering. He has subsequently been seconded to a newly created role responsible for implementing the system throughout the Trust and training employees in its operation. Discussions were also ongoing about potential roll-out across the wider NHS. Callum describes this segment of his careering since redeployment as having '*naturally evolved and morphed*'.

In addition to exploring change the career stories were also insightful in understanding experiences within which interviewees revealed a personal choice not to undertake change, and resultantly highlighting continuity within sequences of work experience. This was particularly evident within discussions surrounding progression, and in terms of the personal sacrifice that this would entail; including in work-life balance and leaving particularly enjoyable or rewarding aspects of their work. In addressing a desire to maintain work-life balance, interviewees drew reference to the careering of colleagues and line managers, and their observation of the time commitment or stress levels involved. For instance, Katie narrated the personal significance of '*quality of life'*, preferring to commit her time and energy to establishing a small business with her partner as an aside to her full-time position within Baycastle Trust;

> *"I'm not any more interested in going up, because to me quality of life is just as important. I'm a band x, and I'm top of the band x, which means my salary is £xx so to me that's a good salary. I don't want to go into the xs, where I'll have to commit more time and whatever".*

Interviewees also chose not to make changes because they did not want to move away from aspects of their role which they found particularly rewarding or satisfying. Specifically, this was narrated in relation to potential changes in work role which necessitated a change from operational duties to managerial or strategic tasks, or from clinical to corporate roles. Interviewees interpreted this change in different ways, depending upon how they considered themselves to affect a greater contribution through work, for some, including Lee this was through working operationally, a perspective shared by Paul; *"yes I am looking for progression, and I actually know what my ceiling is, I know beyond which I do not care to go*". Moving beyond this point would necessitate undertaking work that was "*more strategic and less of dealing with people*", and therefore he outlines his aspiration to progress to what he considers his 'ceiling', and then continue to work at that level until retirement. In contrast, some interviewees interpreted progression to a more strategic role as an opportunity to make an increasingly significant contribution through their work, highlighting variety and resultant complexity in individual interpretations of such career changes.

In addition to choosing not to act based upon consideration of the sacrifice this would entail interviewees also narrated having not sought or responded to opportunities

because of a perceived lack of ability. This is clearly narrated by Nigel in expressing how a lack of confidence in his abilities prevented him from not progressing as quickly as he could have done, particularly within his early career;

> *"I think I've been guilty of, what I've come to realise, reputation is really important to me, and I suppose really deep down subconsciously failure scares me and so I've always made the step to the next level when I know I can walk in and absolutely smash it. And actually, that's not good, and I've come to realise that, and I think I need to be a little less cautious and push my boundaries a little bit more, because otherwise I think I could have got to a higher level quicker"*

Consequently, Nigel feels that at times he has held himself back, particularly in remaining within one organisation longer he should have. However, voluntary redundancy provided a prompt to eventually make the change, and he describes having 'flown' since, developing greater confidence in his abilities particularly through the support of others. Nigel's early hesitation does not stem from a particular event, however Claire described how an unsuccessful application for an internal vacancy damaged her self-confidence and resulted in her not applying for any vacancies for a couple of years afterward. A lack of confidence in ability was also demonstrated to result in limited career agency towards personal development, through inhibiting interviewees from undertaking further study and hence constraining professional progression. Jessica realised that a doctorate was necessary in order to progress as a clinical psychologist, however she found the idea of further study '*scary'* and therefore interpreted this as a barrier to her own progression. Relatedly interviewees also reflected upon how poor academic achievement within early education impacted upon their subsequent approach to careering, explaining this as constraining the opportunities they were able to pursue.

The preceding discussion has outlined how interviewees narrated a range of career agency within their careering, and in relation to different experiences of change within this. However, rather than illustrating the prevalence of proactive and self-directed agency, interviewees frequently described having responded to opportunities or the agency of others, or as having exhibited personal agency, through a choice not to, or a perceived inability to act. These approaches varied both between and within career stories, to demonstrate careering and change as messy and complex.

Furthermore, attention is directed towards understanding how the agency of others and the context within which careering occurs contributes towards experiences of change.

6.4 The Agency of Key Organisational and Professional Figures

The agency of key people within the organisational and professional context is presented as a joint discussion, as not only do they present similar themes but also many of the key characters narrated within the career stories are identifiable as belonging to both the professional and the organisational context. Consequently, distinguishing between the two is problematic and offers no additional value. Interviewees described a variety of ways in which the agency of other people within the context of work had impact upon their own careering and change within this. These people can be broadly grouped as colleagues, line managers, key organisational figures, and whilst the agency of these people was principally positive and enabling in terms of careering, negative experiences were also recounted and will be explored.

Former colleagues will be discussed within Section 6.5.2, as analysis demonstrated in maintaining contact despite no longer working together these individuals shared the same qualities as friends and therefore will be discussed as such. Early line managers were a particularly prominent influence upon careering who often continued to feature within subsequent work experiences, both in continuing to work together or in maintaining contact in an informal mentoring or coaching capacity. Key figures also included individuals that interviewees indirectly encountered within the work context, and primarily consisted of managers and/or professionals working at a senior level but also included training and educational professionals.

In narrating the agency of key people within a work-related context, interviewees distinguished between the contribution to careering of these key people, and the role of the ‘organisation’. However, as will be outlined in the ensuing discussion analysis of career stories demonstrated that these individuals played a role in mediating between organisational and professional opportunities and resources arising from the context and interviewees. This juxtaposition was clearly addressed within the following narrative;

> *"I have to say most of the opportunities have been by individuals that I have worked with, those managers, those colleagues, those people that gave me those opportunities, individuals rather than the organisation" (Sheila).*

Whilst Sheila was the only interviewee to openly address this point it became clear that a similar perspective was held by other interviewees and therefore demonstrates the relevance of analysing the agency of other people alongside the context within which they reside.

In analysing how these core groups of people impacted upon the careering of interviewees, six principal themes are evident (Figure 8:p124). The propensity of each theme varies between groups, as will be illustrated by drawing upon a range of career stories.

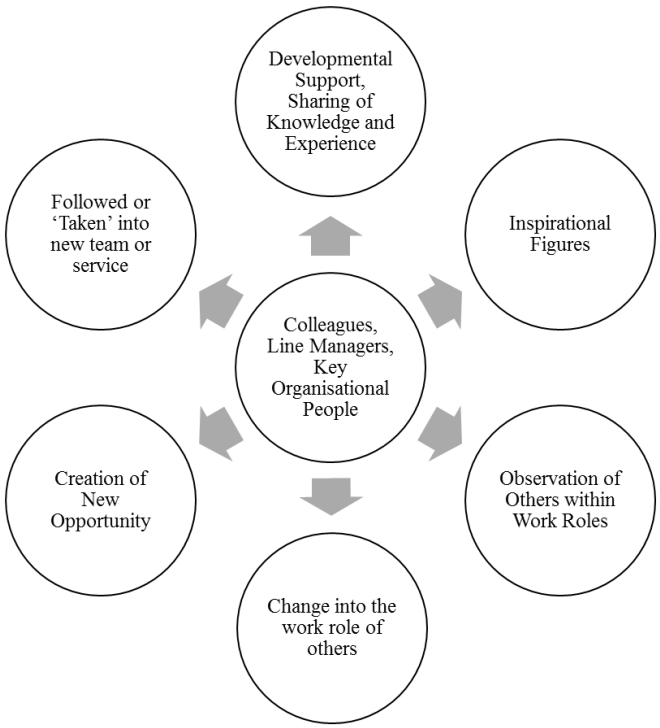

Figure 8: The Agency of Others and Impact upon the Careering of Interviewees

6.4.1 Developmental Support, Sharing of Knowledge and Experience

The most prominent theme in terms of the agency of others was in providing support for the interviewee's career development. This was evidenced as taking place in both a

formal and informal capacity, and included colleagues and key figures but most notably in relation to line managers.

Careering support received from line managers often initially started within a formal capacity but then continued in a more informal nature throughout later stages in an interviewee's careering. For example, Zara in the opening story to Chapter Seven describes how an early line manager has continued to informally mentor her through a number of subsequent moves in position and team throughout her careering. The form of support received also varied within and between career stories; ranging from the interviewee's development within their existing role, general support in terms of on-going development, practical support including accessing opportunities and funding for personal development and/or providing encouragement or a 'push' to undertake further progression into a new role or area. Six interviewees directly described having been given a 'push', whilst others made this inference within their narrative. This was predominantly discussed in relation to line managers, but also key people and colleagues. This suggests that the other person provided the impetus for change which resulted in outcomes related to applications for new opportunities, hierarchical progression, professional qualification, self-confidence and applications for new opportunities. The time scale within which this change occurred also varied, on occasion arising as a direct result, but also as a cumulative effect of on-going support.

Line managers were particularly instrumental in providing practical assistance in terms of careering and this included opportunities for training and building experience such as through involvement in different projects. Craig narrates having received such support from an early manager but on moving to another role, within a different site, not receiving the same level of support which resulted in him seeking a new role elsewhere in the organisation;

> *"the first manager I worked with at XXXX was quite helpful in providing me opportunities for training towards more senior roles. She put me on like a leadership programme and I did do quite a bit of work on clinical risk management and things like that during that time. When we moved from XXXX, my manager moved on to another job and then from 1997-2006 I was quite isolated really in terms of supervisory sort of support. I was like the only OT working there and I didn't really get a lot of supervision or support which was*

> *probably one of the other reasons why I decided to look for something else" (Craig).*

Craig's narrative also highlights professional identity as a constraint which will be discussed further within Chapter Six. It is also informative in demonstrating how the lack of such support can also outcome change within careering.

However, it is not only line managers who provide such support. In one example Nigel gained valuable advice, insight and experience from a management consultant contracted into his employing organisation at the time. Faye also discussed providing such support to colleagues on an informal basis;

> "*mentoring is a really important part, but that's not formalised, it is just sort of, and I know I mentor people and I think it is about using your knowledge and your skills to support others in developing their practice whether that's as an OT or whether it's as a team leader or whatever" (Faye).*

Ongoing support from others was also demonstrated as significant to interviewee's careering, and change within, and again this was provided by all three groups. As discussed earlier, early managers were particularly prominent in providing ongoing support and encouragement in later careering. Such support is summarised in the following excerpt from Sheila;

> *"my manager when I was a community nurse, she was very influential really, she gave me lots of opportunities to act up and was always really supportive of any suggestions, a good sort of, don't get me wrong, she wouldn't agree with everything I say or anything like that, but she'd listen and she'd, sometimes we'd have to come to a compromise but she was happy to listen to your ideas and if you'd got any innovations to improve or anything like that she was very supportive"*

Whilst interviewees recount the positive support they have received some experiences of the negative influence of others in terms of a lack of support were also narrated. The following statement from Chloe, however, demonstrates the positive impact of being granted autonomy to develop within her role was an encouraging influence upon careering;

> *"I've had a lot of people who have enabled me, I've worked with some great managers, managers who allowed me the space, one did micro-manage me, ……to the point where it was a very critical relationship, and I think you get something out of that because you think actually I'll never do that to anyone else" (Chloe)*

The above narrative contrasts both the positive and negative effects of different management styles upon Chloe's careering, and which have in turn shaped her own management approach. Rebecca (33) also describes the potentially damaging consequences of her relationship with a line manager which nearly resulted in her changing direction;

> *"there were so many psychologists around and kind of likeminded people, the nurses as well that I formed friendships with had a strong influence …. I suppose the only time, there was one post I had as an assistant that was probably quite damaging really, and that was the only time where I thought I think I might not do this path, I was all set to go pack it in and go and work in a bookshop, but then moved into adult mental health and XXXX who was the head of psychology of the time really took me under her wing actually and I got a lot of development from her" (Rebecca 33).*

In terms of others providing interviewees with a 'push', this occurred as others valued the skills and potential within interviewees which they did not necessarily recognise themselves. Claire highlights how her line manager has been key in developing her confidence to apply for other roles within the organisation in order to progress;

> *"She's very supportive, she's the one that told me to put in for the managers post. She's the one that encouraged me to do the LIA post last year, and like she sees the potential in people, you know what you can do if you just have that little bit of a push. I'm not very good at saying I'm good at anything myself, but then Nicki's very good at saying but you're really good at this and you could do this and then you think maybe I could" (Claire)*

Similarly, Janice describes the influence of being valued by those working in a more senior position in applying for other roles;

> *"I think having someone pushing you who's higher than you, so certainly before that I have had managers, and I won't say where I've not felt, where they've not*

> *valued me, so they've kept you at a level and you can't go anymore and then obviously that one that came in she certainly pushed me and said why are you still now only a Band 6, you should be pushing yourself and doing, and I think so having that person, someone to mentor and pushing you, and I still keep contact with her now"*

Colleagues were also a source of general careering support, which tended to continue even after individuals had changed roles;

> "*when I worked in one of the admin teams in Health and Safety it was a fantastic team, there was four of us in there, and I don't know what it was, we had a really good bond, apart from this team it's one of the best teams I've ever been in. We used to support each other with careers and push each other and talk things over and different things. And all of us ended up expanding and getting quite high up, one went to be an environmental health officer, another one became a service manager and another one became a manager over all the business support… because we knew we didn't want to be where we were we wanted to progress" (Jayne).*

The forms of support described above in the main represent intentional agency on the part of other people in interviewees careering and change. However, sometimes their actions are not as intentional or even recognised by these other people but still play a significant role in the careering of interviewees.

6.4.2 Inspirational Figures

Some stories featured other people, particularly line managers and key figures, as inspirational characters within the careering of interviewees. Such instances demonstrate how in exercising personal agency people may be unaware that they are in turn shaping the career agency of others. In describing inspirational managers interviewees frequently returned to their initial or an early line manager and drew upon their leadership style or innovative approaches to working. To illustrate, Lee's story demonstrates the significant role of an inspirational manager on first entering a professional role. This manager was clearly inspirational in terms of leadership style and relationships to other people and shaped Lee's own approach. Conversely, the following narrative demonstrates the impact of an early manager in adopting an innovative approach to healthcare practice upon Sheila's careering;

> *"the manager of the house that I went to work in was new, she'd trained in XXXX hospital, and she became the manager, so she was really my first manager as a registered nurse and because you're so green aren't you when you're new in any sort of job, and newly qualified and everything, and so she was quite inspirational, she was very, she had come to nursing quite, as like a mature person, but she had some really innovative ideas and it was almost no holds barred …… and I don't think people realise how influential, she had no idea, you know how influential she'd been really" (Sheila).*

Key figures were also narrated as inspirational, both upon past experiences and future ambition and plans. For example, Janice's exposure to a new Head of Nursing prompted her to reflection upon the necessary skills and experiences she would require to aid her future progression;

> *"we've had a new Head of Nursing and some of the skill sets she brings, I wouldn't have that skill set but you can see that you need it, so she's probably got that through project work so I know certainly I should try and do some shadowing with people who've come in, and just look at, well what do they do" (Janice)*

Alternatively, Calvin, having worked within LD for many years, was inspired by a key professional figure external to the organisational context when undertaking further professional qualification at a local university. The lecturer's approach to the practice of LD care resonated with Calvin's earlier views;

> "*he was quite an influential character, he was a learning disabilities lecturer at XXXX Uni and it was like this is great, this is about revaluing people, this is what I feel I needed all of them years ago, and that's what's changed me, it was actually knowing that actually I'm not alone in thinking outside the box*".

Resultantly, this experience represented a significant turning point for Calvin, furnishing him with confidence to work differently and express a voice, in regard to both patient care and the welfare of fellow colleagues, realised through his role as a staff union representative.

6.4.3 Observation of Others in Work Role

The observation of line managers, senior figures and particularly colleagues at work was fundamental in influencing some of the changes interviewees undertook when careering, particularly as a prompt for change which had not been previously been

considered or desired. Such changes included in position, and in some cases undertaking further professional development in order to achieve this. Denise considers herself to have predominantly 'drifted', however, upon observation of colleagues undertaking different roles she realised her own capability to undertake similar and consequently applied for opportunities as they arose. Likewise, Donna was prompted to undertake further professional development upon observing new entrants to the profession who entered via Project 2000[8]. Prior to this, Donna explains she had no intention of being anything other than a nurse, or of undertaking further study. However, on observing the newly recruited nurses Donna decided to undertake a conversion course which enabled her to top up her nursing diploma and progress further within the organisation;

> "*they just worked very differently and they'd come through practice and you'd hear well I don't do this, I'm a whatever, I don't do this, and I thought this is outrageous, these people are going to be my managers and things……..But they had a very different attitude towards what they should and shouldn't do and that caused lots of tensions within clinical areas with lots of people who held very different views, so I thought well you know if this is the best then, I'll convert, so I did my conversion to become first level nurse, still with a view that I would never manage, I never wanted to be a manager, but you know actually I'd be on a par and I'm not going to have this nonsense sort of thing"*

Similarly, Charlotte successfully applied for a promotion from deputy ward manager to ward manager because she did not want to have to work under her colleague who had also applied. However, although she initially would have preferred to maintain the patient and family contact she enjoyed within her role as deputy manager, on making the change she acknowledged satisfaction at being able to lead change and have a voice within the management team.

In the examples of Donna and Charlotte above the influence of other people was indirect and unintentional. However, the observation of others also resulted in some interviewees seeking their input within careering to enact change. To illustrate, Rory was able to develop additional skills to both increase his work satisfaction through

[8] Project 2000 was a NHS wide initiative which reformed nurse training, introducing academically recognised qualifications and the transition of education from a local healthcare setting to local colleges and universities.

expanding the remit of his role, which had become routine, whilst also developing the skills displayed on his CV through gaining knowledge and experience of IT software from a colleague on an informal basis rather than through a formal training route. His advanced understanding of the software support systems underpinning his area of work supported subsequent changes in his careering across different NHS organisations. The following statement describes how his observation and subsequent involvement in additional tasks outside of the remit of his original role enhanced his job satisfaction at the time, whilst also providing the opportunity to develop new skills;

> "I *started learning that part of the job as well, so it's not my job but I had access to their systems and realised that it was quite a useful thing to be able to use those systems and understand the processes that are in place. And so it wasn't part of my job but I helped them for a few months which was a really useful thing to be able to put on my CV… and I think just things that I ended up doing along the way which didn't need to do. But actually, I found them interesting because my job didn't change much for those couple of years. I wanted to try something else, it wasn't a big organisation, I wasn't really busy all the time, everything was running near enough perfect, there was never any mistakes, there was no problems, everything was fine… so I started thinking that would help in the future really, to say that you've done this"* (Rory).

6.4.4 Change into the work role of others

A further prominent area within which the agency of others impacted upon the careering of individuals was in creating the capacity for the interviewee to move into their role, and this happened within several stories. Particularly within the NHS, but also evidenced within other work settings, interviewees were frequently seconded into the role of colleagues or their line managers for a variety of reasons including maternity leave cover, long term sickness, or movement into a different role. For example, Lisa's entry into Baycastle Trust was initially through placement via a temporary staffing agency into a secondment opportunity to provide maternity leave cover. As the employee chose not to return, Lisa subsequently secured the permanent role. However, other examples highlight increased complexity, for instance, Shirley's story demonstrates how her careering was initially constrained and then enabled by a colleague. Shirley was seconded into a role that she had unsuccessfully applied for as a

substantive post. At the time the role was secured by a colleague identified as being 'at risk' within an impending organisational restructure. Once appointed however, this colleague went on long-term sickness leave and so Shirley accepted a secondment into the position for six months, enabling her to gain further experience, and leading to further opportunities on its completion.

Some changes in position which also encompassed a change in actual area of work were instigated thorough the sharing of office space with colleagues performing a different work function. Whilst there is some overlap here with the observation of others in their role, this was also evidenced to be circumstantial rather than the result of a compelling interest in the work undertaken. To illustrate, a colleague with whom Donna shared office space was moved out of their post due to their inability to effectively manage a specific project. Simultaneously, Donna's project came to an end following funding withdrawal and so this situation provided a new opportunity. Having shared office space, Donna was in a position to quickly and efficiently take on the project and further develop within a new work avenue. Tracey offers a similar circumstantial explanation for having progressed to a higher banded post which was a response to being presented with the opportunity rather than being a role that she had aspired to;

> "*our ward manager had just got promotion to modern matron so two of us were offered the opportunity if we wanted, to be considered for a secondment which was acting up into the ward manager post which was only a grade higher than I was…. and the other person she wasn't interested, I think it was because of the shifts……, anyway I was interested, only because that's what my opportunity was at the time, there was nothing that I'd strive for"*

This example also reiterates that changes in careering, particularly in position, on external observation may appear to resemble a logical progression on the part of the individual but understanding such events through the gathering of interviewees personal experiences reveals change as an unintentional outcome of the agency of others.

6.4.5 Followed or Taken into a New Team, Department or Service

A number of career stories described how interviewees had either followed previous line managers into new departments or teams or had been 'taken' or approached by these individuals to apply for a position within their new setting. Consequently,

managers in such instances were instrumental in effecting a change in position, team or department. Such an impact tended to be alongside developmental support (Section 7.3.1 above) and therefore held a cumulative effect, furnishing interviewees with new skills and experiences which were instrumental in their future careering. Within an early work experience Nigel changed departments with his line manager, and in so doing was exposed to a broader variety of work and opportunity for professional development;

> "*my recruiting manager shortly after I started moved to a different department and was just on her own initially and she needed someone to support her, and she requested for me to come over and work under her, and as soon as that happened, I was exposed to an awful lot more, and really started to enjoy my role. I think it was just the chance that I had the opportunity to get involved….. she got me involved in bits of everything really, and they supported me to do my CIPD at night school"*

Further interviewees had followed managers rather than being 'taken', often as a consequence of appreciating their management style or particular approach to work, and consequently demonstrates elements of the influence of inspirational figures discussed in Section 6.4.2. For example, Janice recounts following a manager who was moved to another part of the service once an opportunity to progress arose;

> *"The manager that was here moved to another part of the service and I kind of looked up to him, I thought I liked what he was doing and some opportunities came up at a higher grade working in the service where he was and that's why I applied really. I thought I know him I like how he works and I wanted to make that next step in my career" (Janice).*

In summary, the career stories demonstrated that changes in position, team or department were frequently influenced by other people, particularly line managers, in that interviewees were either approached by the manager about opportunities within their new area or by the choice of the interviewee to follow them as opportunities arose.

6.4.6 Creation of New Opportunity

Demonstrated within some career stories was the capacity for senior organisational figures to create new (and unexpected) opportunities for individuals in the form of alternative organisational positions. This involved either initiating a change into a pre-existing position within the organisation or a newly created post within which their

skills and knowledge were particularly suited. This is not necessarily to suggest that these were created specifically for the individual, although this could potentially occur, but also relates to the fact that senior managers may have an enhanced understanding of future plans and strategies within the organisation to which the individual can be aligned.

Joan, a former senior manager within Baycastle Trust, re-entered the organisation following an extended career break to care for her elderly parents as a consequence of the agency of a key organisational figure. Joan contacted her previous line manager for a supporting reference in applying to a different organisation which resulted in an invitation to return to the Trust;

> *"I phoned up XXXX to get a reference, and she said what are you doing, what do you mean you are going there, ridiculous. I said I need a job, and she said well you've got one here. This is it, ……., she said come along and do 2 days, 3 days whatever it is you want, come and do it here, it will be really good, your skills and talents are needed by us, in the change culture environment"*.

Joan had extensive knowledge and experience of a range of NHS organisations and this was consequently harnessed in a new role; mentoring employees who had recently transitioned from clinical to corporate roles to implement a new NHS initiative throughout the organisation. Interestingly, three interviewees narrated Joan's influential role within their own careering in this capacity. Evidently Joan had a strong skill set from which to develop others, and therefore her desire to return to work, whilst maintaining a clearer sense of work life balance than she had achieved previously, was recognised by a key figure as being of potential benefit to the organisation and employees in the implementation of a key NHS wide initiative.

Connectedly, other interviewees reflected upon the value of personal recognition, in terms of future opportunities which arise within the organisation;

> "*as you get older, you get more savvy and I recognise now it's about being known, getting your face known, so certainly I think I mentioned winning that award did actually get some recognition for the Trust so then people know who you are, so then your name comes up in conversation, oh have you thought about Janice*" (Janice).

Whilst Janice attributes such recognition to organisational performance, Jessica highlights that this can also arise by 'chance' (Chapter Eight) expressed in the following excerpt;

> *"I had a bit of a champion and a supporter, a fan if you like because one of the directors on the board… was out delivering some chocolates last Christmas, I'd never met him before and you know how you keep getting all these… I said 'are you one of these people on that bureaucratic system that I keep seeing coming round' and he burst out laughing and he said yeah which I didn't know who he was really. I didn't mean to be rude or anything. He said yes I am, and I said you ought to come and have a look at what I do. The next day his PA, and I realised how important he was then, contacted me and said he was really impressed and he wanted to come out. Well he's turned out to be a real good fan along the way which has been great really"*

For Jessica this has resulted in increased organisational support for the development of new services which she has been instrumental in, leading to changes within her current work role and impact upon her future careering. Particularly within the NHS other interviewees also had experience of expanding their existing role, enabled by the autonomy and support they were granted by line managers and other key figures, and leading to recognition across the wider NHS not just within Baycastle Trust, which opened up new opportunities to become involved in different projects and initiatives. Chloe had such an experience, in setting up a new service;

> *"that responsibility was kind of given to me to operationally develop that, with a couple of other people, and just building the relationships with external stakeholders. And suddenly realising that people really kind of recognised you for doing what felt like an everyday job, but got a lot of feedback and spotlight for the work that we'd done really with the police and we got nominated for a national award"*

Principally it was key organisational figures that had the ability to either create or identify interviewees as suitable recruits for specific roles, based upon their skills, experience and the organisational needs at the time. Therefore, this again represents aspects of careering which are difficult to foreseen or for the individual to exercise personal control over.

6.5 The Agency of Family and Friends

The agency of family and friends was also a recurrent theme within career stories, and each is now explored in turn as, although there was apparent cross-over, in the main they each influenced careering in different ways.

6.5.1 Family

The role played by family members, including spouse, children and extended relatives throughout careering is summarised in Figure 9. As will be demonstrated within the ensuing discussion their agency can be both enabling and constraining in terms of the changes it gives rise to within careering.

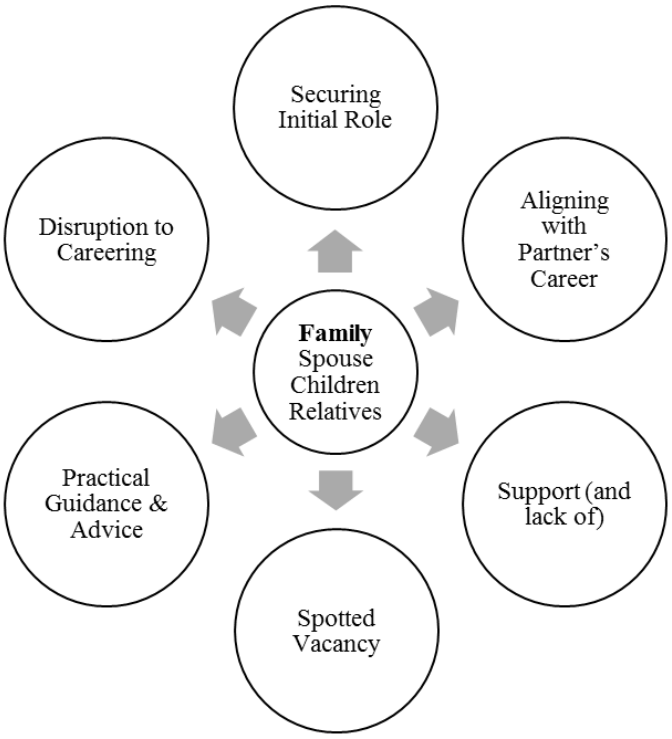

Figure 9: The Potential Impact of the Agency of Family upon Careering and Change

Family members were instrumental in helping some interviewees secure their first role upon leaving full-time education, particularly in circumstances within which the interviewee held no clear aspiration. Interestingly however, in each story within which this was observed the interviewee subsequently went on to career in a different direction. Craig, an occupational therapist of twenty-six years, initially worked for his

father, a chartered accountant, upon leaving school before being influenced by the career choices of his friends in pursuing a career in healthcare. Likewise, Elizabeth's sister assisted her in securing a place on a Youth Training Scheme (YTS) at the age of sixteen within a craft manufacturing company she also worked within. Elizabeth narrates;

> *"it was just who I know, where I know, I thought I can go and live with her, I can get a lift into work and back, YTS get paid for dossing around and not doing much and what have you".*

Although the scheme was terminated within six weeks of Elizabeth starting she secured a full-time opportunity within the same organisation and remained for just over two years. Elizabeth reflects upon her sister's influence upon her early careering;

> *"without that I probably wouldn't have gone in to do the YTS, I wouldn't have fallen into the other job, I wouldn't have then have fallen in love with my husband because that's where we met. Yes, so we can blame Mary, I always do. So that was really important because really, I don't think I would have looked to have done that without her just going here it is, and me going, oh, right then. You're just sixteen*"

This narrative from Elizabeth's career story also nicely reveals that such experiences can also had significant consequences for other aspects of one's life than simply careering.

Family also influenced change by identifying suitable vacancies, such as Nigel's initial entry into the NHS;

> *"my partner she saw a job advertised on NHS jobs and said this looks like the type of thing you do, do you want to apply for it, and I said oh yeah that looks great, and it was the perfect role really, so it was, there was elements of OD in there, there was elements of training which included both design and delivery so it was the perfect role, because a lot of roles are either OD or training and it's nice to have a role that was both, and that was my entry into the NHS".*

However, family members also played a more sustained role within some interviewees careering in terms of practical guidance, advice and continual support. A number of interviewees narrated the significant role a parent had played throughout their career experiences. For example, both Jayne and Nigel highlighted the role of their father as a mentor throughout their career experiences particularly around change;

> *"my father, actually I rely on a lot, if there is any problems or issues or career decisions that I struggle with, I rely quite heavily on him….voice of reason, and his experience, his career experiences, he left school as a mechanic, met my mum decided he wanted more for my mum, went to night school, got an award, I think he got the highest mark on that course nationally, and then worked his way all the way through the XXXXX industry to an ops director level, so he's got a lot of experiences and I have worked for him as well, and he is very much a people manager, that I would aspire to be like, so massive amounts of respect for him personally and professional*ly*…. and although sometimes I might want him to give me the answers, he doesn't, he'll give me an opinion, and he'll help me to make my decision and so I really value that" (Nigel).*

The support of family is also indicated in different ways and Lee's story demonstrates the significance of the career self-help book given to him by his father at a time in his careering when it cumulated with other factors in a pivotal change in direction. Whilst some of this support was general in nature for some interviewees, others were able to offer more specific guidance from their own experiences. For example, Callum entered Baycastle Trust because his wife who already worked within the Trust advised that the role would fit with his existing experiences and desire to achieve improved work life balance. Although Ellie's mother worked within a different NHS organisation she had observed the enthusiasm of the students she encountered from within one of the Trust's large training hospitals at the time. Similarly, Judy, a newly qualified community psychiatric nurse benefitted from the advice and guidance of both her mother and family friends who worked, or had worked within similar roles over many years;

> "*I really wanted to either be a midwife or a mental health nurse. And my mum's a mental health nurse, and my godmothers are all mental health nurses as well, because they're all of her friends. When I was applying I chose sort of my head rather than my heart and I applied for midwifery. I applied and I got through interview but I didn't get in, and so at the last minute when you could apply for clearing I picked mental health nursing and I had to go and study at XXX University, and so I went there for the first year, and my first day on placement I just knew that it was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Like I just had this feeling, whenever I'm on placement I feel like I love doing it"(Judy).*

Other interviewees described how the support of their spouse and children had enabled them to be able to pursue their career as they wish. Janice describes how her husband perhaps holds greater ambition for her careering than she sometimes does;

> "*my husband, he's very ambitious about my career, not about his own (laughing). Oh, you could go and do that, oh why don't you apply for that and why don't you do that… oh he's very ambitious for me, I think I'd be a chief exec if it was up to him" (Janice).*

Similarly, Claire narrates; "*my partner has pushed me into doing things which I wouldn't normally have done and has seen the capabilities in me that I haven't seen myself".* Alternatively, the following narrative illustrates how Donna emphasised the underlying practical role adopted by her husband within her careering;

> "*from a personal point of view, my husband and my son have been crucial to anything that I have done, without the support of them I certainly wouldn't be doing what I do now or anywhere near what I am now. Whatever decisions I have made they have always supported, when I retrained my son was only coming up for 5, so I wouldn't do anything until he was older, but then my husband very much took over all of that so I could work and study, and he facilitated, we converted bedrooms into offices, so very very much about making sure that whatever I needed was in place to enable me to do what I wanted to do. I don't like travelling on the motorway, my husband drives me down the motorway to meetings, he has done it all my life…... he's now retired and because I work, I don't do anything at home anymore, he does everything, I don't cook or anything, he does absolutely everything because he's retired so he's been really instrumental in ensuring that whatever I've wanted to do, I could do. And that's great, from a career point of view at work but also all of the things that I do outside of work so if I've wanted to study to do something that's not work, he's facilitated all of those. So, I think really really important to me" (Donna).*

However, whilst many interviewees have been supported within their careering by partners and family members, others have faced opposition to their choices. For example, Donna, who as outlined above has been supported by her husband, recounts how her Aunties, who currently or had previously worked in nursing, expressed dissatisfaction at her decision to train as a mental health nurse which rather than deterring her actually provided further impetus to continue;

> "*I still got lots of, I suppose I'd call it dissatisfaction within the family, that I was doing it, and they were giving me timelines how long I'd actually stick it and that I wouldn't stick it and I wouldn't be able to do it. So I suppose the reason I stayed initially was sheer bloody mindedness because I thought I will prove you all wrong, I can do this, I will do this and that's the reason I stayed initially out of nothing other than sheer bloody-mindedness" (Donna).*

She also narrates how to her surprise, after twenty years of working in mental health, one of the Aunts commented "*I still don't understand it and I don't understand why you are one but I will say you've sort of stayed the course and done a good job".* Conversely, Jenna did not want to be a nurse because that was what her mother had done. However, after being advised by a School Career Counsellor that she was not on track to become a probation officer she qualified as a general nurse, before later undertaking a postgraduate qualification in psychology to become accredited as a clinical psychologist.

Similarly, prior to joining the NHS in a corporate role, family members who worked within different NHS organisations advised Sharon against doing so as they considered it to be very slow and cumbersome, especially in comparison to the fast-paced work environment she had previously worked within. Alternatively, Jayne provides an example of the negative impact such people can have upon careering. Jayne narrated her story in two clear halves, separated by the breakdown of her second marriage and imprisonment of her ex-partner on domestic abuse charges. In the first half, Jayne demonstrated evident progression in terms of careering, commencing with a YTS scheme in Business Administration. She then transitioned through a number of administrative based roles before returning to college to study O-levels. She had intended to continue to A-levels, however as a consequence of the breakdown of her first marriage she did not. Once her children were in nursery she applied for several posts within the local council before successfully securing a position. Eight years later she was able to specialise in a customer complaint function through two secondment opportunities. Consequently, she successfully applied for a managerial position within another local authority organisation which she held for three years. However, Jayne was forced to resign when significant challenges in her personal life led to a breakdown and necessitated a step away from work to focus upon her personal well-being and that of her family;

> *"I had a breakdown and for some reason in my breakdown head I actually resigned my post. So, I did that, regretted it after a while like you do, because I'd worked so hard to get into public sector and got there and then I just blew it"*

In the latter half of her careering Jayne initially returned to work for a year as a private carer, providing support to a lady with muscular dystrophy in her home, to re-establish a sense of routine and build her self-confidence again. After this time, she describes wanting to build her career again "*basically I got to a point where I thought no I want my career back so I started applying again.*" She subsequently joined Baycastle Trust in an administrative capacity with the intention of progressing to a similar role to what she had achieved previously. Shortly after the interview, Jayne notified me that she had successfully secured a new role, thereby achieving her personal objective and reaffirming the significance of understanding a career story in its entirety, to comprehend what Jayne's current careering represented, not just in terms of work, but personally, and to her children.

In addition, some interviewees narrated how they had fitted their careering with that of their partner or spouse. Janice was about to join the RAF in a nursing route when she met her partner, and consequently shaped her careering in a different direction. However, she still wanted the opportunity to live away from the locality and so went to University to study for a degree in Women's studies and criminal justice. Acknowledging that she enjoyed the social side more than the academic, Janice left with what she considers to be a poor degree result and initially struggled to find work before she "fell" into working with people with learning disabilities; "*and I just got the bug, I loved it, really enjoyed it, it was a part time job that I got at the time and I thought I love this".*

6.5.2 Friends

The influence of friends also illustrated how the agency of others, outside of the immediate context of work, was significant upon careering and change and interestingly highlighted different themes to those evidenced in regard to family, as illustrated in Figure 10 below (p142);

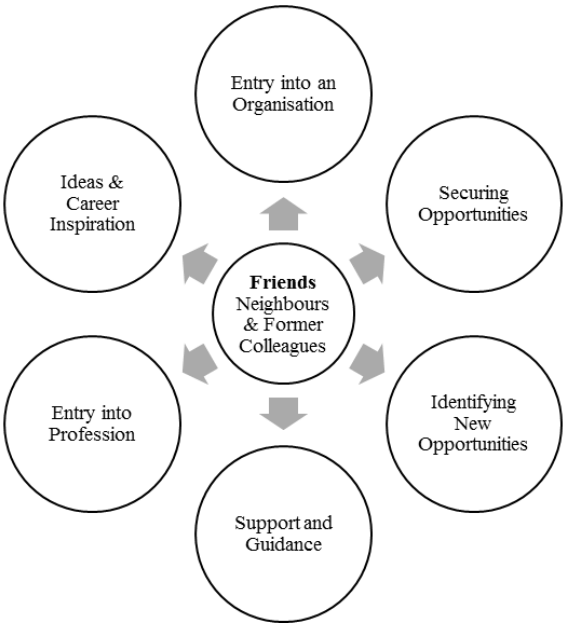

Figure 10: The Potential Impact of the Agency of Friends upon Change

The agency of friends was particularly impactful in selecting and entering a particular profession, especially to those entering clinical and caring roles. Predominantly these friends were already undertaking study or employed within such roles, although exceptions to this were also evidenced in the career stories. For instance, having gained early work experience within a dental practice, Faye was considering undertaking study to qualify as a dental hygienist. However, she had also undertaken babysitting duties for the dentist's family, and his wife suggested that occupational therapy (OT) may be something that Faye would find more enjoyable "*because I guess she got to know me and thought that's not for her, that's not the job for you. So, she's the one that encouraged me*". Faye did not know what OT was but the lady was from the United States where at the time it was more generally recognised. Faye has now worked within the field of OT for thirty years but would not have even considered this professional field without this earlier suggestion. Likewise, as introduced earlier, Craig worked with his father in an accountancy firm on leaving higher education. However concurrently, some friends were undertaking nurse training, inspiring him to research similar roles before deciding to train in OT. Whilst undertaking his training, another friend was working within Learning Disabilities (LD) and Craig accompanied him on some outings, developing his interest in applying his OT qualification within this area. Similarly, both Anthony and Simon entered clinical roles after undertaking a number of years work experience in various roles and types of occupation. Anthony entered the

profession following conversations with a customer in the pub he was working in who was a nurse. Similarly, Simon's chance conversation with a friend, which he interpreted as 'his lucky break', prompted his entry into nursing and he also expresses regret on not having listened to his father who had previously suggested he consider mental health nursing;

> *"my only regret is, my dad was a fire officer at a hospital in XXXXXXXX and he said to me a good fifteen years ago why don't you do mental health nursing and because I was young and a bit of an idiot, I said to him that's nursing, that's what women do, it's not a man's job. And now I look back on it and think what an absolutely idiot because I could have been doing this a good ten, fifteen years sooner than I was doing. So, I kick myself a lot in that regard to be honest, like I said at the beginning I feel as if I've wasted a large number of years really".*

Interestingly Sheila's story demonstrates how other people may be unaware of the impact they have upon another's careering and career decisions. Sheila followed a friend into pre-nurse training, although at the time it was not her intention to continue to qualify as a nurse;

> "*the reason I got into nursing was I wasn't that academic at school, didn't get much careers advice in those days but I had a friend who was a nurse through and through .....she always wanted to be a nurse and so when we came to leaving school she was going on a pre-nursing course at college, which was a two year course, you could catch up on some academic that you'd perhaps missed out on, so extra o levels as they were then, and you also did a placement one day a week and you did a bit of nursey stuff. I said well I don't want to be a nurse really, but she said well come with me and you might catch up on your o-levels at least and at least one day a week you don't have to go to school, and sit at a desk, so basically to cut a long story short I went with her"*

Sheila has spent thirty-six years in the NHS and is currently employed as a modern matron. Remarkably, she had recently been reunited with her friend at an NHS training event until which the friend was completely unaware that was why Sheila had pursued nursing; *"she never knew that story, because you don't at that age, I told her, you were the reason I'm a nurse, you're it".*

Rebecca had a number of early influences upon her decision to study psychology, rather than following her earlier aspirations to pursue studies and a career

in art. Following advice from a family friend about the difficulties in pursuing art as a financially viable career;

> "*she was teaching in art and I can remember a conversation with her when, and her saying how difficult it is to make a career out of it, and then I was thinking she's so talented and I didn't want to go into teaching really. My mum was a primary school teacher and I'd seen how hard that work was".*

Alternatively, Rebecca was inspired to study psychology; by both a friend, who had found it interesting, and a popular movie at the time;

> *"the other thing I remember admiring was you know Silence of the Lambs? I think it was that there were people like Hannibal Lector and people that tried to understand people like Hannibal Lector as well, those career paths"*

In addition, later in her interview Rebecca revealed that in experiencing personal difficulties at fifteen years of age, she attended an appointment with a psychologist. Years later this same professional taught upon her Master's degree programme, informing her decision to undertake that particular course, upon recognising his name and admiring his work in those early years, demonstrating another key person's influence upon her future professional role.

Whilst the above narratives highlight positive influences of friends, this was demonstrated to not always be the case and a small number of interviewees described having left or changed their early work experiences as a result of observing friends engaged in alternative experiences with either more free time or disposable income.

Friends were especially influential within early entry into professions and roles but also featured throughout career stories, and particularly within changes in organisation. Lee's story demonstrates how a friend provided a "foot in the door" when he was unemployed, and this was pivotal in directing his future careering, and other interviewees also shared similar experiences. Lee's story also demonstrates the contribution of former colleagues in identifying future opportunities, which may be of interest, as they are a clear knowledge of the individual' skills and experience. A former colleague was instrumental in Nigel's entry into Baycastle Trust. He recognises that without this introduction the job title of the position would have firstly meant it did not appear within possible job searches and also indicated he would not have the necessary skills for the role. However, through a former colleague, he was invited to submit his

CV and was able to gain further information to determine how his existing skills were applicable and understand the potential within the role;

> "*at that same time I was approached by this trust asking me to apply for a role here, so a colleague of mine at XXXX was doing some graduate recruitment with a senior manager that worked here and was talking about me and my skill set and asked if she would get my cv, from there we had some informal chats…if it hadn't have been for that, I wouldn't have applied for this role, because I wouldn't have been aware of it…it wouldn't have come up on my NHS job search. If I'd seen that on a list I wouldn't even have opened it…and so we got talking about the role and I was really fascinated and interested in it, and again it's sort of a step up".*

Further people who were recounted as significant within career stories from outside of the immediate context of work included teachers and early career guidance advisers. These individuals were demonstrated to have the capacity to both enable and constrain interviewees careering, principally in relation to future career aspirations. To illustrate, Ellie was initially dissuaded by a school career adviser from undertaking nursing qualifications, as this was not considered to be acceptable after undertaking sixth form education, and instead attempted to follow her sister in studying accountancy;

> *"I was told you don't stay on at school and do a-levels to then go into nursing, you should go to university. So, I did a year at XXXX university doing a foundation course in accountancy which I hated, I didn't like the people, I didn't like the course".*

Alternatively, a number of interviewees described the core role that specific teachers had taken in shaping their future plans and aspirations.

As demonstrated in discussing family, the influence of others can produce a determination to prove others wrong, and this was recounted as an important moment by Keith in narrating how an accident and subsequent personal injury was a pivotal moment in his careering. He recounts how a medical consultant advised him he would not be able to work again;

> "*I was 25, and he said you need to find something to do with your life because you probably won't work again. And I was quite determined that I was going to work again, I must be able to do something, and I went straight from that*

appointment and went to the employment agency and said look I've been told this but I don't believe it and I'm not prepared to accept it, what can you do?"

What followed was a fundamental change in the type of work Keith undertook and the settings he worked within. Until the accident Keith had been engaged within a variety of physically demanding roles. However, from this point forwards he moved into administrative type roles which necessitated developing a completely new skill set, and working within a different work setting to that in which he had been previously engaged.

The above narratives demonstrate how the actions of people outside of the direct work can play a significant role in careering and change, whether in terms of choice of profession, entry into an organisation, or ongoing support. However, as this influence is often unexpected and informal, it is interpreted and recounted by interviewees as an aside to careering, which is out of the ordinary, or an untypical aspect of their careering. Nevertheless, the frequency with which it is encountered within individual career stories demonstrates the influence of both friends and family as being a significant component of an individual's careering and a common factor in enacting change.

6.6 Careering Out of Control; Concluding Remarks

This chapter has taken an initial step in addressing the research question; *to what extent do career experiences correspond with understandings of agency in existing literature*? Whilst this question will be returned to and addressed in greater detail within the concluding discussion chapter the research findings outlined within this chapter demonstrate that personal agency exercised within careering is different to that suggested within contemporary models of career. Rather than personal agency being exercised as the proactive and self-directed pursuit of career, Part One of this chapter identified alternative explanations of the exercise of personal agency within careering and change. Furthermore, the research findings have demonstrated that careering change, whilst sometimes reflective of agency as portrayed within dominant career models, is actually a frequent response to a host of factors including personal circumstances and context. Part Two of the chapter explored how the agency of other people impacted upon change experiences within interviewee's careering. Correspondingly, whilst models present career agency as logical and rationale, the gathered career stories demonstrate that career agency can be unplanned, messy and

influenced by a host of alternative factors. In revealing the inherent complexity of career agency, the research findings outlined within this chapter have demonstrated that such agency is often directed and motivated by other aspects of an individual's life sphere. Consequently, this presents difficulties in comprehending of agency in regard to career, and results in a diversity of career stories and interpretations, representing the multitude of contributory factors evidenced.

7 Careering in Context

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined how in narrating experiences of change within careering interviewees exhibited a range of forms of career agency, demonstrating that personal agency is not as proactive and self-directed as interviewees expected it should be, or as contemporary career theory suggests. Frequently interviewees responded to opportunities and circumstances as they arose, or experienced limited choice and control over experiences of change. In addition, the agency of others, both within and outside of the work-related context, influenced and shaped careering, and often in unexpected ways. Therefore, the research findings have indicated that rather than experiences of change arising from proactive agency they are frequently a response to, or a consequence of, factors which arise from the different elements of context within which career is experienced.

This chapter explores the significance of the context within which interviewee's career and experience change, to illustrate the contribution of a broad range of factors and events. This is an initial step towards addressing the research question; *To what degree is agency and career experiences influenced by the various contexts including personal, organisational and societal in which the career is enacted?*

Part One concentrates upon work-related context, particularly the organisational and professional contexts within which interviewees career, highlighting how key contextual factors potentially shape experiences of change. Part Two explores the social context within which interviewees career, to establish how personal and familial related factors and events impact and influence careering and change, demonstrating the significance of their wider life sphere.

The research findings emphasise how a broad range of contextual factors impact upon careering but are interpreted and responded to differently and therefore give rise to diverse experiences of change within careering and career stories. For the purposes of analytical discussion agency and context are afforded distinct attention within this

and the previous chapter. However, as will be demonstrated throughout the discussion within the career stories, as in practice, these elements are closely intertwined and this will be explored further in Chapter Eight.

The chapter opens with the career story of Zara to highlight the significance of the organisation and professional context alongside social factors, including individual and family, in shaping change within her careering. The ensuing discussion will also draw upon additional stories to highlight the central theme of this chapter; a broad range of contextual factors play a significant role in shaping careering and change, occasioning diversity in individual responses and interpretations, and therefore giving rise to a variety of career patterns and experiences.

7.2 Zara's Story

Zara entered Baycastle Trust as a mental health nurse eighteen years ago, and at the time of interview was substantively employed as a Ward Manager. However, she had recently been seconded into a Quality Management position, which was her first full-time change into a non-clinical, corporate role. Consequently, she had reached a significant crossroads in her potential future direction, providing an insightful example, having recently undertaken significant change in her professional role as a result of opportunity arising from within the organisational context.

Overview

Prior to narrating her story, Zara reflects "*it's really straight forward actually my story*". On leaving school and completing mental health nurse training she entered a local asylum style hospital, formerly part of Baycastle Trust, as a Staff Nurse on an acute inpatient ward. Two years later she moved to a new purpose-built hospital, as a Senior Staff Nurse on an acute inpatient ward, and until her recent secondment has remained in clinical roles within the organisation. However, Zara's story offers additional insight as to how the professional and organisational context has shaped and influenced her careering alongside the agency of key people.

Education

Prior to leaving school, Zara aspired to work with children, however following voluntary work for a children's Care Club during the school holidays ascertained that she would like to work within a care role but not with children. A subsequent enjoyable school work experience with older people encouraged Zara to undertake a BTEC qualification in Social Care at a local college upon leaving school. Her intention was to work in a nursing home but she wanted to go to university first as; "*that seemed the next natural thing*". However, whilst in the process of applying, a conversation with a friend prompted her application to a new nurse training initiative 'Project 2000' which had a bursary attached; "*you get paid to do it. I thought that was it, (laughing) that's what I was going to do, because you got £400 a month to do it*".

Resultantly Zara studied for two years for a nursing diploma, expressing regret that she did not undertake an additional year to achieve a nursing degree, something she believes she will now need to undertake to progress further; *"I think that's my next pressure, I've got to do it. And the opportunity is there, and I've got to do it"*.

Early Professional Experience and Guidance

Zara's first key change in careering was from a staff nurse role within the former large Victorian asylum hospital setting to a new purpose-built hospital within the same employing organisation. This change was instigated by the closure of the old hospital, because of major reform and new legislation within the MH care field. Simultaneously, Zara responded to an opportunity for promotion to senior staff nurse. Prior to changing work setting, Zara had no aspiration to be anything other than a staff nurse, describing being; "*quite happy just plodding along"*. However, her then ward manager (Alan) encouraged her to apply for the position, providing informal supervision and guidance; "*around where my career should probably look to pan out*". Similarly, he later encouraged her to apply for a ward-based Deputy Ward Manager position but her application was unsuccessful. Consequently, another colleague suggested that Zara would benefit from gaining additional experience outside of a ward setting, something she would otherwise not have considered;

> "*At the time I wouldn't have considered leaving the ward, I was quite comfortable, I was quite happy where I was, didn't want to move on, so, but*

> *then, it almost seems like everything falls into place in those early days doesn't it?"*

Baycastle Trust was establishing a new community-based team which created an opportunity to undertake such a change, and this was managed by Alan, her former manager who continued to offer informal support;

> *"there was an opportunity because the Trust was developing its own crisis team, it was community based, so it was moving me out to get that overview, and that was Band 6 position, with the potential of being Band 7, because at this time then they were going through all the agenda for change stuff, so I moved into that, I got that post there".*

Zara enjoyed the increased clinical focus this role offered, in contrast to the managerial elements of her previous role, and she remained for approximately three years. She was then approached with a secondment opportunity as acting Ward Manager, returning to an acute ward, by Alan who had continued to informally mentor her. She initially declined, explaining; "*I didn't actually think much of the modern matron who was in post at the time"*. Alan however advised that she risked 'cutting off her nose to spite her face', and to progress as a manager she had to be able to work with different people, and so she successfully applied. Initially this was a temporary secondment but later became a permanent post, and Zara remained there for three years until the birth of her first child. As an interesting aside to her story, Zara narrated that during this period she married the modern matron she had initially hesitated to work alongside.

Projects and Secondments

During her time as Ward Manager Zara became involved in a new NHS ward-based quality initiative which had not previously been implemented within a MH setting. Her successful work on this project resulted in a secondment opportunity within the NHS Institute (for Innovation and Improvement). As clinical facilitator, Zara developed modules and toolkits to support the implementation of the initiative within other mental healthcare providers. Zara was seconded into this role for three days a week, continuing as ward manager for the remaining two days, over a ten-month period. She describes this as being; "*one of probably the most influential things from my career point of view, seeing the bigger picture and seeing beyond an acute ward really, let alone a Trust*". However, Zara describes experiencing a lack of personal control in how this opportunity developed, feeling led by others, in an opportunity which; "*just sort of grew*" and

"*snowballed*'. She observed the potential of the role to result in further regional and national work and consequently expresses relief that the secondment finished after ten months as she commenced maternity leave. Zara explains her intention to pick up these links on her return to work, however more pressing challenges on one of the wards prevented this. Instead, she returned to managing the ward, moving between wards, and managing both simultaneously for a time. Alongside, she proactively became involved in different projects and initiatives as a way of retaining interest in her work, and raising her profile within the organisation;

> "*I've done some of the things wanting to be noticed beyond the wards, so wanting to be noticed by people in the Trust that perhaps wouldn't know who I was or recognise me, so without a doubt that was some of my drivers. But just being a ward manager wouldn't have been enough*".

Professional Progression and Organisational Opportunities

A couple of years later Zara had a second child and returned from maternity leave as a Ward Manager upon an acute ward. However, upon her return she narrates feeling increasingly focused upon her professional development and career. Consequently, she responded to and secured an opportunity to temporarily act up as a Modern Matron and subsequently applied when this was later advertised as a permanent position. Zara expresses her surprise and disappointment at being unsuccessful in her application despite receiving positive feedback. Confusingly, a senior manager on the interview panel also informally advised her that she should be thinking above and beyond a modern matron post. She narrates this as a difficult experience, following which she lost momentum and confidence but retrospectively reflects upon as; *"probably down to one individual probably saying the wrong thing at the wrong time*". This is the only time that she has actively sought opportunities external to Baycastle Trust. Although she recognises that in addition to limited opportunities within her professional field in the locality, this would have also presented additional challenges from the perspective of having a young family.

Unexpected Opportunities arising within the Organisational Context

Zara described herself as having been '*rescued*' by her current secondment role. Reflecting upon the period between having her first child and moving into this new

position; as "*being on hold*" and "*coasting*" which suited her family circumstances at that time;

> "*from probably 2008, which was when I became pregnant to literally now, everything's been pretty much on hold, because it was about family, so I've been coasting. Happily coasting I must admit, I haven't sort of been thinking I've been held back*".

Her recent change into a newly created secondment position has taken her away from a clinical setting, and into a corporate function in an office environment. Potentially the post may become a permanent role, but as a secondment currently provides Zara with "*space to play*", without feeling she has "*completely jumped ship*". Zara expresses apprehension about the organisational exposure which accompanies this key role and reveals personal insecurities about having entered "*a whole new ball game*". Interestingly, she describes this recent shift in her careering as; "*this is from the sublime to the ridiculous*" referring to the unanticipated nature of such a change;

> "*I'm a quality assurance and improvement manager, so this is from the sublime to the ridiculous, my career plan would have been naturally to move into a modern matron role. I wouldn't have considered anything else other than the modern matron role. And then when I came back from maternity leave and I was thinking a little bit more about the bigger picture and my career, I was thinking more around within the nursing directorate, so it would have been perhaps modern matron, maybe deputy director of nursing so that was where I was thinking I would happily sit. Then I've sort of been shoehorned over this end, into this role, which has been absolutely, it's been fabulous".*

She was approached about this opportunity by a senior organisational figure, who suggested it may be of interest, and Zara reflects upon the extent of personal choice exercised in pursuing this;

> "*you're not going to say no are you? But then you are also thinking gosh I'm putting myself in a real vulnerable position, you've either got to cut the mustard or you haven't".*

Zara believes that this opportunity arose because of her exposure to key organisational figures afforded through her earlier unsuccessful interview; *"you never quite know what conversations people have about you and your career behind closed doors*".

Future Direction and Professional Identity

Zara is uncertain about her future direction. In addition to ambiguity about her current role becoming a substantive post, she also expresses personal concern. Having been a nurse for eighteen years Zara reflects upon the potential loss of her professional identity, confounded within a recent experience in which she was asked what she did for a living and hesitated in identifying as a nurse. This is an unanticipated consequence of her new role;

> "*I wouldn't have appreciated how strongly I valued my profession until I've moved into a corporate role, and now I do feel like I've lost my identity a little bit and it does worry me"*.

The change to a corporate role has also led Zara to reflect upon her own abilities, including leadership skills that she has confidently demonstrated within a clinical setting but increasingly recognises that an alternative approach is now required *"it's different in this job, you've got to influence, you've got to persuade*". She contrasts her experience of belonging to multiple professional networks and a highly communicative team within a ward setting, to the relative isolation she has experienced in moving to an open-plan office setting "*I'm on my tod, it's a lonely little world*". In terms of work satisfaction, she compares the degree of control and influence she has within a clinical role, and clearly visible results, with the alternative form of reward offered within her new function; "*pulling together from a corporate environment*". Consequently, she would prefer the opportunity to continue in the role for a further two years before making a final decision about returning to a clinical setting.

The previous chapter demonstrated how different forms of personal agency are demonstrated throughout careering, and this is clearly illustrated within Zara's story. Zara recognises that at times she has played a more active role in her careering than at others but describes nevertheless having always committed the energy to ensure she is achieving her best. Her story clearly demonstrates the contribution made by the agency of others to her careering, particularly within instances of change. Alan, an early line manager, features throughout her story, demonstrating a significant role in supporting and guiding Zara through a number of key changes in position, and teams, and in shaping her future ambition. Other organisational figures have also been instrumental in her recent change from a clinical to corporate role, and she indicates they may continue to do so. Whilst they have predominantly had a positive influence, Zara

emphasises the negative impact upon her careering, of her unsuccessful application for a role she was temporarily filling despite receiving positive feedback, leaving her demotivated and considering external opportunities.

Earlier influences from other people, whilst seemingly minor at the time, have also had a significant impact upon Zara's careering. An early volunteering opportunity set up by a relative clarified that she did not wish to pursue her early ambition of working with children. Zara was also discouraged from applying to university after a conversation with a friend prompted her to apply for funded nurse training, and consequently directed her professional qualification as MH nurse and subsequent entry into Baycastle Trust.

Consequently, Zara's role within her careering has not been as proactive as contemporary theory suggests and has evidently also been influenced by a number of factors arising from the different contexts within which she careers. Zara has careered within a singular organisational context for eighteen years; however, this itself has undergone significant change, in terms of both content and setting of work. This is principally a result of large-scale changes in MH care provision at a societal level. Opportunities for career change have arisen from organisational change, including the introduction of initiatives and projects which Zara has become actively involved in, as a way of both gaining wider recognition and expanding upon her role. The organisation has primarily supported her professional progression, providing a clear route as indicated by Agenda for Change paygrades. Furthermore, senior organisational figures have also been instrumental in creating two unanticipated secondment opportunities outside of traditional professional progression routes, representing a key change from Zara's professional role as a nurse. In turn, this has re-iterated the significance of Zara's professional identity to her and thrown into question her future careering direction. The professional context of her work has also informed her careering, particularly in terms of professional entry routes and qualifications, and the later introduction of a degree as the minimum entry level qualification for nurses, underlies her current intention to undertake this level of academic study to support her future progression.

However, Zara's story also includes a number of non-work-related factors arising from aspects of her personal life, and specifically her family. Zara narrates an

early agreement between herself and her husband that he would be the one to actively pursue his career whilst she assumed family care responsibilities;

> *"I came into mine and John's relationship as we were both going to have a career, obviously then thinking about family and children then I sort of happily stepped, you be the career guy and I'll plod along. Which traditionally that's all a lot of people do isn't it, so that's what we've done"*.

On returning to work after her second child she became increasingly career focused and benchmarks her progress against that of her husband; *"he's doing a very similar role as me believe it or not, but a little bit more advanced (laughing) don't you worry it's a marathon not a sprint".*

Zara's story illustrates how elements of agency (of both the interviewees and other people) and contextual factors are closely interlinked. For example, the agency of others provides a supportive link to the opportunities which arise from within the organisational context. Therefore, in presenting the research findings in the ensuing discussion further overlap will be evident. This highlights some of the complexities in studying careering in such a way, whilst for the purpose of analysis and explanation they are identified separately, as researcher I remain mindful of continually navigating between these elements to understand careering in its entirety.

The following discussion initially focuses upon the various contexts of work, to explore the influence and impact of organisational and professional factors upon an individual's careering and change within. The extent and form of this influence is explored, to demonstrate that whilst in some experiences these factors are interpreted by interviewees as having had a positive effect, in others they are not as favourably narrated, illustrating an alternative perspective of change within career.

Zara's story clearly demonstrates careering within two core areas of work-related context; *organisational;* including both Baycastle Trust, the NHS institute into which she was seconded for a time, and the wider NHS of which these organisations were both a part, and *professional*; as a registered MH professional. In addition, both the organisational and professional context are situated within further layers of context at the *macro* level including public sector, healthcare, and national government and economy. The significance of such key contextual areas is evidenced throughout the

broad range of career stories gathered, and across different work experiences (summarised in Figure 11).

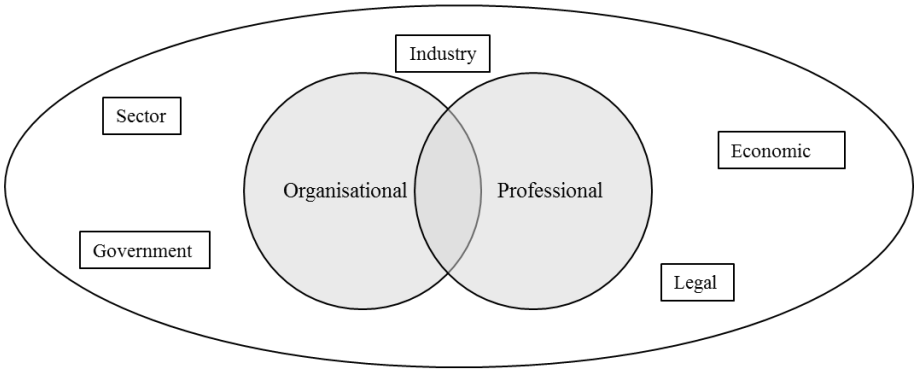

Figure 11: Elements of Work-Related Context

Whilst the organisational and professional contexts were most prominent within interviewee's narration of their careering experiences, the macro level context within which these are situated also featured, particularly within discussion of how this had prompted change within the organisational and professional context within which the interviewee careered. This is clearly illustrated in Zara's story and her change of workplace from a large asylum style hospital to a new purpose-built setting. This demonstrates the impact of an example of wider healthcare reforms and the introduction of legislation to outline how and where mental healthcare is to be provided within the UK (Appendix A). However, it also demonstrates the significance of the wider social context and the integration rather than segregation of individuals with LD or MH issues within local communities and society as a whole. The former hospital was situated within a rural community. In contrast, the new setting was situated within an urban setting, between two schools, alongside a busy dual carriageway and in close proximity to the city centre. Therefore, the change that Zara experienced in terms of physical work setting was the outcome of a transformational change in the healthcare services provided and the professional role of MH nursing. Consequently, such a change was pivotal to Zara's future careering, beginning with the securing of her first managerial post. The wider organisational context was also significant in the creation of the non-clinical role she was seconded into at the time of interview, facilitating a change from clinical to corporate function. The quality management role was created to support the

organisation in preparing for inspection and audit by an independent regulatory body for health and social care services.

Interviewees acknowledged the implications of careering within a public organisation versus experiences within the private sector. Some recognised the public sector, and sometimes the NHS specifically, as offering enhanced remuneration and security and consequently this influenced their continued and future employment within the sector. Conversely, interviewees within non-healthcare related professions expressed concern at becoming stigmatised by working in the public sector, and its implications for pursuing future opportunities within the private sector, illustrated in the following narrative within which Lacey describes having experienced a challenging time within a NHS organisation;

> "*I started applying for jobs in private sector and I really found there's a really strong prejudice against the NHS, they think you're no good, or a person from the NHS can't work in the private sector. I found it really hard even to get an interview, when I thought I'd got loads of experience for roles, and I suppose that put me off applying to private sector again after that".* (Lacey).

Whilst this experience evidently influenced Lacey's decision to remain within the NHS and subsequent careering, Lee, in the opening story to Chapter Five, expressed similar rationale for his upcoming transition from public to private sector employment.

Alternative examples of the macro context within which interviewees careered, and implications for career experiences, were also evidenced. The demise of traditional regional industries limited and changed the opportunities available within local labour markets, as well as directly impacting upon those previously trained and employed within them. Whilst these examples demonstrate the significance of the broader context upon organisational and professional contexts and individual careering which are now explored in further detail, it was also evidenced to directly impact upon the ability of interviewees to work. For example, rising fuel costs associated with the Gulf War meant that Calvin could no longer afford to commute to his workplace and therefore he returned to a previous employer closer to home.

7.3 Organisational Context

The career stories encompassed a range of organisational settings in addition to Baycastle Trust to demonstrate similarities and differences across a variety of organisational contexts. Furthermore, the NHS as an over-arching organisation provided a further layer of organisational context, incorporating numerous NHS organisations. Three key aspects of the organisational context were recurrently evidenced as contributing to, and influencing experiences of, change within career stories; progression routes and opportunities, organisational benefits and reward, and organisational change. A degree of overlap is evident between each of these aspects, as highlighted within the ensuing discussion, however for the purposes of analytical distinction they are discussed separately.

Figure 12: Key Elements within the Organisational Context

7.3.1 Progression Routes and Opportunities

Although progression routes are also represented within the professional context within which interviewees careered they were principally discussed in relation to the organisational opportunities and discrepancy between this and the anticipated routes and opportunities determined by a specific professional field. Inconsistencies between professional expectations and organisational experiences prompted surprise from interviewees on being offered alternative opportunity within careering. This is clearly illustrated within Zara's story, in which she describes her change from a clinical to quality improvement corporate role as "*this is from the sublime to the ridiculous, my career plan would have been naturally to move into a modern matron role*". This

demonstrates how the organisational context can potentially develop and support progression routes which meet the needs of the organisation but diverge from conventional pathways. In Zara's example, her specialised knowledge and experience is aligned with an organisational requirement to satisfy the audit prerequisites of an independent regulator.

Progression routes are particularly visible within NHS organisations following the roll-out of Agenda for Change in 2004, which implemented standardised pay bandings across the entire NHS workforce. Similar grading structures within other public-sector organisations including local authorities were also narrated by interviewees. Alternatively, within the context of private sector organisations progression routes were illustrated through descriptions of hierarchical structures and positions. These banding systems and hierarchical structures were frequently referenced within career stories (illustrated within Zara's story in the chapter opening) to narrate changes within sequences of work experiences, or to demonstrate potential (or conversely a lack of) internal opportunity within professional routes.

As an aid to outlining the course of change between roles, pay banding systems were also drawn upon to highlight experiences within which interviewee's experienced either a down-grading in existing role or change to an alternative lower graded position. Such change was frequently with limited or no personal choice, as a result of organisational change and restructuring, and was accompanied by subjective change in an interviewee's perspective upon their careering. Interviewees described feeling undervalued by the organisation upon being down-graded and this subsequently challenged their perspective upon; current work, the organisation and future aspirations. Shirley expresses "*it just felt really devaluing, massively devaluing*", and she narrates regret at not having insisted upon redundancy. Resultantly, she resolved to never accept a similar situation within her future careering "*whatever you do to me, you will not be doing that again"*. Similarly, Jessica also emphasised the personal emotion surrounding such change;

> *"I felt I was a bit more than a nurse because of everything that I'd achieved, but regardless I was slotted in a band lower …….which absolutely was a travesty for me at the time*".

Both Shirley and Jessica continued within the organisation, primarily to maintain their eligibility for MHO status (Section 7.3.3), but nevertheless the effects of this change

were evident within their subsequent approach to careering within the organisation. Conversely, Karen narrates being demoted to a lower banded post following a programme of organisational change as an accepted consequence of working within the NHS and its propensity for change;

> "*all NHS organisations, especially this one it goes under copious amounts of change. As soon as I arrived I was put through management of change, so it was all really quite complex. I did that post for a while, probably about four, five years. And then things change in the NHS, and I moved to just managing the acute inpatient wards, …….and I'd been demoted as well, because we'd gone through management of change, and that layer of management had been taken out"* (Karen).

The above narrative also captures a recurring acknowledgement within career stories of the inevitability of further organisational change and restructuring. Consequently, it was widely recognised that organisational routes to progression were not static but prone to recurring change and disruption. The potential of such change, as well as the discontinuity it threatened, was also acknowledged, with interviewees narrating that, although there may not currently be opportunity for internal progression, future opportunity may arise with the inevitability of further organisational change.

The careering opportunities offered within the organisational context were also narrated in conjunction with professional identity (Section 7.4.2), with some interviewees expressing a view that they had been deprived of opportunities to progress or undertake personal development within the organisational context as a consequence of belonging to a particular professional group, and especially in relation to others. This was particularly emphasised within the context of Baycastle Trust, through a discernible tension between Allied Health, and Nursing professionals, highlighted within the following reflection;

> "*I didn't do nursing, I always had this slight regret about not doing nursing and always felt hampered back, and I think it's quite interesting because I actually became an allied health professional, and AHPs have very different career paths which doesn't, I don't believe, have all the opportunities that maybe if I'd have nursing had. And I railed against actually the fact that a lot of people are put in a box and they don't have the opportunity so the whole of my life is about giving other people opportunities to do exactly what they want to do"* (Joan)

A specific example is shared by Evelyn, a recently qualified AHP, who describes feeling constrained in her professional development as a consequence of being the only AHP amongst a team of nurses. She is currently experiencing difficulty in gaining managerial support to undertake the training necessary to progress to the next paygrade;

> *"it has been difficult, especially because normally as a speech therapist you don't stay at a band 5 for very long usually, once you've completed your competencies, and you've completed dysphagia training you can move on to a band 6. And that's where I've found it difficult in this Trust, I completed my competencies, but they've really held back on me for my dysphagia training which means I haven't been able to be a Band 6. I'm still a band 5 although people in the team who were employed after me are now Band 6s, so that's where my frustration has come in this trust and the fact that really they're holding me back from progressing"* (Evelyn).

Conversely from a nursing perspective, Ellie commentates upon how a change in line manager, meant she was to be managed by an AHP rather than a nurse, giving rise to discontent within her role;

> *"she's an OT our manager. I think they think a very different way, what they do is very black and white, so they want very structured systems for everything, but actually we needed to do it this way, no it's not for me"* (Ellie).

Consequently, Ellie applied for a secondment opportunity within a different team, where she would once again be managed by a nurse, and she contrasts the two situations;

> *" coming here and working in a solely nursing environment was nice and it made me realise what skills I'd got, so I'm now much more, actually we do this and we do that …… so I think I'm much more fired up to support nursing whereas before coming here I think I felt a bit more downtrodden"* (Ellie).

The above examples how different professional groups potentially experience constraint within their careering as a result of tensions between professional identities within the organisational context. Furthermore, specific groups may experience limited opportunities within organisational structures, presenting less opportunity for progression unless they are willing to undertake a change in role or organisation. The latter itself being determined by the availability of opportunities within the preferred locality (discussed in Section 7.5.2).

Secondments were a particularly prominent form of careering opportunity arising from within and across the organisational context, and whilst particularly prevalent within NHS experiences were also narrated within alternative settings. Secondments provided the opportunity to gain experience at a higher grade, and/or within a different team, service or organisation, and trial roles before potentially applying for a permanent role. Secondment opportunities were also offered between different NHS organisations, (as illustrated by Zara's secondment to the NHS Institute), offering the opportunity to share and advance knowledge, build networks and gain a broader perspective of the wider organisation and its various functions. Secondment opportunities arose to support new projects or services, temporary filling of vacancies, or to provide interim cover. For example, when employees were on long term maternity or sickness leave. Zara's story includes two secondments, the first facilitated knowledge sharing in the implementation of new initiatives across NHS organisations. The second was a newly created role specifically to support the organisation through external audit and inspection whilst also developing her own careering.

Opportunities for personal development were a further common feature to arise from within the organisational context and included training provision, or funding and time to undertake this. As outlined in Lee's story (opening to Chapter Six), organisational support for personal development contributed to two key changes within his narrative. A lack of support for professional development within HR influenced his decision to leave one organisation. However, he then elected to self-fund his qualification within a subsequent organisation on observing limited opportunities for internal progression. He did not want to feel obligated to remain within the organisation on qualifying, highlighting potential constraint as a consequence of organisational support. A significant proportion of interviewees reflected upon the developmental support offered by Baycastle Trust within both their existing role and future direction. Conversely, Barbara expresses a lack of support within her current role, describing the reasons for this*; "The lack of staff basically, you can sit in your PDR and they say oh yeah if you look into these courses……"*. Being the only person able to undertake her role, she does not have the capacity to take time away to undertaking training.

The significance of the wider context within which organisations, and specifically the NHS, operated was also implicated in terms of opportunity. Interviewees narrated that funding for training 'ebbed and flowed', in line not only with

broader changes in the NHS, but also in line with governmental support for the sector. For instance, Anthony reflected upon the availability of training opportunities over time;

> "*when I started my career in healthcare they couldn't sort of get you on enough courses, it was like we've got some funding, get yourself on a course, more recently it's very hard to get any funding for training"* (Anthony).

The findings outlined above demonstrate how the progression routes and opportunities presented within the organisational context mediate the influence of professional structures upon careering and potential change. In turn this was mediated by the agency of key organisational people, including colleagues and line managers, who endorsed and supported such opportunities and routes, in addition to factors arising from the social context within which interviewees careered (returned to in Section 7.5).

7.3.2 Organisational Change

In narrating career stories, change within careering was frequently discussed alongside organisational change within Baycastle Trust and earlier experiences in both public and private sector organisations. A prevalent outcome of organisational change which significantly impacted upon individual careering was restructuring, at the level of team, departmental/directorate or organisation. This resulted in a variety of outcomes for individual careering, including changes within (including duties and/or pay) and between position and organisations (including compulsory or voluntary redundancy). In addition to these short-term outcomes organisational change also held implications for future careering as progression routes became disrupted or diverted, and a change in interviewee's subjective perspective upon their careering and their role within this.

Responses to organisational change were sometimes discussed in terms of prompting further development or progression, occasionally described as a 'kick' or 'push', for example Zara's successful application for her first managerial position to coincide with a change in work setting. Alternatively, organisational change also led to interviewees experiencing a lack of control or inevitability about their own careering, particularly when this resulted to changes in work functions, settings or a re-grading of their existing role. Interviewees frequently found these prolonged periods of uncertainty over which they could exercise no personal control highly stressful, as outlined in the following narrative;

> "*when I said I found it very stressful it was like, am I going to have a job, aren't I going to have a job, what am I going to do and I had to resolve the whole thing for myself and I worked on the basis in the end I would stick it out, I didn't care how long I was there, they could do whatever they liked I would leave it to fate, because either way they would have to pay me quite a nice lump sum that would enable me to do what I felt was really important, supporting my son and all the rest of it, so I think that's why it was quite stressful" (Donna)*

Alternatively, organisational change and restructuring also resulted in voluntary or compulsory redundancy. This resulted in not only changes in employing organisation but also re-evaluation of careering, and a potential change in future direction. Three key responses were evidenced within the stories. Interviewees interpreted redundancy as an opportunity to either; continue employment within a different organisation whilst progressing within the same direction, undertake greater change in the future direction of work or to take a career break to focus upon other aspects of life. For example, Nigel has undergone voluntary redundancy (VR) twice. Firstly, within his early career from an organisation within which he recognised that his careering had stalled due to limited progression opportunities which were frequently blocked by other internal candidates. Nevertheless, it was not until he was presented with the opportunity for VR that he considered leaving the organisation;

> *"the restructure at XXXX, that was actually quite a big moment for me, because I'd left university and gone travelling, and that was my first proper job and I'd gone from being quite an immature straight out of uni kid trying to develop a career, that actually I wasn't necessarily wholeheartedly focused on developing my career. I just knew that I wanted it to progress, and proactively did stuff for that to happen, but the restructure and then going through that redundancy process gave me the stepping stone to actually step away from that organisation, to make that step up to that next level……Whilst I was quite happy going out socialising and enjoying myself and I was comfortable where I was, those circumstances and that catalyst enabled me to make that jump to the next level in another organisation"(Nigel).*

In Nigel's example the decision to accept VR was premised upon the opportunity to further develop his career, and his frustration over the lack of internal opportunity for progression. Alternatively, in a later experience of organisational change and restructure he chose not to apply for a role within the new organisational structure as he felt that

his existing role and potential progression was becoming undervalued in comparison to other professional functions;

> *"it wasn't just financial there was a number of things that indicated that it wasn't valued as a function and that's, if I'm not valued professionally then I'm always going to move on"*

Consequently, Nigel accepted the opportunity of redundancy and left the organisation.

Alternatively, some interviewees utilised the opportunity of redundancy to change the direction of their careering. Lisa requested VR after twenty-six years with a financial organisation. Over this period, she had progressed within a number of roles and departments which she describes as a response to organisational change and the agency of other people, describing herself as not having been 'career-driven'. Evaluating the future direction of her role within the organisation which was becoming increasingly sales-led rather than customer-focused and unaligned with her personal motives and values she deemed it the 'right time' to undertake a significant change within her careering;

> *"I felt the time was right for me to have a change and that's what I did…. It was a big decision because I was literally walking out of there not really knowing what I was going to do…. and although it was a bit strange walking out the door I thought well here goes, we'll see what's out there" (Lisa)*

Lisa recounted this as a key turning point within her careering from which she wanted to experience less pressure and improve her work life balance. In narrating her earlier experience within the building society, she indicates a sense of careering outside of her control, however in making the decision to accept redundancy she regained control and determined her own future direction.

Conversely, Joan discussed an accumulation of personal reasons for requesting a Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS) when it was offered during a major period of organisational change;

> *"my mum died really suddenly in a shop, sat down and died, it was awful you know, losing your parent is a big thing in life isn't it, but my dad who had got dementia was exceptionally poorly and became psychotic and ended up in hospital here in XXXXX, and I was living in a caravan because our house was being done up and we had to move out to have it all renovated…... so job was*

> *going, mum died, dad became psychotic and had to be sectioned and awful, I was living in a caravan, what else, oh I fell and broke my arm and my daughter had a new car and was driving it home and it was written off by a jack-knifing tractor, this was all in the space of about 2 weeks, so all of this happened and the XXX was closing down and they were offering MARS – mutually agreed resignation scheme and I said could I have one of those please, I don't need a job"*

At this point in her story, Joan had accumulated approximately thirty-three years work experience, within both clinical and managerial roles in a range of NHS organisations and progressing to senior management. The opportunity to request MARS enabled her to step away from work for an extended period and focus upon other aspects of her life at a particularly challenging time within her story. She was able to pause her careering, until she felt ready to return to work.

Organisational change was a key feature within each career story. Its impact upon careering was broad, at times presenting opportunity for change which was beneficial to individual careering, whilst at others providing constraining by removing opportunities or enforcing change which was not considered desirable. Nevertheless, interviewees recognised both the potentiality and threat from organisational change upon their future careering, their perspective upon which was influenced by their prior experiences of such.

7.3.3 Organisational Benefits and Reward

Organisational benefits and reward were predominantly narrated as having prompted continuity within employing organisations, either in recognition of receiving an enhanced package or in order to preserve benefits including MHO status and pension. This is demonstrated within the following narrative, in which Donna describes having considered looking for opportunities outside of the NHS during a particularly unsettling Management for Change programme;

> *"I did consider leaving seriously when I was 50, when I was going through management of change because I do feel that people can only go through so many changes before they decide that that's it. The only thing that made me stay at 50 was my pension, so I'll be really honest, having said that, once I got over that initial, I'm definitely going I can't do this any longer, once I'd got over that,*

> *I was ok again but I do think there comes a point, I think for people like myself because I can go at 55, so I think there comes a tipping point for some staff whereby it's not worth you leaving because you respect your pension too much, so from there on, when things keep going on, the only things that have kept me on track is my pension" (Donna).*

Relatedly, interviewees also commented upon the relative security provided within the NHS, recognising that despite an increased propensity for change, it continued to offer greater stability and security than experienced elsewhere;

> *"that's influenced why I've never left the NHS other than my pension because it is quite secure, I know people now say oh NHS job isn't a job for life anymore, but it feels more secure than other places. When I think of some of my friends and my partner who work in the private industry and the differences you do feel quite secure really. Redundancy is less of an option when you work for the NHS, they'll do anything they can to avoid it so you'll be moved into other roles, now that doesn't bother me because I don't mind change but what I wouldn't want is I wouldn't particularly want to be made redundant because a lump sum only lasts for so long"* (Janice).

Similarly, Keith narrates the financial security that working within an organisation for an extended period of time has afforded him as his family;

> *"I've been here 27 years, it's allowed me a degree of security, its allowed me a degree of financial choices, I started off as a Band 2 which was fairly low paid, actually the benefits I was on, it cost me £30 a week to actually switch from benefits to work. But now I'm reaping the rewards of sticking with that because, you know my kids are all grown up, they've gone, it offers me a degree of security and independence and job security, even in these times, there is a degree of security around the role" (Keith).*

The above discussions have demonstrated that the organisational context, and specifically progression routes and opportunities, change, and rewards and benefits which arise within shape experiences of change and continuity within careering. However, twenty-nine interviewees also belonged to different professional groups and therefore the professional context will now be explored.

7.4 Professional and Occupational Context

A number of professional groups are represented within the sample including Nursing, Allied Health (AHPs)[9], and Human Resource (HR) professionals. The sample also included interviewees who had changed professional fields both prior to entering, and within Baycastle Trust. For example, Shirley initially trained as a nurse before undertaking later professional development to train as an AHP, and more recently had moved to a corporate role, each within the same employing organisation (albeit across a number of different sites). A further six interviewees had also experienced a similar gradual change from a professional clinical role to a corporate function, an opportunity arising within the context of the research organisation, as in Zara's story above.

Two key elements within the professional context were evidenced within stories to shape or contribute to change within careering, as illustrated in Figure 13.

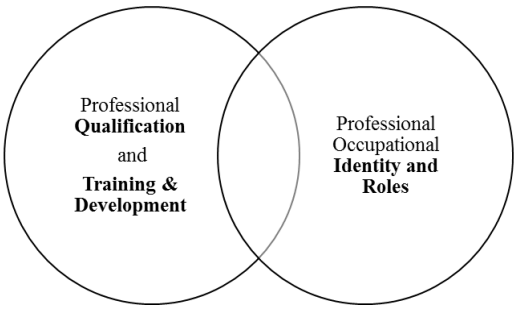

Figure 13: Key Elements within the Professional Context

7.4.1 Professional Qualification and Training & Development

Professional entry routes and qualifications were a prominent theme within career stories, as highlighted within Zara's story (chapter opening). Professional entry routes influenced both her early careering, and her future intention to study for a degree level qualification. Significant changes to the teaching and education of nursing professionals

[9] AHPs comprise of fourteen professional clinical roles, including within the sample group; occupational therapists, podiatrists and a speech and language therapist.

were introduced as an NHS wide initiative; Project 2000[10]. Zara chose this route, rather than directly applying to universities, because it provided financial support whilst undertaking professional qualification (MH nursing diploma), and therefore determined her initial entry into the nursing profession. In addition, the subsequent introduction (in 2009) of a degree level qualification as the minimum requirement for all new nursing recruits underpins her current intention to undertake this level of study to support her future progression. Similarly, changes in professional entry routes and qualification has also prompted change within the careering of other interviewees who had already entered the profession prior to the implementation of Project 2000. Consequently, some interviewees completed courses to convert nursing diplomas to a degree level qualification. For example, Donna chose to undertake a conversion course, with the support of the organisation. She describes having had no prior ambition to be anything other than a staff nurse but on observing the skills and performance of new nurses entering the profession she took the opportunity to undertake further study, to enable her subsequent progression within the profession and organisation. Conversely, others described personal conflict between feeling like they should undertake further study to progress (despite this frequently being stated as a 'desirable' rather than 'essential' element of job descriptions), and their desire or perceived ability to do so. This dilemma is exampled within Zara's story in which she explains the overlap between the need/desire to undertake further study and balancing this with other aspects of her personal life including family. Interestingly, nursing professionals, including those working at a senior level, expressed personal insecurity at not achieving the same level of academic attainment as later entrants to the profession, demonstrating the personal implications of broader changes aimed at recognising and advancing professional skills and knowledge within nursing. This is expressed within the narrative of Chloe, a senior manager, with thirty-eight years' experience within Baycastle Trust;

> *"I feel that I've given loyal service to the trust because it's been loyal to me, but I didn't have a degree (whispers). I was that imposter who didn't have the*

[10] The introduction of Project 2000 from 1984 onwards, transferred education away from apprentice style training to local colleges and universities, and provided academically recognised qualifications (including diploma or degree options). Alongside, optional conversion courses were available for existing nurses, enabling them to convert their nursing qualifications to degree level.

> *degree you know; out of all of these thousands of nurses I didn't have a degree"* (Chloe).

Chloe commenced her career within an asylum-style hospital and her story demonstrates extensive experience across a range of clinical roles and settings. During this time, she started studying for a degree, however personal difficulties (arising from within her social context), prevented her from completing this. She emotively reflected upon not having achieved a nursing degree;

> *"sadly that's something that's probably haunted me for the rest of my career because I am now in a position where I never did get a degree and I still feel, and there are still conversations that really embarrass me that you know, this is a graduate profession, and that actually we need to be looking for people with higher degrees as well and I just sit cringing. And I remember telling my new boss, the director of nursing, and feeling like I was confessing that I hadn't got a degree. And I think it doesn't matter how many times the job description says 'or equivalent experience' in fact it is, I feel that something is missing".*

In addition to initial professional qualification, interviewees also narrated actively seeking or responding to opportunities to undertake further professional training and development across the course of their career. A small number of interviewees had independently pursued and funded such opportunities. For example, Lee self-funded his postgraduate study so he could pursue HR opportunities external to the organisation on completion. Nonetheless, the development of professional skills and knowledge also primarily fulfilled organisational requirements and so was predominantly supported financially and/or temporally within the organisational context (Section 7.3.1).

Interviewees also narrated examples of qualifying within a different professional direction, either to pursue a new opportunity or to advance existing knowledge. The latter was an interesting finding, particularly illustrated by nursing professionals who had specialised in LD but later qualified as a MH professional (such professional opportunities were not reciprocated for those initially qualified in MH). Again, the organisational context was instrumental in facilitating such professional development which brought together its two core specialist fields. Whilst some interviewees progressed within this new professional area on qualification, Donna discusses the value of her newly acquired knowledge of MH practice in enhancing her LD role;

> *"I had an opportunity to retrain, l so I went off and did my mental health nurse training. And some of that was around the fact that the people in the house that I was working at had got associated mental health problems as well. It enabled me to go off and do my training and bring that knowledge back and then we could work better. It's still very patient focused and how we could change things, and how I could change things for the better and things that we hadn't realised when I'd gone off I very quickly became aware of when I came back. So, somebody that we hadn't realised had got bipolar disorder and when we got back we realised that was what the problems were. It just gives that additional knowledge of how to work differently with patients"* (Donna).

This illustrates how the value of, and intention to, undertake professional development varies between interviewees, whilst some use such opportunities to pursue a change in profession, others draw upon the knowledge gained to develop in new ways within their existing area, creating different future opportunities as an outcome.

The above examples demonstrate how professional qualification and training can both enable or constrain personal careering, frequently impacting upon individual experiences in an unanticipated manner. Insightfully, professional qualification and training not only formally support professional development and progression but also potentially shape how interviewees view their careering, and therefore potentially can encourage or prohibit future professional development.

7.4.2 Professional Identity

The second key theme to emerge from the professional context in narrating experiences of change related to professional identity. This is evidenced within Zara's story and most recent secondment. This position demonstrates an initial (albeit currently temporary) move away from her core professional field, from a clinical to corporate function. Consequently, at the time of interview, Zara was experiencing personal conflict in terms of her professional identity as a nurse and future careering. Her recent change had raised her awareness of the personal significance of this identity and how this could be further impacted through future change. Zara conveyed this through the following example;

> "*I've always found my career important, and it is that kudos thing as well, and that's how I've lost my identity. You know I went to an appointment and they were oh what do you do for a living, and I found that I couldn't say that I was a nurse, I was thinking oh god. I did because I am, but you know I was thinking well my title doesn't say that anymore*" (Zara).

A similar commitment towards maintaining a specific professional identity was also conveyed by Karen, a manager within Baycastle Trust; *"I'm very proud of being a nurse…. that's what I put down on my passport and that's, I am a nurse, yes I am a nurse" (Karen).*

The significance of maintaining a specific professional identity encouraged continuity within work experiences, and therefore influenced responses to the frequency and impact of organisational change. Consequently, despite disillusionment at certain periods with an organisation, the ability to maintain a certain professional identity within this context was a key contributory factor in mediating any decision to seek change in their employing organisation, particularly if opportunities to pursue their professional work elsewhere were limited. A key component of professional identity which emerged within the stories was the association between professional role and clients or patients and this was particularly significant in considering a change between client facing and strategic opportunities. Different perspectives upon such a change and its potential implications upon individual careering and associated meaning were presented by interviewees. Lee's story in the opening to Chapter Six highlights his desire to maintain regular contact with employees within his HR role. This underpins both his current dissatisfaction and forthcoming change to a new organisation. In addition, this determines the progression opportunities he will apply for as he does not wish to work within a strategic role. A similar outlook is exhibited by Paul who also wants to maintain regular client interaction and recognises that further hierarchical progression requires a move to strategic aspects of HR work. Alternatively, Paul narrates his satisfaction in supporting applicants through a recruitment process, within a range of organisations, including the Royal Air Force and the NHS;

> "*people are different, 99% of the people they just come in, it's a standard formula that they follow, they have an interview, they're successful, we do the background checks, they get the job and it's done. But you have particularly challenged people, people who have issues and so on that they've overcome, and they get the job and just the sense that they have of achieving something.*

> *And you know I haven't really done anything other than steer them through the process but it's me that they know that's supported them doing it, and you see that, and you see them doing well, and you see them starting off as a healthcare but then going for nurse training and things like that. And you think good, I'm glad that we picked that person, I'm glad that I was part of that journey, it's nice to do that"* (Paul).

Conversely, others felt that they were able to make a greater contribution within a managerial or strategic role and therefore actively pursued such a change in their careering in order to achieve this.

Implicit within the above discussion is a suggestion that interviewees were able to exercise clear choice and control over changes in professional roles and identity. However, some interviewees described how a move away from direct client or patient contact was a progressive outcome of new roles and/or secondment opportunities, or as a consequence of organisational change and restructuring and therefore did not represent personal choice. In some instances, interviewees were able to initially retain a certain degree of patient contact, either through managing more complex cases or remaining in clinical practice for a certain number of days per week as a split role, described by Joan, an AHP, as having provided an '*umbilical cord'* over a five-year period, before fully committing to non-clinical work.

Not all of the interviewees within the sample belonged to a particular professional group but were still located within a particular occupational group which was frequently aligned with certain professional roles within the organisational context. Particularly within the Baycastle Healthcare Trust such interviewees supported particular professional functions whether that be in a clinical or corporate capacity, and whilst some held aspirations to develop their future careering within the field, for others the organisational context remained the primary work context to their careering.

The research findings outlined above have demonstrated the significance of the professional context in influencing both change and continuity within individual experiences of careering, whilst also highlighting this as being closely interwoven with the organisational context. Significant reforms to professional qualifications and entry structures are evidenced to indirectly influence the careering of those already within the profession in interesting and insightful ways, predominantly in initiating a proactive

approach to careering, in response to the agency of others in relation to such changes. Furthermore, the maintenance of a professional identity is a key consideration in pursuing different opportunities and the contribution interviewees intend to offer through their professional role and demonstrates a diversity of perspectives.

7.5 Personal and Social Context

The previous chapter outlined different forms of personal career agency narrated within career stories, and the above discussion has identified prevalent factors emerging from the various work-related contexts within which such agency is exercised. However, as evidenced across these discussions, interviewees act upon or respond to contextual factors in a multitude of ways and the ensuing dialogue will outline how this is mediated by aspects of the personal and social context within which careering occurs. Within the career stories a variety of elements of personal and social context within which interviewees careered were narrated. However, within and across stories; *health*, *locality* and *family* were evidenced as recurrent themes in explaining change and continuity within careering (figure 14)[11]. Resultantly, the ensuing discussion demonstrates how these factors mediated between the agency of interviewees and other people, and factors arising from the work-related context (outlined above), significantly contributing to how and why change is experienced within careering. This emphasises the importance of comprehending the underlying and supporting factors which shape personal career agency and experiences of change, and potentially positively impacting upon or limiting opportunities, creating diversity within and between experiences and stories.

[11] Whilst additional factors emerged within the research findings (including prior experience, gender, and education) their discussion within the narratives was not prevalent enough to permit further exploration within this thesis.

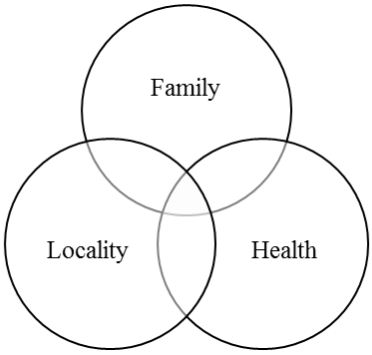

Figure 14: Key Factors within the Personal and Social Context of Careering

Considerable overlap is occasioned between these three aspects, for example (and to over-emphasis) the poor *health* of a *family* member potentially impacts upon the *locality* within which an interviewee will seek or accept employment, and hence implicates all three aspects. Nevertheless, each contextual factor is explored in turn below to highlight how they mediate experiences of change (or continuity) within careering. There is also intersection with the discussion of the previous chapter (Section 6.5) which outlined how the agency of family and friends influenced careering. However, whilst the previous discussion considered specific actions by such individuals the following discussion focuses upon how different contextual factors contribute to underlying explanations of careering and change.

7.5.1 Health

The health of both interviewees and their familial, including children, partners and parents, was a prevalent theme within career stories, as either an ongoing concern or in relation to specific periods of ill health.

On-going personal health issues constrained some interviewees from pursuing certain ambitions and opportunities. For Calvin, an early misdiagnosis of colour blindness prevented him from pursuing his ambition of being a railway engineer. Similarly, an unsuccessful application rejected on health grounds determined Louise's entry to undertake nurse training into a predecessor organisation of Baycastle Trust and resultant thirty-six-year tenure within the organisation;

> *"I applied for my training at XXXX Hospital, got a place, handed my notice in, this may be significant because it is how I ended up where I am which was a bit*

of a fluke really, a fluke or whatever, but applied, got a post at XXXX to do my training, gave my notice in, went for my medical, they failed me on my medical because of eczema on my hand, a bit peculiar, so they didn't want me. So, I had to go back to my job at XXXXX which they let me have, until I applied here".

Louise's narrative above also describes these early experiences as 'fluke', and similar explanations will be explored in further detail in Chapter Eight.

Particular health related episodes were also directly related to specific changes in careering, including Elizabeth, who developed health issues related to her immediate work environment resulting in her acceptance of a VR package and an ensuing change of organisation and occupational type. Alternative accounts did not present such clear discontinuity but included periods of time away from work and reflection upon key priorities which informed future career agency.

However, whilst such factors sometimes shaped the career agency of interviewees and contributed to change experiences, it also conversely promoted continuity in others, in terms of position and particularly in organisation. This included interviewees not actively seeking to undertake change whilst specific issues were ongoing and an increased commitment to a particular organisation as a result of organisational support provided through such circumstances. At the time of interview, Barbara was experiencing health issues and consequently although she potentially may have considered opportunities that arose this was not something which she was actively pursuing;

"at the moment I'm having quite a few health issues and I want to go all that sorted before I do anything. But I think if the right opportunity came up, I think I'd go for."

In addition, career opportunities were also demonstrated to be pursued and responded to premised upon the ability to manage personal health issues. This included regulating working hours through flexible working arrangements and reducing work-related pressures by considering the specific content and demands of a role. Katie narrates having experienced periods of depression throughout her life, and therefore has made career choices based upon valuing time and experiences, over progression and status;

"I find the balance right now, I don't have to spend all my life at work,..... I do want to maintain that balance because I have had periods of sickness in my

> *life…… I'd always been quite academic and quite perfectionistic in my approach to my work, to the point where good was never enough and I've had to learn that good is enough. And since I've learnt that I'm a lot happier, because if I couldn't do something to 100% I didn't want to do it. And that brings problems with it because sometimes your work life doesn't allow you to do that because you've got to that, that, that and that, you can't do them all perfectly so how do you do it all. You have to learn that there is good enough and I've only learnt that as I've got older really……. I just walk out of here at night and get in my car and it's gone until the next day, but that's what it should be".*

Katie's earlier issues around mental health resulted in time away from work and subsequently informed her later choices and approach to work. Such consideration is also evidenced in the narratives of other interviewees who made career changes and choices, both between and within role, premised upon achieving or maintaining balance between work and personal health.

Health issues also contributed to experiences of change within which interviewees expressed having exercised little personal choice or control. For example, health issues which arose as a consequence of changes within the organisational and healthcare context significantly contributed to change within Louise's careering as she nears retirement and are reflected upon as a considerable source of regret. A major programme of organisational change resulted in the closure of the ward setting she managed, the transfer of services to an alternative location with alternative shared support arrangements and a team restructure. Resultantly, Louise describes feeling a loss of control and inability to maintain the provision of services by the team. Following time away from the organisation as a result of work-related stress, she had to make an important decision; *"I couldn't go back, I was off for a while, decided I couldn't go back to that post".* Consequently, she was offered an internal move, to a training role moving her away from front-line nursing for the first time in thirty-six years. This represented significant change within Louise's careering, influenced by both her personal health, and the need to preserve the pensionable benefits of mental health officer status. She expresses having limited choice and personal control within this experience;

> *" when I made the choice, I had to make it for two reasons, one for my own health, and the other because potentially I wasn't going to come back at all, so*

> *in order to come back I had to do something different ……the thing that I find most difficult was, I felt terrible in the fact that I was going to come to the end of my career now not doing what my heart was in, that was the crucial bit for me, it was really quite devastating really to think that I'm going to finish off my career doing something that yes I'll do it to the best of my ability but it's not where my heart is… it's been my life really, I've put my heart and soul into it all until this last two years and so it's very sad when you done that, the influences that cause that".*

Louise's account demonstrates how a combination of different work related and personal factors have influenced her own agency throughout this significant change experience. The trigger for this momentous change within Louise's careering was the closure of a rented hospital site, and transfer of services to a central hospital, and the financial benefits this afforded Baycastle Trust. The resultant impact was unanticipated and outside of Louise's control but nonetheless held significant implications for her careering.

Changes within how interviewees approached careering as a result of health-related issues were also evidenced through changes undertaken in work duties, or in discussions of future ambition. Calvin had experienced a variety of health-related issues, as a result of the nature of the work which he has undertaken and the organisational context, and negative experiences of organisational support during such periods had evidently shaped his personal agency. Interestingly, although Calvin remained within the organisation, he had actively pursued an opportunity to represent the voice of other employees and enact change through a staff representative role, which was split with his prior clinical role. Calvin narrated having received inadequate organisational support in relational to health issues which arose as a result of work-related incidents; including injuries sustained during restraint, and as a result of being physically assaulted by patients. Connectedly, Calvin also introduces elements of the familial in narrating these experiences, and the breakdown of a personal relationship, and as a consequence of this myriad of factors his personal mental health suffered;

> *"I dislocated my shoulder again that's why I ended up, I separated from my wife, ended up on ward X had an incident, put the shoulder out again, I was off for longer this time, so while I was off with my shoulder, they moved from Ward X to Ward X. And again, it was come back to work, nobody stayed in touch with*

> *me while I was off, which was quite difficult really because I'd separated, I was living on my own and I was drifting I suppose, and part of it was we're moving, we're too busy to bother with you sort of thing. So I started to develop some depression, but I came back to work, worked through it, and then I was on nights in 2002 and I got assaulted again, somebody bit me, high risk bite this time and it was one of these things where, in the middle of the night I'd been bitten by a person who was suspected HIV, nobody knew about HIV infections, broken skin all those kinds of bits and pieces and my stress levels went through the roof and I ended up off sick. I was forgotten about, completely forgotten about. I rang the on-call consultant, because I was that worried about it, and of course it just pushed me over the edge. So I had a period where I was not very well mentally around that time because of everything that was going on with the divorce and all the bits and pieces"* (Calvin).

Calvin describes these events as pivotal moments within his careering; "*and I suppose that's why my life changed, it really did change".* These changes including eventually returning to work after an extended period of absence to a community based mental health role, rather than being ward-based, from which he experienced further progression and undertook additional professional training. This marked a significant change in his careering, albeit within the same organisation. However, the biggest change has been in developing his staff representative role and he animatedly describes the different opportunities and experiences he has engaged with in doing this, extending the scope of his organisational context from the context of a ward to a broader undertaking within the wider NHS and staff union organisations.

In addition to personal wellness, the health of other family members frequently placed additional responsibility upon interviewees in terms of both caring commitments and financial input. Particularly within experiences involving the ill health of a partner interviewees assumed the responsibility of primary wage earner and consequently demonstrated an increasingly proactive approach to careering by means of financially providing for their family.

Health related factors also promoted continuity in work experiences, and particularly organisational embeddedness, as some interviewees narrated being less likely to seek external opportunities because of the support they and their families had received from the organisation. For example, Joan described her ongoing loyalty to

Baycastle Trust because of the care and support provided to her father over several years. Claire narrated a similar experience, reflecting upon organisational support she had received when undergoing, and following, a renal transplant, whilst also working, and undertaking nurse training, enhancing her future commitment to the organisation. In addition to a change in work setting to minimise risk;

> *"I wasn't allowed to go back to an acute ward, my line manager, the top manager wouldn't let me go in case a patient could kick or anything while we were in restraint, so I went to the home treatment team"*

Additional support was also provided to enable Claire to continue working, addressing both organisational needs, and Claire's requirement to support a young family;

> *"Even outside of my working career, they supported me when I went through treatment for my dialysis, I had an extra ten minutes added onto my break, so I could do dialysis in my break at work, so I didn't have to have any time off because I didn't want any time off. They supported me when I went into hospital to have transplant treatment, and they gave me lots of support at that time and my family…… and supported me to do my training, I'd feel as if I was kicking them in the teeth if I started to look elsewhere, I'm very loyal to people that are good to me" (Claire).*

Consequently, a combination of organisational and personal factors has resulted in continuity within Claire's work experience within the organisation, fifteen years after this experience.

In addition to health factors, the care of children and parents was frequently cited within stories as a contributory factor in influencing career agency, in terms of both general and specific health care. For those with caring responsibilities, hours of work and travel time were a primary consideration in seeking or responding to opportunities. Care responsibilities were also linked to specific experiences of change within interviewees careering. For example, Joan took an extended career break in order to care for her parents and Katie relocated in order to take care of her mother, effecting not only a change in employer, and work role, but also in her subjective approach to careering.

However, whilst some interviewees assumed principal care responsibilities and narrated their careering premised upon such responsibilities, either during specific

periods within their life or throughout their careering, others narrated how they had been supported by other family members in assumed the role of primary caregiver, enabling the interviewee greater flexibility within their career agency.

7.5.2 Locality

The locality within which careering occurred significantly influenced the agency of interviewees in both actively seeking and reacting to new opportunities, or in exercising personal choice not to undertake changes which would necessitate either relocation, or a change in commute to work.

Insightfully, twenty-eight interviewees originated from the locality of Baycastle Trust, and whilst three had previously worked outside of the area they later returned, narrating their choices in relation to familial aspects, including settling down with a partner close to other family members, parental care, or relationship breakdowns. Revealingly, Shirley narrated a generally recognised tendency of those growing up in the area to remain, which she explains is supported by both regional and organisational workforce mobility data;

> "*they call it the stick city, but one of the things about XXXXXX is, people are born here, live here, die here or people move here, live here and die here, people don't get out of XXXXXX they think that they do but they don't ..... when you look at the census returns in XXXXXX and XXXXshire, that's what you find is, people don't, there's not much movement, and as a trust we've got more movement now in the last 2 years than we've had over the last 22 years, but that will pretty much go for all of XXXXXX"* (Shirley).

Locality was a particularly influential factor in shaping personal career agency, in actively seeking opportunities, responding to opportunities which arose or were presented and in decisions to change organisations and positions. In relation to changes in careering interviewees expressed a willingness, or reluctance, to seek or react to opportunities which potentially necessitated changes in where they lived, or in commuting between home and work (and childcare). Hence, discussions of the locality of work was also closely intertwined with the familial, and particularly in terms of meeting or settling down with a new partner, (as evidenced on different occasions within Lee's story Chapter Six), or in relation to children and childcare. However, the effects of such an influence was polarised, in some instances effecting change whilst in

others providing rationale for not having undertaken change and discussed as both an enabling and constraining influence. Within career stories, locality was predominantly demonstrated as having constrained interviewees decisions to seek or respond to opportunities which were either out of the local area, or increasingly demanding in terms of travel time. The following narrative from Anthony is representative of others discussing their choice to remain within the locality;

> *"I suppose I chose never to look at, or I did only briefly, moving out of area to do nursing, you know my sister very briefly was in America when she did her nursing. I thought well would I fancy, but I suppose its family ties and there's other things occur that possibly stop you from moving out of area. Even when I worked on community it was still locality close to where I lived or had been brought up*".

However, the opportunity to change locality was also evidenced as enabling in terms of careering within the career stories. This was chiefly related to the pursuit of work opportunities, for example, on having recently qualified, it was necessary for Evelyn to actively pursue opportunities in alternate localities;

> "*there wasn't a job for a speech therapist on the Isle of Man, regardless of whether they're learning disability or not so I had the pick of anywhere England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland* ".

Furthermore, similar factors were also discussed in relation to her future careering;

> "*I'd love to stay in the NHS but I want to move back to the Isle of Man and the NHS is slightly different, our NHS is run by our government so I'd work for the government rather than the NHS ……but I'm in a toss-up at the minute, will there be a job there for me? or I might set up my own private practice because we don't have therapists for learning disabilities … that's the future plan, do I go back and see is there a job in the government or do I set up my own private practice?"*

The pursuit of opportunities outside of the immediate locality however also on occasion supported personal decisions and circumstances for interviewees. As described within Lee's story in the opening to Chapter Six, he chose to accept a position within Baycastle Trust rather than a position within a different organisation (and locality) because this provided a prompt to leave the family home, and move in with a new partner;

> *"if I stayed in XXXXXXXXX the temptation would be possibly to stay living at home and nobody wants to do that. And I was also in a burgeoning relationship*

at the time so when I moved out of XXXXXXXX to XXXXXX I moved in with my partner".

Conversely, on leaving school and seeking an opportunity close to home following discussion with her father, and with no clear idea of what she wanted to do, Chloe approached the nearby hospital and has since spent thirty-five years within the NHS, progressing to senior management;

"I said well I'm not going to college, so he said well you better find yourself a job. We lived in the village where the local psychiatric hospital, so a big Victorian asylum it would have been at one time, and so I literally set off down the road, walked up the bank to the hospital, went into reception said I could do with a job. And they said well what do you want to do, and I said well I perhaps want to be a nurse, there was nursing in the family, my mum was a nurse assistant, my grandparents were actually registered mental health nurses, and that was back in the 1920s, they were registered nurses. So, they said well the only thing we've got is a cleaning job, so I said ok, and I was allocated to ward 9, and it was a 45-bedded female older person's ward, we called it geriatric ward then and I was responsible for keeping the ward clean"

In addition to shaping personal career agency, locality also mediated role and organisational changes in careering. This was particularly emphasised where the travel requirements of an existing role were considered too demanding (in time and/or stress). This is evident within Sharon's story, as she narrates leaving what she considers to have been the 'best place' she has worked; "*the most learning I've ever had, the most exposure to new things, fantastic".* However, her decision to leave and seek alternative opportunities was premised upon the extensive travel necessitated within the role*;*

"my reason for leaving there was I couldn't do the travel anymore, I was just exhausted, because that one that was like a business they had parts of their work in west Yorkshire, anywhere between west Yorkshire down to the Isle of Whyte, Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire, Reading, Birmingham, Sandwell, and I was just knackered from being away from home that much".

Alternatively, changes in employing organisation occurred in relation to work related factors but mediated by concerns over locality, including as a response to uncertainty surrounding potential relocation;

"*I think they would have found me a job eventually but it could have been anywhere and XXXXXXXX is a bigger Trust than here, in terms of geographical*

> *area and size and everything so I could have ended up having to work in XXXX …… or miles away, so that was one of the other reasons why I decided to leave really"* (Craig).

The above findings demonstrate the significance of locality in determining the opportunities that individuals actively seek, or choose to respond to, and is closely linked to not only the geographical location of the organisation but also the requirements of the role in terms of time and pressure. However, as outlined above, such factors can also create continuity within work experiences, particularly in organisation, and therefore is an important factor in understanding personal agency in careering.

7.5.3 Family

The previous chapter has outlined how the support of family members was evidenced to have directly influenced the careering of interviewees. Alternatively, this section focuses upon aspects of familial support which indirectly shape the career agency of interviewees, including elements of financial and emotional support.

Having children was a key point in career stories and generated a variety of responses in terms of approaches to careering. For Shirley, becoming a single parent to a young child contributed to her decision to re-train in an alternative field. Similarly, although children were discussed in terms of having constraining career agency at certain times and influenced change within some stories, including a reduction in working hours, others including Zara story narrated how having children encouraged greater proactivity within their subsequent careering.

The support of parents, both emotionally and financially, was particularly significant within early careering, and provided an additional level of security to key decisions and changes;

> *"I think because I've been brought up in a family where its pushing you to succeed, but also I've not had to care for anyone. My mum and dad have always been the one that have paid bills, they do the washing they do all that. So really, I've been mollycoddled and I haven't got any responsibilities that I have to do in the home. I know some people for example who have had different circumstances and feel that they have to go out to work, both my parents work so there hasn't been any economic thing, so I think I'm well supported (Judy).*

The career stories demonstrated how financial support provided by the familial was narrated within explanations of change and personal agency, particularly in supporting a break in employment or to financially support professional development. The financial security offered by some parents also permitted some interviewees flexibility within early careering to take breaks in employment, or accept lower paid work to gain experience;

> *"I went into this HR assistant role and it was really low paid and I had to live at home with my parents but I didn't mind the low salary for the fact that I could save money living at home and it was experience working in HR. HRs a difficult profession to get into because you need experience, but getting that experience is difficult so you really do need to take low paid work to get into, to get some experience" (Nigel).*

Furthermore, parental support also contributed to Nigel's decision to accept VR (outlined in Section 7.2.2 above);

> *"I was going from having a job, voluntarily saying I didn't want a job, and it was a risk, and at that time I was living away from home but in rented accommodation. But I knew that if anything went really bad, I had to just go home to live with my mum and dad for six months while I got myself on my feet, so it was nice to have that security net to fall back on"*

Interviewees also described the security provided by having a partner who provided a primary income which enabled them to make different choices within their careering, influencing their desire for progression and reducing anxiety during periods of organisational change. For Faye however, this situation had been reversed by challenges within the industry that her husband operated his own business, and further compounded by the availability of limited professional opportunities for Faye. Furthermore, Faye was constrained by locality as her husband was unable to relocate his business. Consequently, Faye undertook a major change in role to remain within the organisation;

> *"we had to apply for other posts that were available, so we were against nurses and there were twenty-one staff down to seven posts. There was a new team called the Outreach Team which was about preventing admissions to hospital, which was all nurses, I took the opportunity to be involved in setting that up, I could really see what was coming and I knew I had to make some decisions. There wasn't going to be a head OT as well anymore, and I needed to start looking at what else I could offer to the trust and what would give me job*

> *satisfaction as well. So, then I was no longer an OT after that. Even though I used my OT skills obviously, you can't drop the skills you've got, and I did supply that multidisciplinary team within that, even though I was team leader I still did some OT within that" (Faye)*

Interviewees also narrated constraint in terms of personal development due to their family and financial situation. To illustrate, as a young single parent Sonia cannot currently afford to undertake the professional qualifications she requires to progress her careering beyond her current position, and Lee describes how despite undertaking to self-fund his CIPD qualifications, his personal financial situation resulted in this taking a year longer than anticipated;

> *"finance has been something that has constrained my career. when I went to do my CIPD I was self-funding and I couldn't afford to do it the normal route where you do first year, second year, so I had to, I paid for the first year outright and then the second year I couldn't afford to do that again so I had to do two modules, one year and two modules the next year so that slowed down my progress by twelve months" (Lee).*

However, whilst the familial were potentially a source of financial support for interviewees in other instances interviewees financially supported the career development of others, such as children through university education, and this in turn influenced personal career agency. Similar experiences were also narrated in terms of one partner assuming the role of primary wage-earner within the family setting, and this also occurred as a consequence of either separation from a partner, sickness or as discussed, an agreement to prioritise one partners career over the other. For example*;*

> *"by this time I'm a mum in a front facing career with a clinical role with 3 small children and my husband became poorly, so poorly that he couldn't work. I'd by this time gone down to like one day a fortnight so I hadn't really been doing an awful lot but was then thrown back into having to work clinically full time to support my 3 under 5s and my sick husband, so, in terms of the timeline, these things from your personal life affect your professional life massively"* (Joan).

Similarly, Donna's story demonstrates how financially supporting her son through university contributed additional pressure during experiences of organisational change and the resultant uncertainty in terms of her own careering, prompting her to consider leaving the organisation and also feeling constrained by the rewards provided within the organisational context;

> *"we'd reached the point where there weren't going to be enough posts for everyone and we'd got to compete with each other, very very stressful, my son was at university, I was funding his university, he was in XXXXXXX, living in private rented accommodation that we were paying for, so it was very very stressful, and I kept debating whether or not I would leave at that point and look for something else. The problem you always have, actually I will say I don't think the NHS is poorly paid compared to the private sector and giving how much it was costing to keep my son at university it was like, well if I leave, financially can I still afford all of the things that we are currently doing, so the only decision, I did come up with, again at that time we had a very long conversation and I decided I would stick it out whatever happened, so even if they didn't want me and they got rid of me they'd have to pay me redundancy, if they paid me redundancy I could put it to one side and finance my son at university till the end, and I could get a job and it would all be sorted. And so that's the decision that we made" (Donna).*

Conversely Jayne explains how now her children have grown and become independent, she has greater freedom within her careering choices;

> *"my boys have gone now, I don't need to get up to the high grades anymore, I've got grandchildren now and I've got another one on the way and I've got to a point where if I can get back to being grade 5, grade 6, getting that enjoyment out of a job that I love doing, which is customer based facing people, helping them, supporting them, that sort of stuff, then I will be happy until I retire now. Because there's no need for me to have a big massive house, or a flash car or anything else, kids have gone, they're self-dependent" (Jayne).*

7.6 Careering in Context; Concluding Remarks

This chapter has demonstrated that a broad range of contextual factors play a significant role in shaping careering and change, occasioning diversity in individual responses and interpretations and therefore giving rise to a variety of career patterns and experiences. The research findings highlight how contextual factors are interpreted and responded to in diverse ways, giving rise to different experiences of change within careering and

career stories. Part One explored the context of work and focussed upon organisational and professional factors which shaped experiences of change. Part Two explored the personal and social context within which interviewees careered, to explore underlying and mediating influences upon careering and change and demonstrating the significance of their wider life sphere.

Studying the context of careering demonstrates how multiple aspects of the work and social context within which interviewees career have potential to influence and shape careering in ways which both enable and constrain personal career agency. Furthermore, factors arising from within the personal and social context within which interviewees careered both directly and indirectly influence experiences of change, and health, family and locality were explored in further detail to demonstrate this point. Whilst these factors potentially contribute directly to change they also represent underlying explanations for the exercise of different forms of career agency. Furthermore, in fully understanding the relevance of these factors, this chapter has demonstrated the value in studying context through the lens of careering, to situate them within a career story, to observe context as one of a number of elements of careering, and understand how this is experienced, and made sense of, over time and across different types of change. Consequently, a greater understanding of the context within which careering occurs offers some explanation as to diversity within and between narratives, and the range of forms of personal career agency evidenced within career stories.

The following Chapter (Eight), brings together the empirical findings presented within Chapters Six and Seven to demonstrate how the interplay and dynamism between contextual factors and different forms of agency (of both interviewee and others) is accounted for within the narration of individual career stories, highlighting how career as a pattern of work experiences is often messy, unanticipated and as a result interpreted as unique.

8 Uniquely the Same? Empirical Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The preceding two chapters have demonstrated that interviewees do not adopt a proactive and self-directing role within their careering to the extent to which they expect or as suggested by career theory. Alternatively, careering is frequently in response to the agency of others or to factors arising from the context within which interviewee's career. Although this core finding suggests commonality between stories, a strikingly consistent theme across the empirical research is the tendency of interviewees to describe their career story in a manner that suggests that it is unique or unusual. Words such as 'bizarre' and 'strange' are drawn upon to narrate overall experiences of careering, its development, and specific events within this. For example; "*I've had a really bizarre career*" (Donna), "*in terms of career, I'm a one off*" (Lucy), and "*it's been really really strange, but it's been a fabulous career*" (Chloe) and referencing a recent change in position as; "*from the sublime to the ridiculous*" (Zara).

However, in analysing stories and experiences, it is evident that these narratives are not as different or unusual as often described, and conversely many similarities are observable between accounts. Additionally, during the preliminary stages of the interview some interviewees expressed concern as to whether their stories were relevant or of interest, as they perceived their experiences as atypical. Others felt that they would make a useful contribution because of what they interpreted to be the uniqueness of their experience resulting from not having followed clear or traditional paths, or from being interrupted or shaped by external influences. For example, narrating her future aspiration and established plan to set up a retro launderette, Sharon, a senior HR professional, narrated

> "*that's why I thought I can contribute to this. I actually want to set my own business up and I never ever have dreamed or wanted or thought about doing that, but it was a chance conversation working with a lead provider to one of the services in my last Trust and a contract that we'd just entered into".*

To understand why careering and experiences of change are narrated in such a way this final empirical chapter unites the empirical findings presented within the preceding two chapters. In so doing, a core finding of this thesis will be highlighted; in interpreting their experiences as unique or different, interviewees were actually highlighting significant similarities across accounts and therefore career experiences can be comprehended of as being 'uniquely the same'[12]. In accounting for the interpreted uniqueness, both within and across experiences, three key elements are identifiable within the career stories. Firstly, careering is experienced as messy and non-linear, which is an outcome of the unpredictability and lack of control captured within the further two aspects. Secondly, varying degrees of personal choice and control are exercised within such experiences and, on occasion, is perceived as being out of control. Thirdly, in accounting for the occurrence of unanticipated and unplanned events or circumstances interviewees draw upon explanations of chance, luck and fate, demonstrating the prevalence of happenstance within careering experiences. However, as will be outlined below, this arises principally from both the significance of other people and factors and events arising from the context within which they career, resulting in unpredictability and resultantly attributed by interviewees as being a result of chance and luck. The research findings have demonstrated that these three aspects (summarised in Figure 15:p192) reveal the essence of careering, but in personally experiencing careering as such, interviewees frequently interpret their stories as being non-typical or unique, either in their entirety, or elements within, because they do not recognise such characteristics in the careering of others.

[12] 'Uniquely the same' is inspired by a quote frequently attributed (although unsubstantiated) to Margaret Mead, an American cultural anthropologist, "*Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just Like Everyone Else*".

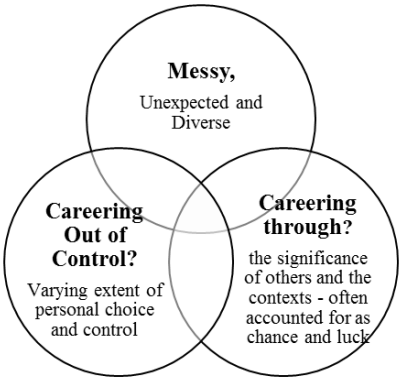

Figure 15: Core Aspects of Careering

8.2 Careering is Messy, Unexpected and Diverse

The gathered career stories illustrate careering as fragmented and non-linear, reflective of contemporary career theory and models. However, in studying change as a dominant characteristic of these stories, the research findings presented within this thesis demonstrate that careers are far more unpredictable and messy than conveyed within 'flexible' career models. Furthermore, contemporary models of career present change as a self-directed and positive element of career arising either from a proactive approach or from a response to changing terrain, in the pursuit of opportunities through which to further one's career. The career stories however have demonstrated that change is experienced as a result of a multitude of factors and reasons. These are not necessarily directly related towards an interviewees career development but often the meeting of different short-term requirements; of the interviewee, the organisation or others within both the work and social context within which they career. As a consequence, change is not necessarily a positive aspect of careering as often portrayed but is also potentially a negative or neutral experience, within both an interviewees overall careering and as a core aspect of their overall life. The career stories have demonstrated change within career as frequently messy; "*So my career I suppose from start to finish has been a bit of a jumble"* (Keith), in response to a host of contextual factors over which the individual has limited or no choice or control with potentially negative effects upon their career experiences. Interviewees contrast their experiences against a central ideology of career as self-directed and orderly, reflective of prevailing conceptualisations of career within prevalent career theory and models, and consequently narrate their experiences as different or unique.

The messiness of careering is typically, although not always, apparent from initial observation of the sequences of work experience from which an individual's career is constituted. For example, connections between seemingly disparate experiences may not be immediately evident, and extended or repeated periods of discontinuity may be observed, including breaks in employment. Alternatively, these sequences may appear to follow a logical pattern and demonstrate relative continuity between experiences, for example within stories set within a single organisation. The research findings demonstrate that change and change events, which form the connections between and within such experiences, are complex and messy, and involve a broad variety of underlying factors, arising from both the agency of others and the context of careering. Furthermore, in observing other people's career sequences, including colleagues and managers, interviewees are not privy to the underlying explanations of such experiences and therefore understanding of their own experience as being different are reaffirmed. Alternatively, the experiences of others are interpreted from the perspective of dominant career ideology and so similarities between career patterns are not recognisable as an outside observer. As Lee's career story in Chapter Six highlights, interviewees are versed in presenting a logical explanation to connect different experiences but the research methodology uncovered alternative underlying accounts of such change and revealed greater complexity than first presented by interviewees. Conversely, Zara's story initially demonstrates relative simplicity in terms of having played out entirely within the NHS and, with the exception of one secondment opportunity, solely within Baycastle Trust. However, her story reveals complexity in terms of her personal approach to careering, the role of other people within this and the opportunities which have arisen within the organisational context. Consequently, the analysis of change and change events within sequences of work experience is a dominant factor in explaining messiness and unpredictability within careering and divergences between expectations and lived experience. The prevalence of stories which present an alternative viewpoint of careering, that does not correspond with dominant ideology, suggests that existing career theory requires further development, to recognise multiple forms and alternative experiences both between and within individual careers.

The career stories also revealed complexity in identifying career within individual experiences as a number of interviewees indicated certain segments of their

work experience which they did not consider to constitute career. This was evidenced to relate to an absence of hierarchical advancement, individual ambition and/or personal control. To illustrate, Gemma narrated; *"I don't think I've got a career, I really don't, I just think I've got a job"*. On further prompting Gemma contrasted her experiences with family members who had taken active steps in a clear professional direction and exampled the different professional roles they had undertaken to demonstrate clearly defined progression. In contrast, Gemma refers to a lack of progression within her own experiences, which has also been shaped by persistent health issues, resulting in her always having worked part-time and thereby limits the opportunities she has chosen to pursue. However, she has worked within Baycastle Trust for the past seventeen years and has undertaken regular personal development and relevant qualifications. Prior to this Gemma worked in the private sector for seventeen years. Her story demonstrates a clear sequence between positions, however, particularly in the last seventeen years changes in position and function have been instigated by two major organisational change initiatives and the termination of a project following funding withdrawal. Consequently, she has experienced little control over experiences of change and this, alongside an absence of visible progression, results in Gemma's interpretation of her experiences as not constituting career.

Alternatively, Simon reflected that he did not consider over ten years of work experience within a variety of occupations and the undertaking of a teaching degree to constitute career. Alternatively, Simon considered his later qualification as a mental health nurse to signify the commencement of his career. Simon's narrative indicated that to him personally career represented having a sense of purpose and the potential for further development and advancement, something he considered to be lacking within his earlier experience. He consequently reflects upon earlier '*wasted years*', within which he felt '*directionless*'. Conversely, Denise considers her work experience prior to joining the NHS to constitute career, but not her current '*job*';

> "*you know I've gone through a career path at xxxxx and now I'm quite happy just to do an important role and feel valued and that kind of thing but at a far lower level than I was before, and I'd be happy to do that for the next ten years*" (Denise).

Denise evidently links the notion of career to hierarchical position and progression and, whilst this is demonstrated within her previous experience, she no longer aspires to this within her current or future work. Within each of these stories the definition of

sequences of work experience as career is distinguishable by different employing organisations, however such differentiation between career and job was also evidenced within a single employing organisation. For example, Louise interpreted her earlier clinical experience as career but not a more recent imposed change to a non-clinical role (detailed in Section 7.5.1:p178) over which the interviewee experienced limited personal choice and so alternatively narrated with regret observing this as seeing out her time until retirement.

Although interviewees exhibited evident diversity in terms of how they chose to define their experiences as career the above stories highlight that the extent to which they have felt able to shape and control their experiences is a defining feature within these explanations. Therefore, it is again demonstrated that individuals contrast their experiences with a dominant career ideology that emphasises personal choice and control, and consequently rather than identifying these experiences as unique, choose to exclude experiences which do not match these expectations.

8.3 Careering Out of Control?

A key element arising from the narration of career stories was that interviewees did not act in ways that they expected they should within their career development. Whilst career models emphasis the exercise of personal choice and control as individuals navigate through discontinuity and non-linearity the research findings reveal that frequently individual movement through this terrain is unplanned, unanticipated and outside of personal control. Experiences of change were often not the outcome of a proactive approach to careering, as suggested within dominant career discourse and theory. Alternatively, interviewees narrated limited or no personal choice or control within change experiences and overall patterns of careering, expressing; "*it's just happened really*" (Sheila), "*if I'm honest it's just sort of evolved'* (Gemma) and;

> *"it's all a mish mash but people don't necessarily have a plan and the plans that you have don't necessarily happen that way, do they? You just end up somewhere"* (Lacey).

Interviewees interpreted such accounts of careering as being unusual or different, and consequently sometimes expressed self-depreciation; *"I was that imposter*" (Chloe) or embarrassment; "*I always feel a bit awkward the fact that sometimes you do hear people say well I never saw that job advertised"* (Sheila). In attributing change to intangible

factors through such narratives, interviewees expressed that they had not proactively created or sought opportunities to enact change within their careering. Alternatively, they exercised differing degrees of personal agency, from responding or reacting to such situations and therefore contributing to experiences of change, or they were inactive; and change arose either as a result of a decision not to act, or a perceived inability to do so.

In narrating alternative forms of agency interviewees suggested that this was not representative of how they believed they should act in relation to their career, expecting that they should have taken a more proactive and self-directed role. However, the findings reveal that in fact such experiences of varying degrees of choice and control are a recurrent experience across a range of career stories. Such explanations are not recognised within the dominant career models reviewed in Chapter Two but the frequency of such accounts across the sample highlighted this as a significant factor in understanding how individuals experience and interpret careering. Analysis of the range of interviewees who explained their careering or particular instances within such terms were dispersed across the sample group. Furthermore, in narrating limited or an absence of choice and control within change experiences, similarities were evidenced in terms of the alternative accounts used. This was not only in regard to the role of other people and contextual factors, but also the unexpected prevalence of explanations which highlighted influences such as chance, luck and fate, outlined within the ensuing section.

8.4 Careering by Chance and Luck

In offering alternative explanations for the occurrence of change in place of personal career agency, interviewees recurrently attributed the creation or shaping of opportunities and circumstances which were unanticipated and outside of personal control to luck, chance or having fallen into opportunities, events and changes (figure 16:p200). Such explanations are insightful in understanding the various elements outlined in the preceding empirical chapters, personal career agency, the role of others and the significance of contextual factors. Explanations of chance and luck were applied to both overall patterns of careering and to specific experiences of change both within and between roles, organisations, and professions.

Dictionary definitions of chance and luck[13] demonstrate similarities between the two terms; the attribution of occurrences or circumstances to some force other than personal action, intention and control. Within the career stories the terms were somewhat more distinct; 'luck' or being 'lucky' was applied to good fortune brought about by chance but was predominantly applied in relation to work or organisational factors which had supported or influenced careering. Consequently, luck tended to describe personal agency in response to contextual factors. To illustrate, Lee attributed securing his initial entry into a HR role to luck and 'having a foot in the door', which facilitated a change in departments within the same employing organisation and gave rise to his subsequent progression and personal development as a HR professional. Alternatively, 'chance' was applied to a variety of accidental and fortuitous occurrences including conversations, events and misunderstandings, and therefore was predominantly discussed in prompting a response to the agency of others, both within and external to the context of work, which occurred without planning or intention on the part of the interviewee. Correspondingly, interviewees also incorporated variations of the phrase 'in the right place at the right time' within their stories to highlight the timely occurrence of opportunity, and consequently suggested elements of both chance and luck.

Figure 16 (p198) summarises how elements of luck, chance and fate were incorporated within career stories. In explaining elements of careering and instances of change as 'luck' or 'being lucky' interviewees were principally referring to unanticipated organisational factors including benefits, support, change and key people. Such factors are not necessarily interpreted as a formalised organisational contribution to the individuals career development but alternatively are unanticipated, rather than assumed, and considered to be good fortune rather than expected, and hence give rise to alternative explanations of careering. Two interviewees attributed their overall careering to luck rather than personal action. To illustrate, Elizabeth narrates luck rather than personal agency as having resulted in rapid progression upon entry into Baycastle Trust. Nevertheless, analysis of her career story reveals a series of organisational

[13] **Oxford Dictionary of English**. 3rd edition. 2010
Chance – the occurrence of events in the absence of any obvious intention or cause.
Luck - success or failure apparently brought by chance rather than through one's own actions:

	Luck	**Chance**	**Right Time, Right Place** **Fate/ Fallen Into**
Key Application within stories	Good fortune applied in relation to work and organisational factors	Accidental and Fortuitous Occurrences	Obtaining opportunities as a result of circumstance rather than merit or pre-destined to occur regardless of individual agency
Principal context from which arising, and agency exercised	Personal agency in response to contextual factors primarily within the organisational context	Response to agency of others – predominantly within the social context, but also work-related	Suggesting opportunities have arisen with little agency on part of the interviewee, except being in the correct location at the time that an opportunity arises
Discussed in relation to?	The occurrence and timing of unanticipated organisational factors including; • Organisational and professional *benefits* • Organisational support and opportunities • *Work duties* e.g. maintaining patient contact, enjoyable or interesting work • Opportunities arising from *organisational change* • Support of *key people* • Overall *careering*	Unanticipated consequences of the following types of interaction with others; • *Conversations,* • *Events,* • *Misunderstandings* • *Opportunities* • *Meetings & Encounters*	Being presented with opportunities with have not been sought • Internal opportunities including secondments and projects • External Opportunities • Personal development • Overall *Careering*
Principal Outcomes	Support for personal development Internal Opportunities – including changes in position, team or location. External opportunities – including changes in organisation and professional direction	Subjective and objective change including entry into professional field, organisation, Change in future direction/aspiration.	Primarily discussed in relation to the sequencing of work experiences, which was not proactively sought and within which limited personal agency was exercised.
Career story coverage	Directly referenced within 13 stories	Directly referenced within 17 stories	Directly referenced within 15 stories

Figure 16; Alternative Accounts to Agency within Career Stories

changes, including the setting up and termination of projects, organisational exit by colleagues and reforms to national training guidelines which each contributed to the changes she has experienced. Likewise, Jenna also expresses her overall careering as partly a consequence of luck; "*I feel at times I've just been really lucky, I feel like I've kind of just fell into things*". Like Elizabeth, Jenna discusses much of her careering as a response to opportunities and circumstances, or change as something which has happened to her, with limited personal intent or control.

Luck was also recognised in relation to the opportunities afforded to interviewees; both intra-organisational (e.g. in position, team, and location) and externally (including changes in employing organisation and/or professional direction), in relation to both their occurrence and timing. Keith narrated how he had been lucky in terms of the internal opportunities he had been afforded across different NHS organisations, and in terms of the people he had worked with, which influenced his decision to remain within the NHS;

> *"I consider myself lucky to have had all of the opportunities that I have had. I've been lucky that, and particularly within this organisation, I work with some fantastic people*". (Keith).

Other interviewees also talk about being lucky in terms of the people they have worked with, and managers they have had, that have supported them in keeping their skills up to date or putting them forward or encouraging them to apply for internal opportunities in order to develop their careering. Interestingly, interviewees also frequently discussed organisational benefits and protection in terms of luck, and this had a more indirect effect upon careering, in that in recognising this aspect they were less willing to change organisations. Predominantly this was discussed in terms of the NHS, particularly in terms of pensions and MHO status which enabled early retirement, but also incorporated pensions benefits and resettlement packages provided by previous employers.

Finally, elements of work design were also explained in terms of luck. Louise considered herself to have been lucky in maintaining some patient contact on progression to a strategic role, enabling her to develop whilst retaining key elements of her work which she was evidently very passionate about. Tracey discussed feeling very privileged to have undertaken the work that she has which she has thoroughly enjoyed and demonstrates deep appreciation and recognition of the NHS as an employer; "*over*

the years I have been very lucky to have done what I have done". The examples illustrated above demonstrate the significance of further understanding explanations of luck in relation to careering. As revealed this frequently highlights the significance of the organisational context in careering, drawing attention away from formalised organisational career management practices and instead illustrating an array of further organisational factors which are experienced differently across employees and thereby offering a different perspective on careering.

In attributing careering to chance, interviewees described change as arising not only from organisational and work-related elements but also unplanned and accidental happenings arising from more far-reaching influences. Chance originated from different occurrences (figure 16:p198) including chance conversations, meetings, opportunities and misunderstandings, and in relation to a broad range of outcomes including subjective changes in career ambition and aspirations, and objective changes in organisations, positions and professional areas.

Chance conversations led to new opportunities or resulted in changes in future aspirations, including changes in profession, and included with friends, family and neighbours, as well as current and former colleagues. Chance meetings and encounters occurred both within and external to the immediate work context, including the development of support networks and information systems. Such an encounter provided to be a pivotal moment within Chloe's careering; "*she took my career in a completely different direction".* The meeting arose as a result of Chloe providing support to a newly appointed senior colleague who subsequently engineered a meeting between a key senior manager and Chloe.

Although some chance opportunities arose from the organisational context, and change and key people within this, they also emerged from alternative sources. To illustrate, at a time when Joan felt that she had no option other than to remain in clinical work she spotted a job advertisement in a local newspaper which represented a pivotal point in her careering. This offered her the opportunity to redirect her careering away from clinical work to pursue a strategic role. Before this event Joan did not consider herself to possess the skills required to undertake such a transition.

Chance misunderstandings were a particularly surprising yet interesting occurrence, illustrated by two interviewees who applied for vacancies which were not for role that they thought they were, and in each example held significant implications

for their future careering. Kate's late-night application for a role she misunderstood became apparent during the interview at which point she recognised this as an exciting opportunity to work across health and local authority organisations and consequently directed her future careering in a way which she had not intended or indeed considered. Similarly, on leaving school Louise applied for what she believed to be an administrative post within the local hospital but starting work she discovered that it was a role in mental health nursing, commencing thirty-six years working within the field;

> "*I purely by chance ended up in the NHS. I thought I wanted to go into admin, and I applied for a work experience post at a hospital, thinking I was going for admin. In a way I think I was lucky because I had no idea that I was going to do nursing, didn't even consider it and certainly didn't consider mental health nursing. But when I went for this job, this work experience job that was at XXXX Hospital, it turned out to be in a mental health community and I went out with the qualified nursing staff, the mental health staff and absolutely loved it"* (Louise).

Stuart attributes his entry into the nursing profession to both chance and luck. A chance conversation with a friend who had made an earlier career change to train as a mental health nurse suggested that Stuart would also enjoy this area of work. This resulted in a key turning point in his story, from what he describes as a series of '*dead end'* jobs to his eventual professional qualification in mental health nursing. Again, this form of intervention is difficult to foresee, plan, or indeed manage, and its influence is not evident within an individual's career history unless explored through the careering lens adopted within this thesis.

In a similar vein to descriptions of chance and luck, interviewees also drew upon the idiom "in the right place at the right time" to describe the origin of opportunities which resulted in change. Such an explanation was narrated by Lee (opening story to Chapter Six) in describing his change in employing organisation, from a pub group to a national leisure chain. This change was prompted by a newspaper advertisement at the time when he was open to new opportunity;

> "*that's mainly what prompted me, it just happened to come up at the right time. I just saw it and I thought I could do that, I've got some of the skill base already. So that prompted me to move*".

Lee's narrative highlights a degree of readiness to change, and consequent openness to potential opportunity, which demonstrates that attributing situations to the right time

and place is potentially not as opportunistic as initially presented. Variations of this expression were drawn upon to indicate an opportunity that the interviewee interpreted as being available or offered due to circumstances rather than merit, inferring luck and good fortune at being in a place or position, at the time of its occurrence. For example; *"sometimes, people always say this don't they, but it's about being in the right place at the right time"* (Janice). Similarly, Donna expressed*;*

> *"there is a little bit of me that thinks some of it is luck, and it's about being in the right place at the right time. I do think I've been quite lucky and I've always managed to be in the right place at the right time"*.

Others expressed discomfort at being afforded opportunities based upon circumstance, rather than merit;

> "*not everybody is given the same chances, sometimes it's about being in the right place at the right time and being in a position where people get to know you and then say, do you want to, yes I'll do that, I do feel a bit awkward about that, it's not the way that it should be really"* (Sheila).

Whilst descriptions of chance and luck have been demonstrated to offer prompts for personal career agency, and subsequent change, interviewees talked about fate or having fallen into opportunities and/or changes throughout their careering, suggesting a limited exercise of agency. Such explanations were applied to both instances of change and overall patterns of careering, suggesting careering had occurred outside of the interviewees control, as illustrated through the following narrative;

> *"I've never been overly ambitious either, you know lots of these posts I just kind of fell in…it's just as things have come up but I've never orchestrated it. And I've never had this blueprint that I'm going to be like, I interviewed somebody the other day and they said my aim is I'm going to be director of nursing, I've never had that ambition"* (Kate).

The above narrative from Kate illustrates how patterns of careering are interpreted by interviewees as having 'fallen' into place, and similar explanations are offered by interviewees in relation to different forms of change within careering, indicating limited control exercised by interviewee over experienced changes. Whilst some of these changes initially appear relatively small in scale; for example, 'falling' into performing additional duties within an existing work role, they potentially contribute to more significant subsequent outcomes, such as supporting a later change in role or indeed profession, which would not have happened without this prior experience. To illustrate,

at the time of interview Lacey was undertaking professional study to facilitate a change in professional direction from training (having worked within this area for over twenty years) to podiatry. Lacey initially accounts for this key turning point in narrating spotting an opportunity to retrain whilst researching university open days on behalf of her daughter;

> *"I just saw it and it fell into place really. The open day was in a few weeks' time, and I went, and they said we'd definitely have you and that was it. A colleague did the same thing in days before the course started, these things change your life don't they?"* (Lacey).

Whilst it is evident that Lacey exercised some personal agency in recognising and reacting to this opportunity, it's arising in the first place is attributed elsewhere. Further analysis of her career story reveals deeper insight into this change; Lacey had experienced a challenging and unsettled period within her work as a result of organisational change, prompting reflection; "*about what to do with my life*". Alongside, Lacey recounted an early interest in podiatry, which she had not pursued following a negative experience, twenty years prior;

> *"I always wanted to be a podiatrist when I was young, and I didn't do it because I did work experience and I went to a pretty horrible grotty chiropody place. And I thought uhh there's some really horrible feet I'm not sure I want to do that, and it put me off. I was only about 16 at the time, and that was how I ended up going into HR"* (Lacey).

Therefore, whilst Lacey narrates this recent opportunity to train in podiatry as having fallen into place, it is evidently the accumulation of different contributory factors, including early ambition and experiences, recent organisational unsettlement, and selecting a university for her daughter, which prompted this significant professional change. However, Lacey interprets if as having fallen into place, because it was unanticipated and unplanned, and therefore she does not consider herself to have been proactive in its enactment, and so offers an alternative explanation of its enactment.

Evidently, stemming from alternative explanations of chance, luck and being in the right place at the right time, are personal responses necessitating some degree of agency, whether responsive or more limited in form. Therefore, although interviewees considered themselves to have had limited influence or control in such circumstances arising, they exercised differing degrees of agency in response which only become

apparent upon exploration of their stories. These explanations are fundamental to understanding how individuals interpret their careering, their role within this and the influence of other factors. And whilst such interpretations draw attention to the context and role of other people, they also highlight alternative explanations in conjunction with these factors and demonstrate complexity in understanding how these factors are experienced by each individual.

What is evident within the above is that such explanations are drawn upon to account for the unexpected within careering, whether that be arising from other people, or contextual factors, and resulting in varying responses in terms of personal agency by interviewees. Such a finding goes some way to accounting for the variety evidenced within career stories, including those gathered within a single organisational setting. Consequently, such explanations are significant in drawing attention to the elements of careering which are considered to be different to the norm but in fact provide greater insight into how careering and change is experienced. Adopting careering as a lens through which to study career change consequently brings such alternative accounts into focus and permits deeper exploration of the factors and people underlying such explanations.

8.5 Uniquely the Same; Concluding Discussion

The career stories have demonstrated that, in highlighting the uniqueness of their careering experiences, interviewees conversely illustrate corresponding accounts of career. At the core of such interpretations are experiences of change as being messy, frequently unanticipated and at times out of control. The career stories have demonstrated the prevalence of such characteristics across a range of experiences encompassing different organisations, occupations and professions.

Analysis of the career stories reveals multiple origins of messiness, unpredictability, and a lack of personal choice and control within change experiences, including the agency of other people, and the different contexts within which interviewees career. And careering has offered a lens through which to observe and study the dynamic interplay between these elements (see figure 17:p205).

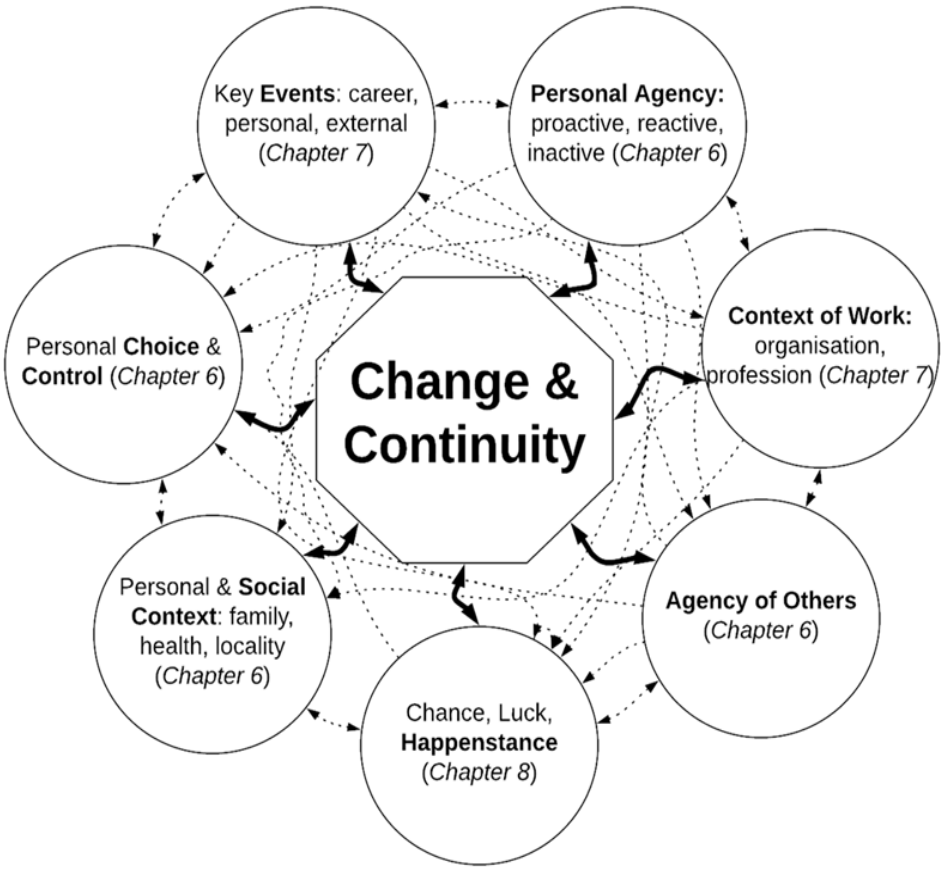

Figure 17: Careering

These elements give rise to accounts of careering as shaped by external and unanticipated influences, including as a consequence of luck or chance, or having fallen into place, and a narrated absence of personal choice and control within careering and change. Interviewees narrated pivotal moments within careering, including events arising from the wider context, as well as seemingly minor occurrences and circumstances which cumulatively contribute to individual stories, and experiences of change and continuity. In addition, interviewees introduce a diverse range of characters, including managers, colleagues, family and friends, who have also contributed to their story.

The central theme of this chapter is that careering is frequently interpreted as being different or unique, and either as a whole, or events within this, attributed to explanations of happenstance as a way to account for such differentiation. Such explanations have been illustrated to arise from discrepancy between how interviewees

expect to experience career and change, and their subsequent personal experiences. The source of such discrepancy arises from the research findings presented within the preceding two chapters (Six and Seven), within which it has been evidenced that interviewees do not adopt a proactive and self-directing role towards careering to the extent that they expect, or as is suggested within career theory. Alternatively, career stories have revealed that experiences of change within career are constituted of a myriad of contributory factors including different forms of personal agency, the agency of other people within and external to the context of work, and a broad range of contextual factors and events, arising from the personal, social and work-related context within which interviewees career.

Chapter Six demonstrated that personal agency within careering is not as proactive as anticipated but is predominantly in response to the agency of others or contextual factors from which opportunities for change are presented or indeed imposed upon the interviewee. The extent to which they are able, or willing, to exercise personal choice and control within such experiences has also been evidenced to vary and is mediated by factors arising from within the personal and social context, including family, health and locality. Consequently, interviewees also reveal experiences within which they have exercised limited choice and control and therefore could be considered to be inactive in terms of career agency. The unpredictability and lack of control which arises as a consequence of different combinations of these key factors, and a multitude of possible outcomes results in interviewees accrediting careering outside of personal agency. And alternatively attributing change to external factors and circumstances, including chance and happenstance. The latter half of Chapter Six turned to how the agency of others featured within accounts of change within careering, to reveal that in addition to formalised avenues of support and guidance, other people within both the work and non-work context significantly influenced careering in both informal and unintentional ways. The key discussions of Chapter Six continued within Chapter Seven to explore the different context within which the agency of the interviewees and significant others was enacted. This expanded beyond the organisational and professional context of work, to highlight the significance of the personal and social context of the interviewee. And how factors arising within this context, including family, locality and health, mediated between the work-related context and agency, contributing to diversity within change experiences. Examining such factors as part of

a career story reveals the interplay of different elements, and consequently demonstrates the unpredictability and uncontrollability within personal experiences that contribute to perceived uniqueness and diversity of career stories and divergence between expectation and experience. Consequently, the aptness of the term ‘careering’ to invoke the notion of sequences of work experience proceeding in a chaotic and uncontrollable manner, such as the progress of ‘a careering or runaway horse’ (Section 4.1), in place of the orderly and comprehensible progression of ‘career’ is substantiated. Resultantly, although interviewees consider such career experiences to be unique, a careering perspective demonstrates that in experiencing unpredictability and varying levels of personal control, such stories are ultimately, ‘uniquely the same’.

9 Conclusion

"it's all a mish mash, but people don't necessarily have a plan and the plans that you have don't necessarily happen that way, do they? You just end up somewhere" (Lacey).

9.1 Introduction

The objective of this thesis was to explore the different experiences of change arising from career stories, to develop a clearer comprehension of how, and why, change is experienced within career. In so doing, the findings of the thesis challenge and advance the theoretical literature reviewed within Chapter Two. Resultantly, in bringing the thesis to a conclusion, this chapter will revisit the research questions to outline how they are each addressed by the research findings and empirical discussion. As outlined within the Methodology Chapter (Five), the objective of my empirical research was to provide a richer understanding of the lived experience of career and change within this. This was approached through the development of 'careering' as a construct, through which to view processes of career, over time, and within the broader context of a person's life and story. To conclude, the contribution of this thesis will be outlined in terms of the advancement of career change theory and research methods. Finally, the limitations of my empirical study are outlined alongside potential future research avenues.

9.2 Research Questions

The ensuing discussion will address each of the research questions in turn, to demonstrate how the research outcomes outlined in the preceding empirical chapters challenge or advance the career literature outlined in the earlier literature review, by fulfilling the original research aim of exploring how and why change is experienced within career.

9.2.1 Experience of Change within the Career

Contemporary models of career portray the overall form or structure of a career, but what is it to experience this fragmentation, dynamism and non-linearity for oneself? How can this be more clearly articulated to demonstrate how apparently linear stages may be experienced in uncontrolled and chaotic ways? How do the career stories gathered within my research differ to how career experiences are depicted or characterised within career theory?

The literature review presented in Chapters Two – Four demonstrate that a plethora of contemporary models' present career as fragmented, dynamic and non-linear, and consequently punctuated by change. Such a perspective of career is supported by the research findings outlined in the preceding Empirical Discussion Chapter (Eight). However, in studying lived experiences of change within overall sequences of careering this thesis has demonstrated that the way in which this is experienced and interpreted by individual's is often messy, unanticipated and out of control. This challenges dominant career theory discourse which, whilst encapsulating fragmentation and non-linearity, accentuates each individual's role in embracing such characteristics. It overstates the extent to which personal choice and control is exercised in navigating such terrain, whilst neglecting to account for how such forms and encompassing change emerge. Correspondingly existing conceptualisations of career, including 'flexible' (Arnold & Cohen 2008) and 'next generation' career models (Sullivan & Baruch 2009), offer only a partial account of careering through fragmentation and discontinuity, a shortcoming addressed by the research findings of this thesis. Furthermore, whilst such theory highlights change as a recurrent feature of career it offers limited insight of how such change is experienced and understood.

In exploring change, the research findings have evidenced that careers and careering are messy, unexpected and diverse, giving rise to experiences which are unpredicted and at times out of control. This results in interviewees describing their own experiences as being in some way unique or not representative of career. Consequently, it is apparent that interviewees contrast their experiences against a dominant ideology of career, reflective of its conceptualisation within contemporary theory and models. Nevertheless, if career is to be understood as "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al., 1989:8), as stated within the

widely-recognised definition of career in the introduction to this thesis, then each of these stories, and the work experiences described within, represent career. Therefore, this thesis has demonstrated that contemporary career theory is remiss in its conceptualisation of the lived reality of career and neglects to account for its potentially unanticipated and out of control nature. In so doing, it offers only a partial account of careering and is in jeopardy of attracting similar critique to that levelled at the traditional organisational career model by Collin and Watts (1996:386) in suggesting it as; "reality for few, though a beacon for many". Career models indicate fragmentation and non-linearity as a favourable condition of career, from which opportunity and change is embraced and proactively pursued. Conversely, by studying change as the 'punctuation marks', 'turning points' and connections between experiences, this thesis has highlighted not only alternative perspectives and experiences upon discontinuity and instability but has also facilitated key insight into the messiness and unpredictability of careering, and divergences between expectations and lived experience. This is because it brings to light the connections between experiences and reveals the myriad of factors at play in creating and responding to such complexity in place of an over-emphasis upon individual proactivity.

Moreover, existing career concepts each emphasise particular forms of change, for example, protean and kaleidoscope career theory stresses subjective change in career orientation, as individuals adapt to performance and learning demands (Hall, 1996b; Hall and Mirvis, 1996) or as a consequence of shifting individual priorities (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005). Alternatively, whilst boundaryless theory (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) emphasises increased physical and psychological mobility, empirical research has prioritised physical mobility occurring across traditional occupational and organisational boundaries (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006). Consequently, such theory only offers a partial account of career and, as the research findings have demonstrated, overlooks alternative forms of change which were narrated by interviewees as significant in relation to their overall careering. In broadening the scope of 'career change', my research addresses the request of Ibarra (2006) for a wider recognition of not only major change within career but also alternative potentially influential or consequential forms. My research findings have broadened the scope of 'career change', recognising a number of different types, in contrast to typologies that focus upon major change within job, organisation, or occupation such as that offered by Feldman and Ng,

(2007) or transitions between and within work and non-work roles (Louis 1980). Alternatively, my research methodology encouraged the narration of a broad range of change within career stories, revealing the change events which interviewees interpreted as influential or consequential within their own careering. In fostering the emergence of different forms of change from within career stories the significance of seemingly minor instances of change, which subsequently impacted upon later careering, were fruitfully highlighted by interviewees, for example, in the physical setting of work or the work role. Accordingly, adopting a broader perspective of career change has revealed greater insight about how key characteristics of career are experienced.

Clearly, the prevalence of stories which present an alternative viewpoint of careering that does not correspond with dominant ideology suggests that existing career theory requires further development to recognise multiple forms and alternative experiences both between and within individual careers. Consequently, my research proposes a broader perspective upon career, and change within, which is unconstrained by the dominant discourse of prevalent career models to more closely reflect the lived experience of many. This will provide a holistic view of careering which encompasses and embraces diversity within and between experiences and personal orientations to career. Relatedly, the remaining research questions take further steps in determining how this can be achieved.

9.2.2 Agency and Context

To what extent do career experiences correspond with understandings of agency in existing literature? And to what degree is agency and career experiences influenced by the various contexts including personal, organisational and societal in which the career is enacted?

In addressing this second group of research questions, the research outcomes are demonstrated to advance beyond the characterisation of overall experiences to address how and why such chaotic and messy experiences are constituted. To do so necessitates recognition of both agency and context, and acknowledgement of the complex interplay between the two. The career literature reviewed within Chapter Three highlighted different approaches adopted within the study of career and change and their associated treatment of these elements, on occasion informed by academic debate and social

theories of structure and agency, including that of Giddens (1984) and Archer (1995) and career structuration theory (Barley, 1989). The approach adopted within this thesis is similar to that advocated by Duberley et al (2006b), in drawing upon such debates as a 'sensitising device', to provide an initial point for analysis, whilst evading the constraints of a rigid frame and assisting the emergence of relevant strata from within the career stories.

Correspondingly, in the foregoing presentation of research findings, aspects of agency and context are outlined within Chapters Six 'Careering out of Control?' and Seven 'Careering in Context' respectively. However, analysis of these factors clearly illustrated that agency and context cannot be considered in isolation but necessitate recurrent working between the two, as has been argued within the empirical research of Cohen and Duberley (2015). To illustrate, the exampling of agency through segments of narrative inescapably necessitated explanation of the context within which this was located and vice versa. This clearly infers agency and context are closely entwined elements of careering and to successfully comprehend of one entails a corresponding understanding of the other. Such a perspective is neglected within contemporary career models which over-emphasis elements of individual agency, either treating this in isolation from, or as a proactive approach or 'adaptation' to, context (Hall, 1996b).

The empirical discussion of Chapter Eight demonstrated that whilst proactivity is evidenced within individual experiences of change this is not as prevalent as dominant theory and ideology suggests. Conversely, narrating alternative forms of agency, including that of other people and varying degrees of personal choice and control, individual careering is frequently revealed as unplanned, unanticipated and often out of control. The literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three has demonstrated the propensity of career theory and models to accentuate a self-directed and proactive approach to career, with change presented as both an outcome and a means of achieving this, suggesting high levels of personal freedom, choice and control. A position that is further reiterated within the theory of career proactivity (Parker et al., 2010). Consequently, alternative forms of personal agency are overlooked but, as demonstrated throughout, the preceding empirical chapters neglect to offer a clear representation of what it is to experience careers characterised by fragmentation, dynamism and non-linearity.

Accordingly, this thesis has demonstrated careering as constituted of different forms of agency, reflecting the choice and control exercised in response to unpredictable opportunities and situations. Resultantly, Figure 7 (p113) proposes career agency as located across a continuum, from proactivity to inactivity, with a significant midpoint representing how individuals react and respond to opportunities which are unanticipated and outside of personal control. Such a continuum of agency arose within and between sequences of work experience, at different stages and in conjunction with each of the types of change identified. Consequently, this multitude of potential approaches to careering contributed to the diversity of experiences evidenced. This builds upon the empirical findings of Duberley et al., (2006), which identified 'proactive' and 'reactive' modes of engagement between individual actions and career to demonstrate the extent to which individuals wanted to initiate change, and actions which transformed, challenged or maintained. However, my proposed framework has two key points of differentiation from that presented by Duberley et al, (2006b). The first is the application of the term 'responsive' as an alternative to reactive. This is to convey the notion of a somewhat considered response within which other factors and considerations are considered, rather than to suggest a sudden and unplanned reaction. Furthermore, by recognising inactivity, my research draws attention to change within which the individual has either no control or exercises a personal choice not to act. In demonstrating that such inaction presents the opportunity for individual reflexivity its recognition as a form of career agency is befitting. In recognising career inactivity, my research also incorporates elements of career inaction (Verbruggen and De Vos, 2016) and career embeddedness ((Feldman and Ng, 2007) theory. However, currently such theories have formed an alternative body of research, as a juxtaposition to that of proactivity, and so the two positions are empirically studied as disparate areas.

However, as my research findings have demonstrated, career stories encompass multiple forms of agency, in relation to different events and factors, and consequently the value of combining elements of such theory within the study of career agency provides a holistic understanding of agency across the course of career. Insightfully, interviewees recurrently interpreted both responsive and inactive forms of agency as unreflective of career because they had not proactively sought or created such opportunities. Specifically, whilst accounts of proactivity within career theory remain relevant, a broader perspective upon career agency is required to account for different

ways within which individuals act, and exercise control and choice, including reacting to, or taking no action. Furthermore, whilst contemporary career theory emphasises proactivity as a dominant approach to careering, the career stories demonstrated that interviewees principally narrated instances of change within their careering as a reaction or response to opportunities arising or being presented. Consequently, whilst the individual remains central within their own story, the role they take within this as presented within the career models reviewed in Chapter Two, is challenged.

The research findings demonstrated two core explanations for inactivity within careering; a personal choice not to act, or an inability to exercise choice, either as an outcome of the agency of others, or as a consequence of contextual factors arising from both work and non-work contexts. Unlike the argument of Feldman et al., (2007) which relate embeddedness in terms of job, organisation or occupation, to forces such as fit, link and sacrifice, the findings also highlight an inability to exercise personal choice as a determinant in keeping people within their current employment situation. Consequently, in understanding personal agency, careering is observed as one of a multitude of interconnected aspects within a person's total life and studied in relation to competing and conflicting priorities, and demands within this. The chosen research methods were particularly valuable in exploring such interplay, recognising alternative forms of agency as instrumental in the development of career and introducing the significance of further factors including the agency of others and context.

Correspondingly, multiple layers of context through which individual's career or participate within other aspects of their lives were key elements of career stories, and their narrative was insightful and indeed necessary, for setting the scene of each interviewee's careering. Contextual factors significantly contributed to the unpredictability and messiness of careering, and to the extent to which individuals exercised personal choice and control over and within personal experiences. My research adopted an integrated approach to the study of context, as advocated by Mayrhofer et al., (2007), rather than studying specific factors to yield further insight. However, moving beyond the differentiation of individual levels of context, such as that offered by Smith-Ruig (2009), key factors arising from within were identified within the career stories as emerging themes of significance to careering. As would be anticipated the organisational and professional context had key influences upon

careering, however the research findings demonstrated that this particularly arose from wider scale change and reform or unexpected events. Experiences of career change were frequently narrated as a response to, or imposition arising from change within the context that careering occurred. These wider contextual changes and the associated consequences for individual careering are frequently difficult, if not impossible, to foresee or manage, emulated within their consequences upon the careering of individuals. Baycastle Trust provided a variety of rich examples of such change, particularly as a result of encompassing a number of different professional and organisational fields.

In turn, the organisational and professional context was also clearly impacted by, and in cases a direct result of changes within macro structure including the UK healthcare sector, governmental structures including those of public services and that of the wider economy. In addition, as a public-sector healthcare provider the organisation itself was situated within, and shaped by, the wider social context. For example, the implications of widespread reforms within the healthcare sector were clearly evidenced within a number of career stories. Such over-arching changes provided either a catalyst or prompt for agency within careering but individuals responded to the opportunities this presented in different ways. Similar to the empirical research of Cohen and Duberley (2015) my research incorporated the public sector as a key contextual area. However, by encompassing a variety of different professional and occupational roles within such a setting, and retrospective accounts of prior experience external to this field, different perspectives and interpretations of the relevance of this context and the changes which were instigated within were offered. Cohen and Duberley (2015) identified three faces of context in ideology, enduring structural features and proximal events. My research builds upon this to demonstrate the significance of the individual and social context of careering in mediating within change experiences, which was revealed as a result of a methodology which studied different forms of change over a greater period of time. This, combined with the use of career stories, encouraged a deeper richness of personal detail within the research findings and therefore offered an enhanced understanding of the importance of these contextual areas.

My research has evidenced the prominent role of factors and people within the personal and social context of career on change experiences, particularly in mediating

between factors arising within work contexts and careering. This is in contrast to the argument of Barley (1989) which suggests that career scripts mediate between individual action and institutional structures. Conversely, my findings demonstrated that such a mediating role contributes greatly to the diversity of experiences and to the interpretation of this as unusual, or atypical, as interviewees did not recognise similar influences within the experiences of others, and therefore was held in contention to dominant career scripts. Contextual factors were evidenced to prompt, direct or impose change within careering, to which interviewees acted or responded with varying degrees of choice and control resulting in diverse outcomes and contributing to the 'uniqueness' of experiences.

Of particular interest was the frequency by which unanticipated and unforeseen events, arising from the variety of contextual fields within which the individual careered or participated in other aspects of their lives, was demonstrated to shape changes in careering. The narration of unexpected, unusual or 'one-off' events which arose from within these various contexts were revealing a key feature of many stories and developed the earlier recognition of proximal events as a contextual aspect by Cohen and Duberley (2015). Incidents such as physical assault by patients, customers or family, accidents within and outside of the workplace, family breakdowns, chance encounters and conversations were far more prevalent than interviewees appreciated when describing their own experiences. As a point of difference to the empirical findings of Cohen and Duberley (2015) was the recurrence within my research of the attributing of unanticipated factors and events to chance and luck. This unanticipated finding subsequently directed my attention to the wider career literature, and the development of a chaos theory of career (Pryor and Bright 2013), and butterfly model of career (Borg et al 2006) to account for happenstance within careering (reviewed within Chapter Four). To date this model has been adopted as a practical tool in providing career guidance to school and college leavers but my research clearly demonstrates the value of such an approach in informing career management literature. This addresses some of the theoretical limitations of the mainstream models, by presenting career as a pattern of motion within which stability is closely intertwined with inherent uncertainty. However, my findings also show that accounts of happenstance and chance frequently do not do justice to the role played by the individual in encountering or responding to such situations, highlighting embarrassment

at having received 'opportunity' in such a manner. Therefore, I would suggest that happenstance is an important but currently under-valued element of careering. Appreciating chance, luck and happenstance as an underlying and recurrent factor within careering goes some way to addressing the gap which has been evidenced between not only theory and experience but also experience and personal expectation. However, it should not be accepted as an explanation in itself, but as an indicator of underlying influences and contributory factors warranting further exploration.

Consequently, recognising the connections and influences between different contextual factors is essential in explaining diversity within and across stories, and within this thesis these have been made visible by employing careering as a lens through which to explore career experiences.

9.2.3 Careering

How can the development of careering as a theoretical construct advance our understanding of what is it to experience career? What does this approach afford that is not provided within existing career theory and models?

Chapter Four of the literature review considered the potential of 'careering' as a methodological and theoretical construct through which to study and understand experiences of career and change. The application of 'careering' within current career literature was demonstrated to be limited and noticeably under-developed. In advancing careering as a contrast this thesis builds upon the existing limited application of the term by Clarke and Knights (2015) and Arthur et al., (1999). The potential of careering as a construct was deemed to be twofold; firstly, in conveying an alternative sense of movement than expressed through orderly connotations of career. The fittingness of this to the chaotic, diverted, interrupted and difficult to control movement conveyed by interviewees through their career stories has been exhibited throughout the latter half of this thesis. Secondly, the research findings have also demonstrated the theoretical value in approaching career as a process, to be studied as it unfolds over time and incorporating many different aspects of an interviewee's life. Furthermore, it points towards understanding such processes through observation of the points when they are jeopardised or at risk. To date career theory is limited in its understanding of change other than as a recurrent feature of career patterns. Whilst a cross-sectional approach

has traditionally been applied to the study of particular types of change this offers a narrow perspective with little appreciation of how this unfolds over time, and the scope of change within career. However, in exploring careering and change, it is possible to elaborate upon how sequences of work experience evolve over time, and encompassing wider influences including past experiences and contextual factors, and therefore building a more comprehensive picture of how individual career stories develop.

In concluding the literature review of Chapter Four, I proposed a definition of careering, which has subsequently been amended to consider the different forms of agency evidenced within the career stories;

> *a contextualised but highly-individual process unfolding throughout an individual's life course, that is closely intertwined with all other aspects of their life. This dynamic process incorporates both proactive and responsive actions and responses, as well as situations within which they choose not to, or are unable to act. At times this may include elements of uncontrollability, unintentionality, unpredictability and spontaneity, and gives rise to an evolving sequence of both work and non-work activities and experiences*.

In positioning careering as such neither the individual or context is prioritised within the determining of career patterns and change, alternatively the potential of each is recognised without being assumed. Furthermore, flexibility is provided to understand how the role of each may change across the life-course, and indeed within specific moments or events throughout the career.

The research outcomes have demonstrated that an empirical study of careering, through career stories, reveals a host of forms of change from which overall career experiences are constituted, and giving rise to fragmentation and discontinuity. The occurrence of change within sequences of work experience is a dominant factor in explaining messiness and unpredictability within careering and, because this is experienced by individuals in ways that they do not expect, they consequently interpret their experiences as being different or unusual in some way. However, I suggest that this is because changes in careering are not clearly understood. The career literature reviewed in Chapter Three demonstrates an emphasis upon physical rather than psychological mobility, and particularly changes in organisation, position, or between

different forms of working arrangement, e.g. from full time employment to self-employment. However, the career stories have demonstrated the significance of continuity, particularly as some interviewees had experienced protracted tenures within a single organisation, but this was demonstrated to have incorporated alternative forms of change, including within role, in work setting, professional role, and occupational type.

Exploration of careering revealed that continuity was also significant to other aspects of interviewees' lives, for example in terms of maintaining work life balance, or practical arrangements in terms of child or parental care. Consequently, careering demonstrated the implications of continuity or change within the wider context of an individual's life, not just in relation to work. This supports the argument of Miller-Tiedeman (1999) in recognising careering as an individual strategy within the context of the lifeworld to demonstrate how it is interwoven with other aspects of the individual's life. This illustrates that continuity and change require joint comprehension, to highlight the presence or restriction of personal choice and control and recognise individual diversity within such experiences and sequences. Hence greater insight is afforded as to how fragmentation and non-linearity is experienced within individual careering, and in relation to the broader context of that person's life.

In addition, analysis of career stories from a careering perspective moves beyond the identification of forms of agency, to understand why individuals act in this way and to what degree they are able and willing to exercise choice and control within their approach. In so doing the extent to which personal agency and change within the career is influenced by other factors including the context within which they career, and other people is revealed.

Consequently, a careering approach provides a closer reflection upon the lived experience of career through first-person narratives, offering a broader perspective than presented within current literature, to reveal careering as part of individual's wider life story, and recognising and encompassing the diversity this gives rise to. In so doing, a careering approach to the study of change has demonstrated a prevalence of stories which present an alternative viewpoint of careering, that does not correspond with dominant ideology indicating that current career theory requires further development. As this thesis has demonstrated, in endeavouring to present and potentially model career

in a manner which recognises multiple forms and alternative experiences, both between and within individual careers, a simultaneous appreciation of multiple aspects of careering is necessitated, including aspects of control and unpredictably, and the individuals or contextual factors from which this arises. Specifically, it requires a broader understanding of career which captures alternative experiences and provides clearer insight of how and why change occurs without depending upon over-simplistic accounts of personal agency. This would facilitate a greater appreciation of the diversity presented within these experiences whilst also recognising the similarities presented by such diversity, demonstrating how such experiences are in fact united in their differences and ultimately are 'uniquely the same'. Indeed, what makes each story unique is individual responses to the myriad of structures and contextual factors which they encounter as they live and work, creating different opportunities or constraints, resulting in responses and reactions which are mediated by past experiences and the agency of others. This is crucial in highlighting the career as going beyond the organisation and the individual but is a result of their whole lived experience and a consequence of the bringing together of many unique factors.

9.3 Methodological Contribution

The principal contribution of this thesis is the development of the construct of careering as outlined in Section 9.2.3 above. Advancing careering as a theoretical construct contributes to an understanding of how and why change is experienced and challenges the self-determinacy presented within career concepts whilst also highlighting the significance of multiple areas of context within which this is experienced.

In sum, a careering perspective requires the study of sequences of work experience over time, through a holistic approach which understands work as one of many closely entwined aspects of an individual's life. Resultantly, this also holds implications for how careering is to be empirically studied and therefore also presents a methodological contribution. This research shows that exploring careering through the analysis of career stories, and aided by a timeline tool, provides a retrospective and contextualised perspective upon experiences of change, providing empirical evidence to support such an approach and to inform future theory and practice. Some may suggest that the use of career stories to analysis careering is limited as it is reliant upon both

interviewee engagement and recollection, and particularly over protracted career tenures this may prove challenging. However, the purpose of this research design was to explore and understand personal experiences of change, and therefore the adopted method facilitated and encouraged interviewees to share this in their own words and highlight what was significant to them, enabling meaningful elements to emerge from the narratives. Also, the use of timeline tool assisted both in terms of recall, providing a visual representation of work experiences, and as a collaborative effort within which both the interviewee and myself as researcher were engaged, making me part of the recollection experience.

In addressing the research questions outlined above this thesis advances existing conceptualisations of career offered within contemporary career models by exploring change within and across sequences of work experience. Developing greater insight into how and why change is experienced addresses an under-researched area within the wider career literature, which has focused upon specific and isolated change events, rather than endeavouring to understand a broad range of forms of change within the context of sequences of work experience. Such an approach, encompassing not only major changes in employment forms but also recognising and exploring the impact of seemingly minor instances of change within which the future direction of the individual's career is reconsidered or challenged, informs understanding of what it is to experience fragmentation and non-linearity in careering. Such an advanced understanding of career experiences recognises diversity within, and across, experiences but also reaffirms the factors which reassert these as 'uniquely the same'.

This thesis has already had practical implications in informing my practice in my role as a Career and Employability Adviser within the University Careers Team. In providing support and guidance to students anxious about navigating a highly competitive graduate labour market without a clear ambition and definitive career plan through which to achieve this. Conversely, I have drawn upon my research to illustrate how careering can be unanticipated and frequently does not go to plan, and whilst key skills and experience are fundamental, it is also about being open to opportunity (from many different avenues), expecting the unexpected, and developing and maintaining effective networks across different aspects of their lives.

9.4 Limitations and Future Research

On drawing this thesis to a close, it is pertinent to reflect upon the research undertaken and its potential limitations. The research participants were recruited from within a single organisational setting, which some may suggest being relatively niche, in terms of both part of the wider organisation of the NHS and its specialist healthcare functions. This organisational setting encapsulated a vast and incredibly varied array of experiences and stories, of careering both within the wider public sector and further afield.

As an aside, the historical context and on-going reform of healthcare provision within such settings provided fruitful insight into its consequences for individual experiences of careering. Of particular interest to myself as a researcher with no former experience or knowledge within this field were fascinating accounts of interviewees who began their careers within former asylum style institutions and had expected to remain doing so throughout their working lives. However, rather than being context specific, this demonstrates both intentional and unintentional impacts of macro level changes, similar to which can have repercussions for many different sectors and industries.

As outlined within Chapter Five, the purpose of this thesis is not to make generalisations about career, but to embrace the diversity within and between experiences and this has been demonstrated within the Empirical Discussions of Chapters Five-Eight. Therefore, whilst it may be suggested by some that the context of the research organisation restricts the reach of this empirical research in informing career theory, I would maintain that conversely, through demonstrating a broad diversity in experiences both within and outside of this organisation, its wider appeal and relevance is ascertained. Furthermore, many of the factors which were demonstrated as significant to careering, including the agency of other people and aspects of the personal and social context within which interviewees careered, are not exclusive to such an organisational setting.

The research design resulted in the gathering of extensive career stories from which many different interesting themes emerged but could not be explored further within the constraints of this thesis. However, these could usefully provide the basis for

future research. Firstly, empirical discussion has focused upon how context has shaped and directed the career agency of interviewees. However, although to a lesser extent it has also been demonstrated that in exercising individual agency interviewees also acted upon the context within which they careered, which also subsequently impacted their future careering. This included transcending historical gender boundaries within the workforce and the development of new services and resources. However, whilst some evidence has been demonstrated, in focusing upon the research aims of this thesis; individual experiences and interpretations, there was insufficient evidence from which to draw clear conclusions, and therefore this was set aside as a potential avenue for future research.

In addition, the specific healthcare context of the research organisation provided a fascinating case for exploration, in representing a significant change in both the organisational and professional context. The objective of this thesis was to explore a multitude of experiences and occupations. However, in terms of further research these contextual factors provide a fascinating base for future research. Whilst the consequences of this are implicated within the findings of this research, there is usefully far more data that could be explored on this, requiring much greater knowledge on this specialist environment.

9.5 Concluding Remarks

This thesis has illustrated change as a consistent yet under-researched aspect of career which has been demonstrated to reveal greater insight into career experiences than captured within the current literature. My research has demonstrated that careers and change within this is frequently experienced as unanticipated and out of control. As a result of being experienced in such a way, people describe their experiences as being in some way unique. Such uniqueness arises from both the agency of other people and a wide host of contextual factors to which individual's respond or exercise limited personal agency over, either as a result of personal choice or an inability to act. The research outcomes challenge and advance how change is conceptualised within contemporary career models including the protean and boundaryless concepts, which present a limited perspective upon how this is experienced by focusing upon disparate elements rather than considering experiences of career as a whole.

However, by adopting careering as a lens though which to understand change within career this research has presented a holistic view of careering over time, revealing a myriad of factors from which experiences of change are constituted. In place of ascribing an over-deterministic proactive role to the career holder, the significance of the agency of others and contextual factors, which are sometimes presented as chance or luck, to account for the unpredictability and lack of control that is evidenced. This thesis has therefore provided a retrospective perspective upon careering, as it has unfolded across time, within an individual's personal, social and work context, recognising this as a highly individual process within which different forms of agency are exercised to reflect varying extents of personal choice and control.

In sum, in presenting a broader illustration of what it is to experience career, this thesis has illustrated that rather than being unique, the career stories gathered are wonderfully 'uniquely the same'.

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11 Appendices

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Appendix A – Baycastle Trust – Key Contextual Events

Year	Event/Legislation	Detail
1899	County Asylum opens	Predecessor organisation to Baycastle Trust
Interwar period	County Asylum renamed as XXX Mental Hospital	National trend to abolish term asylum
1948	Creation of NHS,	XXX Mental Hospital becomes St James Hospital
50/60/ 70s	Era of psychotropic drug therapies	Patients live outside hospitals on medical regimes
50/60s	Rise in patients' rights movements	In turn tied to civil rights campaigns
1959	Mental Health Act	Abolished the distinction between psychiatric and other hospitals and encouraged development of community care
60s/70s	Normalisation movement arose - underpinned by the basic right to live in the community alongside others,	One of two ideological movements over the past thirty years, alongside empowerment, which has had a significant impact on services for people with LD. Giving rise to deinstitutionalisation, the move from institutional to community care (Holt, 1997). "Partly in response to increasing recognition of the negative impact that large institutions had had on the lives of people with learning disabilities" (Emerson, 2001).
1983	Mental Health Act	Sets out rights of those admitted to psychiatric hospitals and allows appeal to committal
1986	Publication and introduction of; Project 2000: A New Preparation for Practice. (UKCC, 1986). A major review of nurse education and training. Legislated for by the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001.	Nursing and education reforms introduced by government and informed by recommendations of nursing review bodies and midwifery education. Attempt to attract people from wider educational and cultural backgrounds. Judge Report published by RCN Commission on Nursing Education in 1985 recommended transfer of nurse training to higher education setting. All new entrants to complete an eighteen-month common foundation programme (later reduced to one year) and then one of four specialist branches – mental health, learning disabilities nursing, adult nursing or children's nursing. Each component 50% theory and practice. Introduced at same time as radical changes taking place within NHS and problems including recruitment within a highly competitive labour market and public and management expectations of newly recruited nurses led to further research and reforms of their preparation (Spouse, 2003).

80/90s	Number of wards closed within two old asylum style hospitals, treating those with mental health and learning disabilities.	acute services transferred to District General Hospitals
1988	Community Care: Agenda for Action report	Followed assault of community nurse by former inpatient and was forerunner to the community care act
1990	Community Care Act 1990	Provides framework for many LD services
1991	Term 'learning disabilities' first introduced	by Stephen Dorrell, then Minister of Health in a speech to Mencap. Formal definition; of 'learning disabilities' or 'intellectual disabilities' includes the presence of; • A significant intellectual impairment and • Deficits in social functioning or adaptive behaviour • Which are present from childhood" (Emerson et al 1998)
1994	Establishment of Baycastle Healthcare NHS Trust	
1997	Closure of first of two old asylum style hospitals within the Trust	
2001	Newly purpose-built Hospital opens within the Trust	Setting for the majority of inpatient services
2002	Closure of last asylum style hospital within the Trust	
2004	Implementation of Agenda for Change, following publication of government paper 'Agenda for Change: Modernising the NHS Pay System.	Introduced pay bands and spine points across the health service based upon evaluation of jobs across skills and responsibilities.
2010 - 2012	Closure of Meadow Hospital and services transferred to Trust's central hospital.	Small hospital focusing on elderly care - assessment and rehabilitation, and transfer to central hospital and shared support services.
2010	Closure of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Inpatient Unit closes	Changed service provided within an alternative site in the Trust.

2011 (May)	Panorama Programme 'Undercover Care: the abuse exposed'	Winterbourne View, Bristol. People with learning disability and autism suffered abuse in a secure hospital - resulting in a criminal investigation and the sentencing of eleven employees
2012	Opening of New Trust Headquarters	
2012	Health and Social Care Act	Radical Changes to the way in which NHS is organised. The legislative changes came into effort from 1 April 2013 and included: 1) a move to clinically led commissioning 2) increase in patient involvement in the NHS 3) renewed focus on the importance of public health – 4) Streamlining of arms-length bodies 5) allowing healthcare market competition in the best interest of patients (NHS England, 2014)
2012 (Oct)	Panorama follow-up Winterbourne View - the hospital that stopped caring'	
2012 (Dec)	DH Report 'Transforming care: a national response to Winterbourne View Hospital'	Dept of Health Review: Final Report. Government final response and programme of action to transform services including pledge to move from institutional to community care wherever possible
2014 (Nov)	Publication of an initial report 'Winterbourne View - Time for Change'	Commissioned by Chief Exec of NHS England to consider how a new national framework could be implemented.
2015 (early)	Transforming Care for People with Learning Disabilities' programme	set up by coalition government – led jointly by NHS England, Association of Adult Social Services, Care Quality Commission, Local Government Association, Health Education England (HEE), Dept of Health (DH) national plan around building the right support, establishment of 48 transforming care partnerships.

Appendix B – Participant Attribute Table

No.	Name[1]	Approx Career Tenure (Years)	Baycastle Tenure (Years)	NHS Tenure (Years)	Gender f/m	Age Category	Experience	Relevant Professional Registration	Occupation classification
1	Nigel	14	9mths	9	m	35-39	NHS & Other	HR (CIPD)	Non-clinical
2	Shirley	33	33	33	f	50-54	NHS only	AHP& Nurse	Was clinical
3	Denise	35	2	2	f	50-54	NHS & Other	n/a	Non-clinical
4	Joan	38	3	38	f	55-59	NHS only	AHP	Was clinical
5	Barbara	34	8	8	f	50-54	NHS & Other	n/a	Was clinical
6	Donna	34	34	34	f	50-54	NHS only	n/a	Clinical
7	Lisa	41	5	14	f	55-59	NHS & Other	n/a	Non-clinical
8	Louise	36	36	36	f	50-54	NHS only	Nurse	Was clinical
9	Jayne	28	2	2	f	45-49	NHS & Other	n/a	Non-clinical
10	Craig	26	18	26	m	50-54	NHS only	AHP	Clinical
11	Faye	31	31	31	f	50-54	NHS only	AHP	Was clinical
12	Sheila	36	36	36	f	50-54	NHS only	Nurse	Clinical
13	Tracey	37	27	27	f	50-54	NHS & Other	Nurse	Clinical
14	Ellie	30	30	30	f	50-54	NHS only	Nurse	Clinical
15	Janice	17	17	17	f	40-44	NHS only	Nurse	Clinical
16	Claire	34	34	17	f	50-54	NHS only	Nurse	Clinical
17	Sharon	20	5wks	6	f	35-39	NHS & Other	HR (CIPD)	Non-clinical
18	Katie	36	7mths	5	f	55-59	NHS & Other	n/a	Non-clinical
19	Jessica	32	32	32	f	50-54	NHS only	Nurse + BABCP[2]	Clinical
20	Zara	18	18	18	f	35-39	NHS only	Nurse	Was clinical
21	Anthony	35	31	31	m	50-54	NHS & Other	Nurse	Was clinical

[1] Interviewees names have been changed to afford anonymity
[2] psychological therapist through grandparent route

No.	Name[1]	Approx Career Tenure (Years)	Baycastle Tenure (Years)	NHS Tenure (Years)	Gender f/m	Age Category	Experience	Relevant Professional Registration	Occupation classification
22	Evelyn	2	2	2	f	20-24	NHS only	AHP	Clinical
23	Sonia	11	11	11	f	25-29	NHS only	n/a	Clinical
24	Lucy	28	28	28	f	45-49	NHS only	Nurse	Non-clinical
25	Kate	36	11	36	f	50-54	NHS only	Nurse	Clinical
26	Gemma	30	17	17	f	50-54	NHS & Other	n/a	Non-clinical
27	Paul	31	6mths (+12mths previously)	6	m	45-49	NHS & Other	HR (CIPD)	Non-clinical
28	Elizabeth	27	20	20	f	45-49	NHS & Other	HR (CIPD)	Non-clinical
29	Charlotte	32	32	32	f	50-54	NHS only	nurse	Clinical
30	Lee	19	5	10	m	40-44	NHS & Other	HR (CIPD)	Non-clinical
31	Rory	14	2mths	7	m	30-34	NHS & Other	NAMPS	Non-clinical
32	Callum	32	10	10	m	50-54	NHS & Other	n/a	Was clinical
33	Rebecca	16	2	16	f	40-44	NHS only	Pscyhologist	Clinical
34	Lacey	21	17	21	f	45-49	NHS only	HR (CIPD) & Chiropody	Non-clinical
35	Chloe	38	38	38	f	50-54	NHS only	nurse	Clinical
36	Keith	40	10	27	m	55-59	NHS & Other	n/a	Non-clinical
37	Calvin	30	30	30	m	50-54	NHS only	Nurse	Clinical
38	Judy	2	2	2	f	20-24	NHS only	Nurse	Clinical
39	Jenna	28	18	28	f	45-49	NHS only	Psychologist	Clinical
40	Simon	21	1.5	1.5	m	35-39	NHS & Other	Nurse	Clinical
41	Maureen	32	32	32	f	50-54	NHS only	Nurse	Clinical

[1] Interviewees names have been changed to afford anonymity

Appendix C – First Phase Coding Structure

Parent Code	*Sub-code*	*Sub-code*
Type of Change	Position/work role	
	Away from patient care	
	In pay grade in existing post	
	Employer	
	Project	
	Aspirations/Ambition	
	Profession	
	Working hours	
	Within existing role	
	Physical Location of work	
	Personal Circumstances	
	Change – other	
Personal Career Agency	Actively seeking opportunities	
	Career constraining other aspects of life	
	Personal Development	
	Reacting to Opportunities Arising	
	Self-reflection	
	Surprise shock	
	Early Ambition	
	Towards Careering of others	
	Past *(Agency which is reflexive upon past events/actions)*	
	Present *(Agency focused upon events/actions occurring at that particular moment in time)*	
	Future (*Agency oriented towards the future*)	
	Personal Meaning and Significance of Career	
	Personal Values and Motivations	*Challenge*
		Financial
		Other
		Progression
		Seeking balance
		Enjoyment
		Helping others
		Making a difference
		Recognition
		Self reflection awareness
		Valued (feeling)
Career Agency of Others *(influencing/impacting interviewee's career)*		

Contextual/ Structural Factors	Career Structures	*Individual*
		Partner/Spouse
		Children
		Parents
		Opportunity Structures
	Economic/ Financial	*Economy (macro level)*
		Pension (organisational level)
		Personal finances (ind level)
	Education	*Early*
		Continuing
	Employment	*Additional Employment*
		Cadet Scheme
		Fixed Term Contract
		Job Share
		Nurse training rotation
		Part-time work
		Saturday job
		Temp work
		Unemployment
		University Placements
		Voluntary Work
		Youth Training Scheme
	Family	*Childcare*
	Government	*Public Sector*
	Networks	*Colleagues*
		Peers
		Support systems
		Friends
	NHS	*Mental Health* *Learning Disabilities*
		Inter-organisational Structure
	Organisational	*Hierarchical structures*
		Flexible working arrangements
		Company Training Programmes
		Culture
		Opportunity structures
		Reward and Recognition
		Values and Motives
	Professional	*Professional Bodies and Groups*
		Training
		Professional Entry Structures
		Professional standards and codes of conduct
Key Events	Life/Personal Events	*Meeting partner*
		Marriage
		Children
		Relationship Breakdown or Divorce
		Health Issues/Illness
		Parent Illness or Bereavement
		Other
	Career Events	*Early work experience*
		Early careers guidance
		Secondary education
		Higher education

		Maternity leave
		Key or pivotal career moment
		Nurse or professional training
		New employer
		*New organisation**
		*New position or role**
		New work setting
		Acting up
		Interim post
		Project Opportunity
		Promotion
		Secondment
		Entry into Public Sector
		Entry into NHS
		Entry into NSCHT
		Entry into Healthcare
		Resignation
		Retirement
		Redundancy – compulsory
		Redundancy - Voluntary
		Career Break
		Other
	Organisational Events	*Restructure*
		Investigation
		Management for Change (NHS specific)
		Organisational Changes
		Closure of site
		Other
	External Events	*Recession*
		Healthcare Reform
		NHS Wide Reform
		Other
Constraining Factors & Influences	Family	
	Self	
	Other people	
	Geographical	
	Organisation	
	Financial	
	Personal Health	
	Lack of Relevant Experience	
	Lack of Qualifications	
	Professional Identity	
	Desire to maintain patient contact	
	Constraint – other	
Enabling Factors & Influences	Family	
	Self	
	Financial	
	Geographical	
	Experience	
	Organisation	
	Organisational Changes	

	Qualification or specialist training	
	Chance, Luck, Happenstance	
	Key people	
	Enablement – Other	