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'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'

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VOLUME TWO

Examples of the interviews and their analysis



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VOLUME TWO

Examples of the interviews and their analysis

<u>Title page</u>	i
<u>Contents</u>	ii
<u>Introduction to Volume Two</u>	1
<u>List of men interviewed</u>	3
<u>Edited transcript, with commentary, of</u> <u>interview with</u>	
<u>Mr. Scott</u>	4
<u>Mr. Southwell</u>	9
<u>Mr. Hampden</u>	18
<u>Mr. Baldwin</u>	29
<u>Mr. Jordan</u>	48
<u>Mr. and Mrs. Jackaman</u>	59
<u>Mr. Townley</u>	78
<u>Mr. Driver</u>	91
<u>Mr. Bolton</u>	114
<u>Mr. Dickens</u>	139



## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME TWO

This volume, while in one sense having the status of an appendix to the thesis, is in another sense its very heart. It contains edited transcripts of selected interviews with my commentaries upon them and thus presents examples of the raw material in which the discussions and conclusions of the chapters in Phase Three are grounded. With an objective of the study to become aware of the phenomenal 'career', the contents of this volume are significant for the access they give the reader to some of this raw material and my analysis of it and thus for the evaluation which can be made thereby of my interpretations.

I chose for inclusion ten of the 32 interviews which illustrate the various issues discussed in the chapters of Phase Three, the major themes of the research. The commentaries, which illustrate my analysis and interpretation, draw upon the remaining interviews and their analysis as well as, to a limited extent, upon theory and other research. This is explained in Chapter Eleven. The sequence in which I have presented these transcripts is arbitrary, though it does demonstrate some marked contrasts between the men.

I have included a substantial amount of some of the interviews, but practicality has demanded editing: the typing conventions (see below) and at times the commentary indicate where this has been carried out. These transcripts, therefore, do not have the continuity of the interviews and, because I have retained the original sequence of the questions, they do not, unlike a case history, tell a story. (The commentary indicates where the same theme recurs at other points during the interview or, when necessary, fills in missing details.) The transcripts give examples of my questions and hence illustrate how I conducted the interviews. (Appendix Five sets out the framework within which I was working.)

To enable Chapters Twelve to Eighteen to refer to these texts, I have used in the transcripts and commentaries an alphanumerical reference system. The transcript of the interview, on the left-hand page, is denoted by 'a' and my commentary on the facing page by 'b'.



The lines of the transcript are numbered and indicated in the margin at intervals of five (5, 10, 15, 20 and so on). The number in the margin of the right-hand page ('b') relates to the specific line of the transcript upon which a comment is being made. (Because the text of the commentary has to fit the page facing the transcript to which it refers, the position on the page of a line in the commentary does not always correspond to the position on the page of the line in the transcript to which it relates.) Chapters Twelve to Eighteen refer to these texts by quoting a name and page/line number. Thus 'Mr. Dickens (22a,b)' refers to line 22 of the transcript of the interview with Mr. Dickens (identified by reference to lines 20 or 25 in the margin) and to the commentary on the facing page upon that line.

The following typing conventions are used in the transcripts of the interviews and the quotations from them in Volume One.

<u>underlining</u>	indicates my speech and the men's emphatic speech
...	indicates a pause in their speech
(...)	indicates an edited cut



EDITED TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH

Mr. Scott

Mr. Southwell

Mr. Hampden

Mr. Baldwin

Mr. Jordan

Mr. and Mrs. Jackaman

Mr. Townley

Mr. Driver

Mr. Bolton

Mr. Dickens

REFERENCE IS ALSO MADE TO THE OTHER MEN INTERVIEWED

Mr. Andrews

Mr. Argent

Mr. Bedford

Mr. Betts

Mr. Boatman

Mr. Bonhill

Mr. Bowers

Mr. Charles

Mr. Ellis

Mr. Flint

Mr. Gilbert

Mr. Homer

Mr. Lipton

Mr. Luke

Mr. McMillan

Mr. Morgan

Mr. Paddington

Mr. Portman

Mr. Prince

Mr. Roberts

Mr. Stephens

Mr. Thomas

(These are all pseudonyms.)



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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. SCOTT



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. Scott

(...) And at that time your father was dead, your mother was bringing you all up, what sort of jobs did you think of doing at that time?

Prior to leaving school I worked in stables, I worked on a newsround, I worked in a bakery, those were all part-time jobs before school  
5 and after school or weekends I used to make money for the house anyhow. Because of my environment at that time I was committed to going into the mill. I also had to go and start in the mill in the evenings about three months prior to leaving school, so I could get a top rate when I left school, which was 35 shillings.

10 (...) there's very few people in the army who can see the rank above the next one really. You go along until you get Lance Corporal and all of a sudden you might consider, well, the chap who's doing Corporal, you're as good as him and you probably get Corporal anyhow. You then start looking at the Sergeant and think, well I'm better  
15 than that Sergeant and you're put up to Sergeant. And you probably get along as far as that and then you might have a look at the Colour Sergeant in the same way (...) All of a sudden, the longer the service you do, you then find from experience and looking at other people doing the job that you feel that you can do the job (...)   
20 I think that looking at the Quartermaster, from the time you're a private soldier, looking up the top of the pyramid, more or less, you don't see it at all, you can't visualise it. And it's only by association with ranks as you go along that you see the next one is attainable ... (...) You've got to take into consideration trends  
25 in society, whether they're going to reduce the army or increase the army, pay goes up, pay goes down (...) the larger the army you can say there's no problem - I shall get ahead with it. (...) It's a matter of climbing up the ladder before you're going to see any further (...) I think that when you first start you can't see right  
30 to the top of the hill ... as a young man I don't think I looked very far at all ... I think sometimes as you get older you've got more sense and things start coming into it - more education etc. - you start seeing a bit further than what you saw when you were younger.

(...) How long do you think you've been thinking in these lines about  
35 the future?



b. Commentary on edited transcript of interview with Mr. Scott

- 1 His father died when Mr. Scott, the second of 5 children, was 8.
- 3 Coming from a poor family in the 1930s, Mr. Scott was not able to choose which job he took and thereby to implement his self concept. His early occupational experience was influenced strongly by the need to earn 'any-how' (5a) and illustrates the working of the opportunity structure (Roberts, 1977: Chapter 8: 1 (b ii)). Though perhaps not driven by such extreme need, Mr. Bolton (15b) and Mr. Southwell (5b) undertook similar job changes in their early years. Mr. Bedford, Mr. Dickens (59b) and Mr. Southwell (23b) show how financial need continues to exert a strong influence on the jobs taken through early adulthood. Mr. Scott tells how he was offered a desirable job, but could not afford to take it because he could earn more at the mill. It was then offered to his friend, who turned it into a thriving professional practice. He eventually found a way of escaping his opportunity structure and of implementing his self concept when, at 16½, he joined the army. He falsified his age: it was wartime and he very much wanted to be a soldier. He thinks this may have been selfish because he left his mother with less money than before.
- 10 Several theories may be used to analyse this passage. Social learning theory (Chapter 8: 3 (b)) explains how vicarious learning takes place through observing others' behaviour. Mr. Hampden (63b, 139b) illustrates how he gauged his progress by comparison with others. Mr. Scott's description here is the layman's account of 'career' development as explained by self concept theory (Chapter 8: 2 (b iii)).  
Finally this passage well illustrates the actor's view of 'career': see Chapter 8: 4.
- 18 'looking at other people': watching and analysing another's behaviour and matching that with one's own capacities ('as good as', 13a).
- 19 Mr. Scott describes this as a cognitive and an affective comparison: 'you feel'. It is thus explicable by both social learning and self concept theories
- 21 'pyramid': one of the several images of 'career' he uses: see 28a, 30a.
- 22 'visualise': this suggests both realistic information about and identification of self with the higher ranks.
- 24 'trends in society': he recognises the effect of exogenous factors on the individual's 'career': see particularly Mr. Driver, 120b.
- 28 'ladder': another image of 'career'.
- 30 'top of the hill': yet another image of 'career'.
- 31 In the early stages of 'career' the soldier focusses on the present only (10a) whereas, when he has progressed, he looks also to the future. He explains this in terms of greater maturity and a wider vision derived from education. Cf. Mr. Jordan (62 a ff.).



Very short period. I think you tend in the army - you work in a good environment, you work in an environment whereby if you are sick or anything goes wrong you still get the same pay, your standard of living doesn't go down at all. And I think you tend to carry on 40 and on and on until you get very, very near the end when you could really drop one if you didn't start thinking about the future.



- 37 See Mr. Hampden 115a; Mr. Jordan, 31b. The army encompasses many of the domains of the individual's life. It is a 'total institution' (Goffman, 1968, p. 11):

'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.'

The army cares in all circumstances for the soldier who thus (social learning theory) may not have developed the strategies to cope with them effectively on his own. This may be one reason why Mr. Baldwin (106b) is 'frightened' at the prospect of leaving.

- 40 Cf. Mr. Jordan (23a ff., 26b, 62a).

- 41 The transition into civilian life is more than a change of job and thus requires considerable preparation.



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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. SOUTHWELL



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. Southwell

(...) By the time I left school I was top of the class.

(...) Do you recall at the time (...) the sort of jobs that you thought of doing?

Well, my father always said I would never go down a mine - I  
 5 started off as assistant to a cinema projectionist - I think that  
 lasted about a month. (...) Then I went to work with (...) factory  
 (...) I stayed with them until my father got me a job - I was round  
 about 16 - on the pit top in the power house (...) right up to 18  
 when I joined the army. (...) I have never really shopped around,  
 10 just a thing that, going to work in this power house, gave me the  
 first chance, if you like, of trying to learn something, like learn  
 to be something ... I'd got visions of being an electrician ...  
 (...) I was more or less employed as a cleaner, but really I must have  
 learned quite a lot. In fact one of the drivers, quite a young chap,  
 15 who really taught me most of the basic things about life and general  
 knowledge - we used to sit there - general knowledge all the time -  
 taught me maths, taught me etiquette. I've always remembered, I'll  
 never forget it.

(...) we were married (...) and I fiddled it so that I got posted ...  
 20 (...) because wives didn't - especially of young soldiers - didn't  
 travel out and get quarters very easily.

(...) I came out and joined the Police Force (...) working five shifts  
 - very little money, again, of course with the wife working (...) we  
 were always poor. Really, up to here in hire purchase ... (...) I've  
 25 always wanted to learn a trade - and before I joined the Police Force  
 I went to (...) to ask if they'd set me on as an apprentice electrician  
 to learn the trade. (...) I was willing to accept apprentice wages to  
 learn a trade, but they told me I can't do it, the unions won't allow  
 us. (...) I rejoined the army and I've never looked back since.

30 (...) You were keen for a qualification and training.

(...) I knew, I think, as a young man. (...) I knew I must have something



b. Commentary on edited transcript of interview with Mr. Southwell

- 1 He had a history of illness through childhood until early adulthood.
- 4 His father was a miner who had had a serious accident underground. Other fathers had influenced or procured the first job: Mr. Driver, Mr. Homer. See also 7a. Several said they had had no choice in their first jobs, but had had to bow to their father's wishes: Mr. Luke, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Roberts and Mr. Stephens.
- 5 Mr. Bolton (15b) and Mr. Scott (3-5a,b) have a similar early job history. There seems to be no question of implementing the self concept in the occupation (Chapter 8: 2 (b iii)), but rather of reacting to the opportunity structure (Chapter 8: 1 (b ii)). See also 9b.
- 9 'never really shopped around': he was not proactive and did not actively seek opportunities. See also 42a,b ff.
- 11 'chance': 'opportunity' rather than 'luck'. See 34b.  
It is clear that he greatly values 'learning': see 15a, 25a,b ff., 30-1 a,b. Mr. Dickens shows a similar concern: (22b, 98b). Does this indicate the nagging of the self concept to which Super refers?  
Although the opportunity structure denies its expression in an occupation, the self concept still demands to be heard. Cf. Mr. Bolton (5b).
- 14 A mentor relationship. The mentor is nourishing the self concept rather than coaching a young employee in strategies for survival and success in an organisation (Chapter 8: 1 (c iii); Chapter 9).
- 17 'etiquette': social proprieties seem important to him. See references to manners in 38a. Like his father, who used to say 'it's nice to be nice', he used to enjoy ballroom dancing. This suggests an awareness of the constraints of the opportunity structure and a striving to overcome them. See also 11b.
- 19 'fiddled it': although he apparently does not scan his horizon widely nor 'shop around' (9a,b), he seems adept at making minor adjustments to make life as comfortable as possible. See also 81a,b, 100a,b; Mr. Hampden (14b) and cf. Schein's (1978, pp. 74-5) 'small adjustments'.
- 23 The constraints of the opportunity structure continue through early adulthood and are, indeed, augmented by the additional responsibilities of starting a family. This experience was shared by several of the men I interviewed: Mr. Bedford; Mr. Bolton, 79b; Mr. Dickens, 11b; Mr. Jordan, 7b; Mr. Scott, 3b.
- 27 Despite the power of the opportunity structure, as manifest in financial exigencies, the nagging of the self concept is strong enough to make him seek education, 'learning', one of the keys to overcoming that structure.
- 29 The army has provided both 'learning' (60a, ff.) and advancement and it has helped his children escape from his opportunity structure (34-5a).
- 31 He expresses this as a strongly felt conviction: the self concept?



to carry me through life. (...) When I came back into the army I was 32. I was very lucky to get back in. 28 is the age ... (...) the army has provided - or helped provide - my children with a very good  
35 education.

(...) Compared with their cousins?

(...) No comparison. Forget about brains or capabilities, just ordinary manners.

(...) Would your children have had the same education, would they have  
40 been as likely to be at University, had you not gone into the army?

No. We could never have afforded it.

(...) I think my wife has an awful lot of influence on me, whether I should have done half as well if it had not been for the wife I don't know. She's, I would say, quite bright and clever. (...) We've got  
45 a bungalow and we've built two rooms upstairs, she did all the brain work and I did all the other work. She's never done anything like it before, and I've never touched a saw before in my life but we've built it. (...) I would never have attempted the thing if it hadn't been for the wife. The wife said it should be straightforward  
50 and we can do it. I would never even have dreamt of tackling it. (...) She's always been an influence but she's always been crafty about it, there's no-one could push me or make me do something if I thought they were trying to make me do something. I wouldn't have that. I think she's done it in a crafty way.

55 (...) With the army system you've got basic rules. I got a stripe on my arm the moment I finished recruit training, but it was unpaid and within 15 months of rejoining I was a full Corporal. Then the rules said you'd have to wait 5 years before you get Sergeant. I just about made 5 years when I got to Sergeant. (...) You must have your first  
60 class education or EPC advanced. (...) It's a long drawn-out process. If you pass all your courses and you get your education - say it's two years from Sergeant to Staff-sergeant, then it's two or three years to WO2, WO2 to WO1 would be practically any time - at least a year to two years. But there's an age limit. The age limit is 43 - well, there's



- 33 'lucky': he was allowed re-entry above the normal age because of his unusual experience during his previous service (9a). Age of entry determines date of leaving and degree of progress possible (62-6a). He had several jobs and experienced financial insecurity (22a ff.) after his early army service and re-joined the army largely for the security it offered. He achieved thereby financial security, some education, promotion and hence enhanced social status, the benefits of travel abroad (he compares the breadth of his experience with that of his family), and for his children, through their private school education, the erosion of the social barriers he had experienced
- 34 'lucky': he uses the word several times, but see 77b.
- 35 The army contributes to the boarding school fees of children of soldiers serving abroad. Cf. Mr. Baldwin (53a,b). See also Mr. Hampden (31b).
- 37 See 17b. This is a measure of the social distance he has travelled from his initial opportunity structure and is the base from which his children start. His occupation has given them an opportunity structure very different from that which he experienced initially.
- 42 He makes several references to his wife's practical and business abilities. It was she, he says, who decided to buy the bungalow to give their children a home base (see 82 ff. and Mr. Jordan, 96b). She seems to influence and energise him. Perhaps she compensates for his somewhat narrow perspective on life (9b)? It is, therefore, clear that one must take into consideration not only the individual but the rest of his family as well when examining response to the environment.
- Other men mentioned the influence of their wives: Mr. Bolton, 218b; Mr. Jordan, 116a,b; Mr. Jackaman, 136b. Several spoke of warm, supportive marriages and some were exploring the possibility of some kind of business partnership with their wives. Five of the men I met were divorced and others had marital difficulties. These experiences could be expected to boost or to undermine self esteem.
- 55 The army promotion system: see particularly Mr. Baldwin, 20a,b ff. for discussion. Cf. Mr. Hampden, 39a,b ff.; Mr. Jackaman, 59a,b ff.; Mr. Jordan, 40 a,b ff.
- 60 Through the army's education system he presumably achieved the 'learning' he sought: see 11b.



65 never any time for me to possibly be W01. (...) I always knew I'd be  
 very lucky to make W02. Because I am sure there were people on the  
 roll that I jumped over. I was fortunate because I'd got to get 2  
 years in at W02 to qualify for the pension of a W02. And really you  
 can say there was a goal as far as the army was concerned ... (...)  
 70 Gratuity and there's pension, and of course starting to think about  
 another job.

Before we talk about the future, how do you feel about your progress  
through the army? You said you considered yourself lucky to have got  
W02 (...) Does this mean to say that you look back over your progress  
 75 as though it were a question of luck or do you think you've had  
your just rewards, or ? ...

Oh, I think I've earned it. I honestly do. (...) It would have been  
nice, I think, to have got a commission. But of course that would  
 have compelled me to stay until 55. (...) I went out to Germany 2  
 80 years ago - and of course I should be out there now but I arranged to  
 swap a post with a chap who was here. The wife couldn't pack up and  
 just leave the children here because I think it was a crucial time.  
 Especially as the lad was coming up to 18 years old and this is the  
 time when he's about to finish school.

85 (...) It's clear also that you're not exactly rushing to leave the  
army. If you could find some way of staying until you're 55, what  
you're saying is, you would.

(...) I'm going to get a secondary job anyway. I'll be 48 when I  
 finish - there's not much ... for a 48 year old man.

90 So what do you mean by a secondary job?

I mean a middle of the road job ... take a dustman's job. I've  
 been looking at the trades union paper. They're quite well paid.

(...) Do you have any pictures of the future for yourself? (...) what  
you will be like and what you will be doing in the future?

95 From what I have seen of a friend who has just finished. He's gone



- 65 'always knew': a realistic appraisal of his future. Although he does not scan widely (9b) he apparently has a very down-to-earth approach to life (19b) and copes well within a narrow field (100b). His wife supplies the broader vision (42b)? Contrast this with the more distant, but vague, sweep of Mr. Townley's vision (87b).
- 66 'lucky': but see 77a. This is the reverse of the picture painted by Mr. Baldwin, 39b; Mr. Hampden, 57b, both 'jumped over'. Mr. Southwell's consciousness of his good fortune suggests that this was a relatively unusual occurrence and that their expectations were realistic and thus their disappointment even more keen.
- 68 It is not just present status that is at stake, but the pension: present advancement sets the financial base-line for the future. Cf. Mr. Hampden (85a).
- 69 'goal': probably referring to an earlier question about future plans when he returned to the army.
- 77 This suggests the word means 'lucky to be awarded one's just deserts', not 'lucky to be given something undeserved'. He illustrates his point with an anecdote about officers similar to one Mr. Baldwin relates. Perhaps he perceives his environment as essentially unjust; effort is rarely rewarded and 'fiddling' (19b) is needed for personal control?
- 79 He talks of the possibility of an extension of service, which he would love. However, it would involve being away from home and he does not want this: he refers to the decision to buy the house in order to give their children a stable background for their education. Extended army service would damage the other domains of his life. Cf. Mr. Jordan, 35b. Cf. the significance of Mr. Bolton's house to him (355b). Does this bungalow (45a ff.) perhaps mean something similar to Mr. Southwell, his achievement of a new social class?
- 81 'swap': another example of 'fiddling', see 19b.
- 89 He is aware of the difficulties of starting afresh at this age, more perhaps, in terms of societal stereotypes than in terms of his own deficiencies (see 107a). Mr. Dickens, 134b; Mr. Baldwin, 185b; Mr. Hampden, 128b; Mr. Jordan, 22b share a similar concern that their age would be perceived as a barrier to future jobs. Mr. Driver, 268b and Mr. Jackaman, 154b acknowledge but discredit the stereotype.
- 91 But see 98a: he is still talking in terms of the stereotype; he does not really believe this for himself. Cf. Mr. Baldwin (97-102a); an anger at the stereotype and at being forced to accept it. Contrast Mr. Jordan (134a).
- 92 University fees make money still important, though his wife works.
- 95 He makes comparisons with others who have already left the army. Mr. Jordan and Mr. Morgan make similar comparisons; the Resettlement courses point to such models, but Mr. Baldwin notes that these are always successful models.



to work for middle management. (...) There are other people coming out and getting supervisory jobs. I think it's along these lines I shall go. I can't see myself going labouring or anything like that again.

100 (...) I enjoy it when it's busy, I think I enjoy it when there's a problem - problems to sort out. I think I enjoy things - no matter what they are - a problem wants to be solved - I can really get my teeth into it when it needs sorting out.

(...) Do you think you've changed? If one could say that you've  
105 reached the middle of life - do you see any real changes in yourself?

My wife says I'll never grow up! (Laugh). Probably quite true. As you get older - I'm 47 now - I don't really feel any older than I did 20 years ago - I know I look different but I don't feel any older in myself, except when I've got back ache. I don't feel any older. I  
110 don't regret anything I've done.

Would you say that you're anxious about the future?

I think I'll get more anxious the nearer I get to finishing with the army. At the same time I have never been out of work in my life and I know damn well I shall get something - I shall get something -  
115 whether I get something straight away that I like doing or want to do is another thing. I don't know that but I shall get something. I can't see any problem.



- 96 The difficulties of equating army and civilian posts: see Mr. Baldwin 106b; Mr. Hampden, 115a,b ff. He has taken some civilian vocational courses which have prepared him to some extent; the Resettlement courses are designed to introduce the civilian world and to make translations between army and civilian language and structures. (See Baldwin (120b)
- 100 He enjoys detailed, busy activity: 'fiddling', (19b); worrying a problem as a dog worries a bone. This is my expression, not his, but it makes a link with the 'worrying' of Mr. Bolton (256b) and Mr. Jordan, (76b). Mr. Southwell's worrying is more positive than their's and suggests effective adaptation to his environment: see 65b. See Hampden 104b. Other men spoke of their enjoyment of their job: Mr. Baldwin, 230a; Mr. Bolton, 120b; Mr. Hampden, 110a; Mr. Jackaman, 158b.
- 107 He knows, but does not feel his age. Mr. McMillan makes a similar point. '... my wife and I (...) we don't feel different ... from how we felt when we were much younger ... My mother will be 80 (...) in many ways she feels very much as she did when she was a young girl'. Similarly, Mr. Homer says that although the mirror tells him his age, he is on occasions 'still that boy'. See Mr. Bolton (326b). on discrepancy between knowing and feeling. See Mr. Jordan who did not admit the knowledge to consciousness (64b).
- 112 'anxious': see Chapter 9 on increase in tendency to avoid as individual nears the goal. Cf. others who displayed anxiety: Mr. Baldwin, 106a,b ff. who said he was 'frightened'; Mr. Bolton, 256a,b; Mr. Jordan, 21a,b. 134b. Mr. Morgan said, '... it would be unusual if I wasn't anxious ... I think I would be a fool if I wasn't that little bit cautious about it ... (sigh and long pause)'. Mr. Southwell, perhaps because of his temperament (100b) exhibits much less anxiety. He will no doubt both adapt to his circumstances and 'fiddle' with them to make them more comfortable.
- 113 Social learning theory explains his confidence and his approach to life: it has worked in the past.
- 115 Contrast with Mr. Baldwin (200b), who displays great anxiety about leaving and about the time scale involved. Mr. Baldwin has a future orientation and thus sees more than Mr. Southwell does and more of which to be frightened. The present perspective gives a narrower view and more comfortable view; he is also accustomed to working upon his environment and finds that, within his narrow range, it is malleable. Mr. Baldwin has a future orientation, is active upon his environment but perceives it as unyielding. Mr. Southwell also has an active wife.



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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. HAMPDEN



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. Hampden

Yes. X was, in fact, quite a small rural town, or village, really at the time and I think at an early age I found that it didn't have much to offer me in the way of a job. I didn't fancy myself as a farmer's boy and I suppose at that early age the forces seemed like a good way  
5 out of the environment. In fact it was quite a traumatic thing to do because I didn't want to leave home but I didn't want to stay there with what it offered. (...)

How about your father and your mother, what sort of advice did they give you?

10 My mother thought that I was perhaps doing a good thing and my father didn't want to know. (Laugh)

So it wasn't their idea you going into the services?

No, in fact my father did try and discourage me from coming in. (...)

I only ever applied for one posting. (Laugh) (...)

15 Why did you never apply for any others?

In general, it's the old ... It's like when people say they never volunteer for anything because you're going to end up doing it anyway. It was almost in that sort of vein that you almost thought that if you volunteered for somewhere you'd obviously be volunteering to go some-  
20 where nice, not just near Mum, and the people in the Records Office would immediately post you to the other end of the world. (...)

Did it happen?

It did use to. In fact the Records people admit to it. You see at the time we had the National Service people in the army who didn't want  
15 to be there anyway and of course those people were, I think in a lot of cases, in the sort of office type jobs. They'd say 'Oh, he wants to go ...' because they didn't want to be where they were ... and that was it. (...)



b. Commentary on edited transcript of interview with Mr. Hampden

- 2 Another aspect of the opportunity structure (Chapter 8: 1(b ii)): the paucity of jobs in the local community. See Mr. Dickens (218b). Others, such as Mr. Boatman, describe similar constraints: without transport, the country boy had to take whatever job was available locally, 'but always the thing was to get a trade'.
- 3 'I didn't fancy myself': despite the pressure of the opportunity structure, there is also the stirring of the self concept (Chapter 8: 2(b iii)). This must have been strong enough to enable the boy to make the traumatic break from home (5a) and to withstand the moral pressure of his father's dissuasion (13a): 'he had to sign a form to let me come and he signed it on the railway station as I left'. Can social learning theory fully account for this insistence on following his own inclination or for that of Mr. Luke, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Roberts (see 4b)?
- 4 He would have done National Service at 18 anyway. There are others who used regular military service at some time during their job histories as 'a good way out': of rural limbo, as here (Mr. Charles); of their fathers' prescription of their job (Mr. Luke, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Roberts); of an unhappy home, (Mr. Jackaman); of family poverty, (Mr. Jordan, Mr. Scott and Mr. Southwell); and of educational failure (Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Betts). The services play a significant part in release from the opportunity structure for these people.
- 13 His father is now approving of his son's occupation: 'he thinks I've done all right ... he doesn't believe that I've got to come out'.
- 14 This comes much later in the interview. I asked those in the services whether they had applied for a posting to give me some indication of the degree of their proactivity. Mr. Baldwin (145b) had, but few others. Mr. Hampden's reply (16a ff.) undermines the validity of my question: application for a posting was not regarded by them as a realistic exercise of choice. Social learning theory would suggest that the services attract and nurture people who are temperamentally more reactive than proactive. Certainly many of them spoke approvingly and with pride of such qualities as loyalty (Mr. Baldwin, 119a) or 'a soldierly attitude' (Mr. Hampden, 103a). Mr. Morgan used the adjective 'soldierly' 13 times in his interview. However, Mr. Southwell's 'fiddling' (19b) indicates that there is some scope for minor adjustments of the environment in the army and Mr. Jackaman (e.g. 62b, 91b) illustrates that a proactive approach can also flourish there.
- 24 An example of Gouldner's (1957) 'cosmopolitans' and 'locals'? See also Mr. Dickens, 34b. Is this also an example of the working of the informal organisation (Argyris, 1960)?



It was an application and they ran a competitive examination for it  
 30 (entrance to course which led to significant promotion) but during  
 my time in England I was fortunate enough to be close to the sort  
 of school that did City and Guilds and this sort of thing and there-  
 fore I was able to take the equivalent - this was when civilianised  
 examinations became popular, (...) I was fortunate enough that I'd  
 35 done the right posting, to be in the right place and got fourth  
 year City and Guilds and therefore was exempt from the entrance  
 examinations. I, therefore, just applied and got accepted for it. (...)

What's the requirement for progressing from Staff Sergeant to WO2?

(...) there was a 6 year time limit and after that it's supposedly  
 40 by merit. They've changed that system ... (laugh)

(...) from the minute you leave the (training) school, if you get  
 recommended, you can get promoted. (...)

At that point, in 1976, you were 36. What sort of future were you  
seeing for yourself then? Did you know that your army life had a  
 45 limited future (...)?

It wasn't limited at that point. When I went to Germany - unfortunately  
 it was a bad posting, not that I did anything wrong or anything but  
 it wasn't in one of the units where you get the type of reports for  
 promotion, advancement.

50 Did you know that when you went that it wasn't a good posting?

No, I didn't. In fact the chap apologised to me when I left. It  
 was one of those things - it was a completely civilian job that I  
 went into (...)

When I got posted from there to here I suddenly realised that as far  
 55 as my career had gone I was in a very sticky position. I hadn't  
 advanced to the next rank then, by circumstance - other people having  
 caught up with me and (...)

And had I got WO1 I think it would have been very easy to advance from  
 there because I know they're short of officers. But with not being  
 60 able to progress in that fashion it's very difficult to progress in



31 On return from a posting abroad.

'fortunate': his several uses of this adjective might suggest that he is reactive to his environment rather than proactive. However, this again is not altogether valid, for it must be recognised that in the services the individual has little control, if any, over the location and nature of a posting. Apart from the activities of the army's informal organisation (14b), postings, like promotion, are determined in part by the army's manpower needs at any time which in turn are influenced by factors outside the army's control, such as the country's defence needs. It is, therefore, not necessarily an indication of Mr. Hampden's response to his environment when he recognises his good fortune in being 'in the right place' (35a) or says (46a) 'unfortunately it was a bad posting'. A proactive response, however, can be seen in the ways in which the individual uses the posting or other situation to his own advantage. See Mr. Jackaman's optimisation of his army experiences (e.g. 45b); Mr. Southwell's 'fiddling' (100b) or the education of his children (35a,b). Mr. Stephens amply illustrates this: 'it's up to the individual to take advantage of the system': he uses the expression 'to take advantage of' 19 times during the interview.

39 The army promotion system and its timetables: see 80a,b and cf. Mr. Jackaman, 59a, b ff.; Mr. Jordan, 40a,b ff.; Mr. Southwell, 55a,b. ff. See particularly Mr. Baldwin, 20a,b ff. for discussion.

43 The expectations generated by the promotion system are woven into a picture of the potential future and upon them people make decisions which affect the other domains of their life and the other people within them.

48 'type of report': see also 66a. The experience and 'visibility' of a posting is reflected in the annual report. Although the total points awarded may be the same for two individuals the specific experiences they refer to may be differentially evaluated. See Mr. Baldwin (47b) for discussion of annual reports.

52 'civilian': several of the men I interviewed had worked with civilians during their military service, like Mr. Flint, Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Portman; Mr. Hampden had carried out a job usually done by a civilian. Others had some experience of civilian life before joining the forces. This might influence their view of civilian life: see 104b.

54 'here': he was aged 35.

57 Like Mr. Baldwin (39b). Their position was the reverse of that of Mr. Southwell (66b) who describes how he 'jumped over' others.

60 He is saying that he could not advance in his trade and the alternative, to advance 'in an administrative stream' (61a), was difficult. It was not so difficult, however, that Mr. Jackaman (64b) was deterred from doing it. Cf. the switch from specialist to generalist in any organisation, e.g. Glaser, 1964.



an administrative fashion so you come to a quick realisation -  
I'm stuck! (Laugh) (...)

The way it became really clear was when I came here there were two  
of us posted in who were of the same rank and I was senior to the  
65 other chap. Now he came from (...) and I came from (...) His  
points were less than mine but he got promoted because obviously  
his report meant more to the Board. (...)

I suppose that was the writing on the wall. (...)

As far as the army was concerned unless things happened very, very  
70 quickly at that time, nothing; because I realised, as I did from  
an early age, that if I wasn't commissioned from the ranks before  
I'd finished my 22 years service then because of my trade, which  
restricted me in that there are a limited number of us, then the  
army aren't going to say 'just stay where you are', because you're  
75 stopping a younger chap coming in. So I knew that come the age  
of 40 I was going to move out of the army. (...)

Does that mean that previously you had had some sort of expectations  
of the future by that stage?

Well, when I was promoted WO2 ...

80 (...) I at that time had only a month or so under 8 years to do and  
all I had to do really was to progress one rank - the average time  
for which is 2 to 3 years - after which commissioning from the ranks  
as a WO1 with 5 years to do - things have got to be pretty slack if  
you don't get it - you're pretty much assured. (...) The difference  
85 between my pension as a Warrant Officer, whether it be 2 or 1, isn't  
much but between that and, say, a Captain after 6 years in that rank  
is very substantial. In fact, it's about twice. So this is  
obviously the attraction. When I had 8 years to do I figured that  
if I made WO1 in 3 years, and Captain in a further 2 years, it would  
90 be 3 years to run on my present engagement I would be able, as a  
commissioned officer, to run further and after a further 3 years  
in fact I saw myself resigning to go out into civilian life to stand  
a reasonable chance of a reasonable sort of job. (...)



- 61 'quick realisation': c.f. Mr. Jordan (26b, 66b). However, in Mr. Hampden's case this could not have been so easily foreseen for it was not a matter of his perception of an existing environmental state (Mr. Jordan 64b), but of his assimilation of a new information from the environment.
- 63 See also 139b. Comparison with others to measure progress can be made in an organisation which has an age-related promotion system. E.g. equity theory (Adams, 1963). Comparisons can also be made to evaluate one's own abilities (Mr. Driver, 100a,b; Mr. Scott 10a,b ff.) or to identify suitable future jobs (Mr. Southwell, 95b). Both self concept and social learning theory are relevant here.
- 65 Two different postings: see Mr. Baldwin (167a,b).
- 66 See 48b.
- 68 Mr. Baldwin uses the same expression for the same experience (79a): see longer discussion there. Mr. Ellis, Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Jordan (89a,b) also describe the realisation that their long awaited promotion would not materialise and that they would have to serve several years without any hope of advancement in order to get their pension.
- 69 In reply to my question about what future he saw at that point, when he was 36.  
'very, very quickly': this can, indeed, happen (as in the Falklands crisis, 1982), because the army exists to respond to external 'things'.
- 72 This would be when he was 40.
- 75 Once again, he has certainty: see 126b.
- 80 With good annual reports, the possibility of a commission seemed real; he seemed to be progressing well according to the established benchmarks (80-4a ff.) What he could not have allowed for was the 'bad posting' (47a). Until 'it became really clear' (63a) there was, presumably nothing he could do to clinch the promotion; he could only act afterwards, like Mr. Jackaman (62a,b). From the army's point-of-view, it has to keep expectations as high as possible in order to maintain the standard of work and morale needed (101a ff.). This was very different from Mr. Bolton's situation. He had no benchmarks to judge his progress and had to assess himself and his chances of promotion in an ambiguous and changing environment. He acted upon this assessment by resigning from his job (178b).
- 85 pension: see Mr. Southwell (68b).
- 88 He seems to look to the future realistically enough with the information currently at his disposal. Here he is looking forward from the age of 32 to the time when he would be 43.



Cold rage. I was very angry and that's about all.

95 (...) I complained quite bitterly (...) I got absolutely nowhere -  
it was 'Sorry old chap, your report wasn't good enough - you'll  
have to get a better one next year.' (...) It's the old business  
really of the wrong place at the wrong time. It's very easy to  
get bitter but the more you think about it you get bitter at first  
100 but then you think I'm not going to change it so why fight? (...)

I don't think it affected me on the work side. It led really to  
a change in attitude. (...)

Well from the sort of soldierly attitude to one of (laugh) almost  
civilianisation, I suppose. (...)

105 As a young person in the army you've got almost the blind obedience  
bit. (...) I guess I went through a stage really where whether  
my chiefs said it was right or not they weren't going to get much  
joy in the way that I operated. It was just fortunate, I suppose,  
for me as well as the system - probably more for me - that I was  
110 at the time enjoying the work that I was doing very much and I  
suppose I hid my disappointment in my work. But as I say I haven't  
got a soldier's attitude. (...)

I just can't relate - you know what I mean? I have started doing  
the resettlement process and I have done a second careers course  
115 which was really aimed at trying to get you to think how you could  
relate your experiences and qualifications to those asked for in,  
say, a newspaper advertisement for a job. That's all very fine  
but I still don't know enough about the civilian life to be able to  
equate where I am now against what I could be either now or in the  
120 future. I don't know their structure.

(...) At least I've got the opportunity, around 40, if nothing  
comes my way that really interests me, to sit back and to be able  
to financially afford to sit back.

(...) I'm committed to leaving because come July next year nobody's  
125 going to renew my contract. In fact I heard in the last few months



- 94 His response when 'it became really clear' (63a). See Mr. Baldwin (79b) for fuller discussion.
- 96 See Mr. Baldwin (136b).
- 100 After his bitterness, resignation. Compare this with Mr. Baldwin's continuing pugnacity. This may be because Mr. Hampden is in a different phase of the 'grief cycle' (see Mr. Baldwin, 79b), or because he differs in his approach to the environment generally; to the army in particular (see 104b); or to himself. Mr. Hampden has, perhaps, a sturdier self concept: see 3b and contra Mr. Baldwin (165a). He also has a more accepting and realistic approach to his environment (128b) and experiences it as more open than Mr. Baldwin (10b) does, something he can master when he has learned the 'structure' (120a). 'I'm quite prepared to make the best of it when I get out ...'
- 101 Cf. Mr. Baldwin (93b), Mr. Jordan (109a).
- 103 'soldierly': see 14b.
- 104 'civilianisation': see 52b. Neither Mr. Baldwin (105a ff.) nor Mr. Hampden seem to regard civilian attitudes, particularly to work, very highly. He explains 'soldierly attitude' in terms of respect for authority (105a). The following comment is unrelated to his use of the word 'system' in 109a. Many soldiers perhaps regard the army as a closed system, in which the only scope for the exercise of individual control lies in minor adjustments to the system (Mr. Southwell's 'fiddling', 100b). The civilian world is, by contrast, an open system, in which the individual finds new opportunities as the system adapts to the changing environment. Some soldiers are aware of this wider system, perhaps because they work at the boundary of the army's system (e.g. Mr. Jackaman, 148b, 170b). Mr. Southwell is well adapted to his system; his wife counterbalances his narrow view (42b). Mr. Hampden is now perhaps prepared to take this wider view (100b), whereas Mr. Baldwin is still working within his model of the closed system? Is Mr. Jordan now beginning to open his system to the world at large (117b)?
- 110 'enjoying the work': see Mr. Bolton (120b).
- 113 In response to my question about what he could see in his future.
- 114 See Mr. Baldwin (120b) and Mr. Southwell (96b) on Resettlement courses.
- 115 See Mr. Jordan (31b) on the transition from a 'total institution' which has encompassed all the domains of an individual's life for the past twenty or so years. Also Mr. Scott (37b).
- 118 'know enough': compared with Mr. Baldwin (e.g. 105a ff.) Mr. Hampden emphasises the cognitive rather than the affective dimensions of his response to change (though note 136b) and leaves the impression that once he has gathered and sifted the appropriate information, he will be able to cope well with the change.
- 123 This gives him a breathing space to adjust to new modes of living Cf. Mr. Bolton (248b).



that I could extend for about another 5 years but I know myself I'm not going to.

(...) I know at 40 - a lot of people say you're too old - all right, I don't feel it, but in a way they have got a point. They would  
 130 prefer to employ someone that's 20 and train them into their ways and them being good for their working life rather than somebody who's firmly fixed in his ideas and knowing that you can't change him that much. There's also the financial business of why should I stay  
 135 in the army at my present rank with no hope of advancement when I might be able to advance as a civilian.

(...) When I think about it - I don't really think about it - when I thought about it quite seriously after the event, I did look at it from the situation that it was only because I progressed so fast initially that you can't understand why you've come to a stop. Those  
 140 who progressed at a more normal and steady rate, they're only just where I am now and that much later in life.

So your speed of progression at the time indicated a trajectory that was out there but...

... it tailed off. I can think of other people I know, like (...)

145 (...) But if you take another chap like (...) It was only that 3 years ago I thought my projected full-stop was much further out. To come back to the original question I would say Germany was the break-point.

But it was something about which, as you look back on it, you could  
 150 have done nothing anyway?

No.



- 126 Mr. Hampden talks about his father, (a 'career' model for him at this point) who, at the age of 40, heard the rumour that there were going to be redundancies at the factory at which he worked and so left to run a pub. Having thought about it he was 'mentally committed to leaving and planning for the future'. To have stayed would have prolonged uncertainty. Mr. Hampden is doing the same now: 'I've got to go out and I'm going out'. Compare this with Mr. Bolton (204b) and Mr. Jordan (110b) who act to end uncertainty. He explains his decision as 'my ambitions having been put down, there's a mental attitude which says, "No, you've done the dirty on me once (...)" why should I stay in the army at my present rank with no hope of advancement when I might be able to advance as a civilian.' Like 75a,b his response seems to be related to his view of the future rather than his need to act in the present.
- 128 Attitude to age: see Mr. Southwell (89b) for discussion. See also Mr. Dickens for societal stereotypes (178b). Mr. Hampden acknowledges these stereotypes and tends to accept that they have some validity from an employer's point-of-view.
- 136 Much later in the interview.  
See 118b: not denial but suppression of knowledge too painful to contemplate?
- 137 He is trying to understand what has happened and why: the process of reconstruction and rationalisation has begun? He recognises that he has done well objectively: 'I'm ... the equivalent of being one of the kingpins of the unit (...) which I suppose is a nice thought, but behind it all you still think ...' Subjectively, he was retarded, 'come to a stop'.
- 139 He does not believe that there was anything he could have done to change his history (but contrast Mr. Jackaman, 64b). Comparisons with himself when younger and with others enable him to come to terms with the situation: he had moved so fast in his early days, much faster than others, that he arrived at his plateau early. He had experienced early arrival rather than an abrupt finish. The army's system of benchmarks in promotion makes such comparisons possible. Mr. Baldwin also talks of his early rapid progress (184b).
- 150 End of interview.



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER' AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'

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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. BALDWIN



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. Baldwin

(...) One of the key questions at the Resettlement Board is how hard do you want to work, well I've given up wanting to work that hard, because I've worked very hard in the army. And I'm a little cynical about the outcome, I mean I make no pretence that I feel  
 5 that I should have done better than I have and one of the things that frustrates me slightly too is that in 18 months, two years time I will have to leave the army, although I consider myself pretty much at my peak, I'm still in good physical condition, I can do everything that the army calls upon me to do (...) They haven't rewarded  
 10 me in the manner that I feel that I deserve by them. I'm quite happy to be leaving, but I haven't got a clue what I want to do, except there's a big cross-roads really because I have the opportunity for the first time in my life to do something entirely different.

(...) Did you have any ambitions for the future?

15 (...) Don't laugh - I wanted to be a Field Marshal - I was that ambitious I really wanted to get on well. I felt that I had all the necessary attributes.

(...) What sort of future were you seeing for yourself?

Well, I was very lucky, because whilst I was there, because of my  
 20 job, I was advanced in promotion, because there are three grades of rank within the trade hierarchy. Staff Sergeant, which is what you get when you pass the course, W02 and then W01, and it's from there that you take the springboard to commissioning. Now, at the time, there was a mandatory six years' wait between Staff Sergeant and W02  
 25 for my present rank. It was a long period but they considered that two tours was what you required to get the necessary experience. So having got my promotion early, so although it was acting, but paid, I'd demonstrated my ability to hold the rank, obviously, and I was already younger than most of my counterparts. I thought I had it  
 30 cracked.

This was at Staff Sergeant level?



b. Commentary on edited transcript of interview with Mr. Baldwin

- 2 'given up': after a major disappointment over promotion. See 79b; 100a,b ff. and cf. Mr. Hampden's similar change in attitude (100a,b ff.).
- 5 See 88a,b on assessment of himself: is this realistic? Cf. Mr. Bolton (9b, 243b). Then see 165a,b; 235a ff.
- 6 Notional date of leaving related to date of entry and thus known from the start of his service. Cf. Mr. Jordan (26b). His expected promotion would have postponed it, but it is now becoming a reality.
- 8 'at my peak': he is now 38. See 90a. He values his physical fitness. Cf. Mr. Jordan (51-4a,b).
- 10 'I deserve': he has worked hard (90a, 102a, 115a, 241a, 271b, 273a) and given 'loyalty' (117a). He feels the army has broken the 'psychological contract' (Levinson, 1972); see also 136b. His 'career' has been 'strangled' (46a), 'denied' (230a) and he is now 'cynical' (4a). This has prompted some re-appraisal of himself (165a,b) and has badly jolted his perception of his environment: it is not predictable and equitable as he supposed, but is deceptive ('never confess', 133a; 'nefarious', 136a). Cf. Mr. Hampden (100b).
- 11 An uncertain future: see 195a,b and Mr. Hampden (126b) for discussion.
- 12 This suggests anxiety rather than excitement. Contrast 214a.
- 14 This question refers to the time when he started his army service.
- 15 See 114a, where he acknowledges that this was unattainable. This is not, it seems, a haunting dream (unlike the dashed expectations of promotion), but one does not know how urgent it had been in early adulthood and thus how much more painful his present disappointment is. See also 251b and Mr. Jordan (75b, 87b) on how ambitions come down a notch or two and on the 'Dream'; see also Chapter 6 and Mr. Bolton (34b).
- 20 The army's promotion system. Cf. the similarities in Sofer's (1970) study of organisational 'careers'. I did not investigate the official regulations on promotion, but the men described it as systematic within the army's various occupational groups. The criteria for advancement, known to all, include time served, trade and educational qualifications and merit. There is a timetable for promotion (cf. Chapter 4 and Roth, 1963), with age norms and bench marks (annual report) which chart progress and influence expectations. There are several reasons for disappointment. There may be no vacancies, as Mr. Stephens describes: 'just waiting for people to leave (...) a huge backlog (...) I waited nearly 7 years'. A man may not have the most appropriate experience: 167b and Mr. Hampden (48a,b), who had been in a backwater. The army may change the promotion system for some reason, such as the demand for a particular trade; it may reduce the time element (38a,b ff.) or impose a new upper age limit (Mr. Jackaman, 59 a,b ff.). See also discussion of annual report (47b).



This was at all stages of my promotion; I thought I had it cracked. And, of course, I was looking for W01 and I've had confidential reports every year, of course, as every soldier does, from that time  
 35 on - all of them very good - but no promotion. It's a bottleneck you see, there's too many of us trying in the same position ... but I thought I had it cracked ... Then the thunderbolt came when they reduced the mandatory 6 year period between Staff Sergeant and W02 to anything down to 2 years - so there were now people passing their  
 40 course way after me, suddenly finding themselves the same rank as I was. And unbelievable as it may seem, at the end of this year, there will be men the same rank as me who've done less time in the army than I've done in this rank. That's an incredible statistic. (...) what it means is now I've got to leave. Yes, it was a blow,  
 45 you don't do 22 years and give it up just like that - I mean my career prospects were strangled.

(...) So you all see your reports. You know what points you get (...)  
You've always had good scores.

I've always had well above average - at the end of it the score is  
 50 then classified into verbs - into words - I should say - outstanding - well above, above, average, below average and satisfactory. I've always got well above.

(...) we put our son in boarding school. ... he was about 11, 11 or 12, at that stage and we applied to a number of schools and we got  
 55 him in one. ... but we felt it was the right thing to do, because he was coming to an age where education was going to be very important. ... We sent him to one of the best schools that we could afford, one that had a tremendous reputation, but he was surrounded by people for whom money was absolutely no object, I mean, Rolls Royces, Jensens,  
 60 Learn how to live in society in other words, broaden his horizons, perhaps go to a ballet, learn a bit about opera, learn a bit about choral singing, angling, squash, all the things that the prospectus shouts about.

(...) my confidential report that year which was a bad one, still a  
 65 very good report but relative to what I had been having (...) it may not have done me that much harm, but it certainly couldn't have helped.



- 32 He had high expectations, having had early promotion (27a) and generally excellent annual reports (47b, 64a, 159a).
- 35 'bottleneck': see 20b, 180a. He could accept the 'waiting' (Mr. Jordan, 44a). One had to be 'lucky' (e.g. Mr. Southwell, 66b) to 'jump over' the other legitimate contenders. This was reasonable and there was still time to achieve his due reward (Mr. Southwell, 77b).
- 37 'thunderbolt': his language and manner of speaking testify to the enthusiasm he notes as one of his attributes (96a). He uses metaphors for emphasis: 'strangled' (46a); 'bust a gut' (102a); 'scruff of its neck' (113a); 'murderous choice' (206a). Here 'thunderbolt' conveys the uncontrollability and destructive force of this organisational contingency within his personal world of order and hope. See 10b, 20b.
- 39 He is now vying with more and younger men for too few vacancies (Mr. Southwell, 66b). Despite his earlier reasonable expectations, he hits the age ceiling without achieving promotion which 'means' (44a) he has to leave. For discussion of competition with younger men, see Mr. Bolton, 288b; Mr. Jackaman, 67b; Mr. Jordan, 51b.
- 47 The annual report: standard staff appraisal procedure, which is part of the formal system of evaluation, is entered on the records and thus influences future promotion decisions. It informs the man of his progress and so plays a part in self assessment; it offers a means of comparison with others and influences expectations. Thus it has both an objective and a subjective significance; social learning and self concept theories offer different interpretations of it. He refers several times to the rubric of the report (as here) and to the difficulty of interpreting it in the light of promotions made, of reading its latent message; Mr. Hampden also refers to this (48b). Mr. Baldwin also recognises that there is what he calls 'inflation', the deliberate manipulation of the scores for a particular effect. When one adds the impersonality of large organisations (e.g. Mr. Hampden, 24a ff.), there emerges a picture of several layers of reality, objective and subjective. Mr. Baldwin recognises this in his reflections (133a, 153a; 165a,b) upon whether his reports had been a true assessment of him and hence a fair index of his promotion chances. He feels he has been misled into optimism, but recognises the difficulties of motivating people on a fixed term contract. See 136a,b ff.
- 53 Children's education: like Mr. Southwell (34a ff. and 35b); Mr. Jackaman, 177a ff.; Mr. Jordan, 35b he recognises its importance and takes it into consideration in his decision-making.
- 61 He enjoys music himself: see 249a.
- 60 Several of the men refer the broadening of their 'horizons': Mr. Dickens, 116b; Mr. Southwell, 33b.
- 64 Debating with himself the reasons why he was not promoted. See 152b.



And you see the other thing that one's got to remember too, is they're always looking in the army for fliers. Now by implication a guy who's a flier is a guy who hasn't been reported upon very often.

70 Well I've been a foreman now ten, eleven years, and so I've had 11 reports from all sorts of different people saying that I'm capable of doing the job and one thing and another. So the chances of me slipping up once or twice are much greater - any flaws in my make-up are going to be spotted. So as time went on it was getting worse, and  
75 I mean there was nothing - why should they promote me now - I've so little time to do.

(...) Tell me how this realisation came about, you know, that it wasn't going to go the way you'd always thought it would.

Well it's the writing on the wall really. I mean you can fool someone  
80 a bit. (...) it was like a slap in the face, really. Because by the time I'd got this worse-than-my-average score I was beginning to have some doubts. Anyway I hadn't got it yet, and I could see all these younger guys catching me up because of this reduced promotion between Staff Sergeant and WO2. And I think it took about two years  
85 to sink in. And I was extraordinarily bitter when I finally worked out - particularly when I got this bad report - that I worked out my chances must be slim. I've got over that now. I'm looking forward to getting out. (...) Frankly, without any false modesty, I think they're losing a good bloke. Its as simple as that. A bloke who's  
90 dedicated all his life to the army and who's capable of going on.

(...) You've said you're very bitter. How has this bitterness expressed itself?

Fortunately, it hasn't. I told the boss quite frankly - I just hope that the army doesn't dissipate my natural enthusiasm and love for  
95 my job before I leave (...) But I was concerned at one time that the army might dissipate my enthusiasm. I might become so damn cynical that I'd just throw my arms up and become a - you know, live on the dole or something of that nature.

Do you think that is happening to you?



- 68 This indicates a fairly realistic self assessment. He is not a 'flier' but (236a) an 'ordinary, average, mediocre bloke' who, because of his 'enthusiasm and drive' is, nevertheless 'a good bloke' (88a). Cf. Mr. Bolton's (243b) comparison of himself with 'high fliers'.
- 73 There is realism also in his implicit recognition of his own 'flaws' and of the likelihood of them being 'spotted'. Cf. Mr. Townley (e.g. 38a,b), who is vague and unrealistic in many ways. Mr. Baldwin is realistic in terms of his perception of the environment: the 'thunderbolt' (37b) changed his 'assumptive world' (Chapter 9) and he is now struggling to re-orientate himself (10b).
- 77 'realisation': that his 'career prospects were strangled'.
- 79 The exquisite pain of this gradual realisation ('it took about 2 years', 84a) is perhaps less familiar in organisations where 'career' paths, if they exist, are both less rigid and longer. These men are leaving in their early forties and starting afresh in the face of negative (but unfounded, see Chapter 5) societal stereotypes which increase their anger and lower their self esteem. The story can be pieced together from several interviews. First there is the waiting (Mr. Jordan, 44a), the growing doubts (82a) quietened by reasonable explanations (35a,b). As the dream 'slips away' (Mr. Jordan, 87a), the belief that a lesser prize is obtainable perhaps replaces it (Mr. Jordan, 107a ff.) But as time passes, comparisons with others are made (Mr. Hampden, 63a ff.) and the doubts crystallise as 'writing on the wall' (79a, 86a; Mr. Hampden, 68a). Then comes the 'thunderbolt' (37b), the 'slap in the face' (80a), which can no longer be denied. Mr. Ellis describes this as 'like pulling the ground from underneath you (...) My heart bled.' Objective and subjective realities confront each other. The first response is disbelief and action to restore the world to normality: see 88a ff; 93a ff.; Mr. Hampden, 95a ff. 'I complained bitterly'. But that world, of their own construction (47b), no longer exists and they respond with anger: 'cold rage' (Mr. Hampden, 94a): 'furious underneath' (Mr. Gilbert). Living in this new and alien world, they are depressed and bitter (85a; Mr. Hampden, 99a), but gradually the process of rationalisation starts (cognitive dissonance: Chapter 9): 64b, 75a, 145a, 170a, 179a. This calls for a re-appraisal of self (153a, 165a) and of the situation (Mr. Hampden, 113a ff.) and a new response to the environment (2a,b; Mr. Hampden 103a). Gradually a new future is identified. This parallels the grief cycle noted in Chapter 9 (shock, denial, anger, depression, acceptance, testing of self, search for meaning and internalisation). Mr. Hampden (118b) seems well advanced in this process and coping now with the cognitive stage. Mr. Jordan (142a) is working it out' in his mind. For discussion of 'mid-life crisis' see 185b, 225b. Although his objective situation keeps pushing him onwards, Mr. Baldwin does not yet seem to have let go his past and keeps spiralling back to anger and depression (206b).



100 Yes, I do. In my job it doesn't, but mentally, I've already started talking about being a postman - I feel like just sitting back and saying to hell with it - let them look after me, I've bust a gut for them and if this is what I get out of it. But if I can meet somebody in Civvy Street that's prepared to give me my head, I'd do a good job  
 105 for them. (...) No, I've never been in Civvy Street you see, I really don't know what it's like. (...) I am frightened - I don't think frightened's the right word - trembling - yes, I'm frightened. Because I don't know what people are going to expect of me - am I better than they are, am I worse than they are? Are they going to  
 110 put up with someone like me? Because I am different, I'm an out and out extrovert and I don't suffer fools easily and I believe in speaking my mind, but I think I've got a lot going for me and I want to shake British industry by the scruff of its neck. But of course you see this is the old Field Marshal bit again - its pretty unattainable,  
 115 I'm not going to do it. I don't see why I should grind myself into an early grave to try and make it, but by God whoever I work for if they support me then they'll get everything from me, because one thing a soldier has got to offer, and I think this is one of the reasons why they're attractive to some labour forces, is their loyalty.

120 (...) How are you setting about this change? (...) you have to attend the Panel.

Yes, but I would have done anyway, because I'm a firm believer in what they've got ... in fact I've got a list over there of courses I've applied for, (...) But no, I'm actively working at this, I  
 125 wished I could have started earlier.

Did you start at the earliest point you could?

Yes, in fact I started a little bit before. But I'd also applied for redundancy, you see. Every now and again the army has a redundancy scheme, and they bring up certain trades. Well only once has my trade  
 130 come up, and I applied for it, and didn't get it (...) And, of course the great thing, 37 years of age. Not 40. This is why I think the army's being spiteful. (...) This is the problem they've got and this is why they'll never confess to you what your promotion prospects are. If they'd told me 5 years ago that I had no prospects at all I wouldn't



- 100 'mentally': but the language and proposition suggest that this is not a cognitive response. It reflects his anger and his testing of new identities. These are early phases in the grief cycle and do not make for accurate assessment of self or of suitable jobs.
- 101 'postman': cf. Mr. Southwell's (91b) gesture in response to societal stereotypes of 'middle age'. Mr. Baldwin is not speaking this from his lack of knowledge about civilian life (cf. Mr. Hampden, 113b), but he, too, is making a gesture, parading the sort of identity he feels the army has accorded him, deliberately degrading himself. The personal devastation he has experienced (cf. Mr. Dickens, 154a) has left a confused and negative self concept when it needs to be positive and realistic. See also 271b.
- 103 See also 116a ff., 222a ff. Is he seeking another work environment with which he can interact in his accustomed way (social learning theory) and which will confirm that his world is unchanged and that the army is but a monstrous aberration?
- 105 This does not follow immediately. It suggests that he knows that he cannot return to 'paradise lost': he has to face the outside world.
- 106 'frightened': see Mr. Hampden, 113a; Mr. Jordan, 31b; Mr. Scott, 37b; Mr. Southwell, 112b. Mr. Baldwin's response is characteristically more anguished than theirs. Coming from a family with '165 years' continuous service in one regiment', he has perhaps lost confidence in his assessment of his environment, is disorientated and 'trembles' because he does not know what to expect (11a, 186a) and does not know how to evaluate it anyway. Like Mr. Southwell (95b), he hears about men leaving the army but notes with caution that they hear only the success stories.
- 109 Self assessment. This reiterates the importance of comparisons with others for self assessment (social learning and self concept theories). He points out some negative and positive attributes. The annual reports will have helped to mould his self concept: he wishes (134a ff.) that they had been honest. He seems to be able to assess himself fairly realistically; what he seems to lack is a realistic and coherent picture of his environment.
- 115 See 101b, 245b. He is hurt and angry; accommodating on one hand, rebellious on the other.
- 120 The Resettlement Panel: interviews are compulsory for WOs, voluntary for officers. The Resettlement Service runs courses (Mr. Jordan, 31b; Mr. Southwell, 96b), both general second 'career' courses and specific occupation courses.
- 124 Despite his anguish, he is active in response to his environment: 127a, 147a ff.; he hints at opportunism (in the army he used to know). He says elsewhere that he 'loves' making decisions and seeing them through.
- 131 Concern with age: see 185a.



135 be as enthusiastic about my work now, I'm only human ... so they don't  
tell you. They give you nefarious kind of reasons.

So they've got the problem of ...

Maintaining satisfied soldiers.

(...) Looking back do you feel that you've taken any wrong turnings  
140 at all?

(Laugh) I must have done somewhere ...

I mean do you seriously think this ...

Perhaps I do.

Where?

145 Well, perhaps in applying for particular postings. They may not have  
liked that very much. (...) I think - yes, I've allowed family circum-  
stances at times to influence where I wanted to go ... (...) wanting  
to get here, and wanting to get there - they may not have looked upon  
that with much pleasure. (...) I've got a sense of humour that not  
150 everybody relates to ... (...) and maybe I've rubbed a few people  
up the wrong way, but that's part and parcel of the game. I would  
not have thought that was serious enough to have denied me promotion.  
Maybe I'm not good enough. I wouldn't mind so much if they'd turned  
round and told me, look you're a bit of a bum really! But it's knowing  
155 that you've done more than is expected of you all your life, and  
knowing, I think really the reason why I haven't got promoted is that  
there just isn't a place for me. Why should they give promotion to  
me now? It's Government money badly spent. It's interesting.  
(thoughtfully). (...) that report, (...) it was absolutely brilliant.  
160 Leads from the front, an inspiring leader ... gets the best out of the  
men ... all this stuff ... I would have thought would have made a good  
officer. But you know if I can't get promotion with that report, then  
there's no way in hell I'm ever going to get it. Because that was a  
good report. In fact, it wasn't true ... (pause, rather slowly),  
165 it's better than I am.



- 136 'nefarious reasons': see 47b. Although he understands why the army acts as it does (138a), the pretence hurts and angers (154a). He tells elsewhere that 'You're always given the patronising "better luck next time"'. Cf. Mr. Hampden (96a). At first they had presumably believed what they now feel to have been a hollow concern for them. He says that his implied contract has been broken by the army (see 10b), because 'they've played around with the promotion bit'. They have changed his system of expectations.
- 138 He recognises the 'problem' (132a) of motivating men on a fixed contract to a high level. They are 'only human' and without the promise of advancement could, during their final period in the army, expend greater energy outside the organisation than in their job within it (cf. Becker, 1960). This could dilute the effectiveness of an army which has to respond immediately in defence crises.
- 139 To account for his present position.
- 145 Few had applied for postings: see Mr. Hampden (14b).  
This is the process of rationalisation, of coming to terms with what has happened (see 79b). He finds possible explanations in his own behaviour: 110a ff., 146a; 149-50a; and in the situation itself (75-6a, 156-8a, 180a).
- 146 See Mr. Bolton, 62b; Mr. Driver, 120b on the interweaving of the various domains of the individual's life in decisions about the work domain. Though Mr. Baldwin doubted whether most other soldiers did this, others (e.g. Mr. Jordan, 35b; Mr. Southwell 79b) took the needs of their families into consideration.  
'allowed': under what pressure? See 252a, which indicates that his wife has some influence in this thinking.
- 152 He is weighing the evidence: cf. 64b, 161a ff.
- 153 An alternative explanation to those in 145b: he may not be 'good enough'. This questions his self concept, for the annual reports had consistently told him that he was (159a ff.). It also lowers it: there was perhaps nothing he could have done ('wrong turnings', 139a). He is 'a bit of a bum' (154a). See also 68b.
- 154 'told me': cf. 133-6a.
- 159 See 47b.
- 160 Self assessment: see 68b, 73b. He ponders the identity he was accorded on paper, which should have won him promotion.
- 165 He did not get that promotion and concludes that he is not the man the report told him he was. He quickly turns away from this painful acknowledgement as he continues to talk about the reporting process. Another confrontation of objective and subjective realities (79b)?



(...) Eighty per cent of the people in my trade structure who got promoted this year came from (...)

Is that significant?

Damn right it's significant. First of all they're reported on by a  
 170 Colonel as opposed to a Major in my case. Secondly it is the place  
 where all the soldiering goes on (...) and that's where you get  
 known amongst the senior members of the officer hierarchy. And  
 don't forget too that in this organisation, I'm competing with a  
 number of talented people as well. It's much more difficult for me  
 175 to shine here than it would be for example in a unit.

(...) So what you're saying is there's more to this than your own  
 ability, its partly to do with the luck of - er - the people report-  
 ing on you, ...

Yes - right place, right time. That really is ... I mean, I've got  
 180 to be fair, there are too many of us trying for too few positions,  
 and it's the guy who ... I mean, I was lucky when I was in (...) to  
 get promoted early - the fact that it didn't do me any good is  
 neither here nor there. But that was something I wouldn't have got  
 if I hadn't have gone to (...), so I mean, you take the rough with  
 185 the smooth. (...) it's a hard business at 40 - starting again, you  
 know. So I really don't know what's out there.

(...) Extra education to improve my lot in terms of some employment  
 that I've sought, is interesting, but I can't think what I want to do.  
 (...) I mean I'd be nearly 50 by the time I'd qualified, and then  
 190 there's 15 useful years left? ... No. So I don't really think at  
 this stage that extra education is going to help.

(...) You used the word, back at the beginning, crossroads ... how  
 do you see yourself ... here you are standing at this crossroads,  
 and presumably it isn't just a fork ... there are dozens of roads ...

195 (Laugh) No, it's like Spaghetti Junction.

Yes, well at some point you're going to have to take a step forward.  
 How do you think you're going to do that?



- 167 They came from the same posting: see 20b and Mr. Hampden (65a ff.). He explains (169a ff.) the significance of this for promotion: a particular posting may provide more valuable experience, greater visibility to the 'hierarchy', an annual report by an officer of higher status; it may offer less competition and greater opportunity 'to shine'. This has parallels in most large organisations: see Sofer (1970, p.232; chapter 14). The nature of the posting forms one of the exogenous factors which facilitate or constrain the individual's progress: see Mr. Bolton (125b).
- 177 I introduce the concept of 'luck' at this point. He uses it several times after this (e.g. 181a) and once before (19a).
- 179 'right place, right time': cf. Mr. Hampden (31b; 'right place', 35a; 'wrong place at the wrong time', 98a).
- 181 'lucky': cf. Mr. Hampden's early promotion (137b, 138a) and Mr. Southwell (66b). It did not win him the promotion he coveted, but it influenced his expectations and his self concept and thus probably the level of his performance: see Chapter 9 on psychological success.
- 184 He recognises that the exogenous factors offer opportunities (early promotion) and limitations (no promotion later) and that 'you take the rough with the smooth'. See Mr. Bolton, 118b; Mr. Hampden, 137b; Mr. Jordan, 129a,b.
- 185 Concern for age: see 131a, 189a, 203a. See Mr. Jordan (22b). These remarks about age suggest several associated concerns. There is first the concern for 'starting again' (185a), an issue which particularly exercises Mr. Dickens (see 92b, 96b), who demonstrated how much libidinal energy this requires. This is 'a hard business at 40', says Mr. Baldwin (185a). Elsewhere (8b) he notes that he is currently at his 'peak', which would suggest that he perceives the age of 40 as representing decline (e.g. 131a). His second concern, therefore, is with the societal stereotypes of 'middle age' expressed by many of the others: see Mr. Southwell (89b). The third concern, particularly shared by Mr. Jordan (89a), is with the erosion of time: 190a, 203a. He is talking in terms of 'time left'. This concern and his feelings analysed in 79b prompt the question: is he experiencing a 'mid-life crisis'? For further discussion see 225b.
- 187 Education: it would eat up too much of the remaining time to make it worthwhile: see 189b. Contrast this with Mr. Dickens' (22b, 91a), who sees it as a passport to self-fulfilment.
- 189 This suggests that he looks to the future. See also 200b, 204a.
- 194 I have introduced the idea of the many possible 'roads'.
- 195 See 12a, 205a. See also Mr. Dickens, 160b; Mr. Townley, 150b.
- 196 In the interview not as brutal as these printed words suggest.



That's what frightens me. Because at my age I can't afford to fool around with employment. I mean, it frightened me a little bit by  
 200 what he said, you've got to work for a firm two or three years and then advance yourself in another company. I mean he's not talking to a young man any more. And if I'm going to secure useful employment, I've got 25 years' working life maximum left - by the time I actually get out and get to that stage I'm sure retirement will be down to 60.  
 205 I can't afford to mess about with choice. I really can't. So the first job I get has got to be the right one. And that's a murderous choice to make. It's that what frightens me, not the seeking employment, getting the right one first time.

So you're standing trembling at this crossroads, I mean, what help  
 210 can you get to make up your mind?

God knows, I really don't know. Other than what I'm doing now, really is ... going on these day courses to as many as I can get on now. I know in a day you're not going to learn a great deal, but hopefully you will either pick up the thread of something that excites you, or  
 215 something that horrifies you. And I would be then able to delete ... I'm trying to get a short list.

(...) You're painting a picture of - you're not talking as enthusiastically as you have done of some of your jobs in the past.

Well that's right because I don't think I'm ever going to find a job  
 220 that's as good as the one that I've done. That's the sad thing about it. I mean what I have amassed in terms of experience, since I've been in the army, there's somebody out there somewhere who would give his right arm - I hope and I believe - to employ somebody like me. But how do I get to him?

225 (...) And there comes a time, I mean they talk about the male menopause - I don't think I've reached that yet, but there is a time when you take stock of your life, I think, and look back. I think I took more stock of it about the time when I realised that I was going to go no further. That came as quite a blow. Because I wondered  
 230 - I believe in pursuing a career and one that I thoroughly enjoyed and to be denied that is difficult. And then you begin to think about



- 198 'frightens': see 106a,b. See also 185b on the passage of time.
- 200 See also Chapter 8: 2 (b ii); Mr. Bolton, 243b. Whilst objectively sound, the Resettlement Officer's advice on exploration and acclimatisation in a civilian job conflicts with Mr. Baldwin's subjective assessment of his situation (185b, 201a). He feels there is not time left for this, particularly in view of the negative stereotypes of ageing. He is also conscious of wider social changes: the possibility of the lowering of the retirement age. See 189-90a, 242a: he seems to look to the future and to do so realistically. Cf. Mr. Jordan, 26a,b; Mr. Southwell, 115b.
- 206 'murderous choice': He is faced with many choices ('Spaghetti Junction', 195a) which, because he has not yet developed a new and coherent perception of his world to match its changed reality, he cannot yet evaluate. It is not the inevitable change of occupation but this choice which 'frightens' him. The resettlement process is building up pressure upon him to make a choice, a cognitive process, but affectively he is not ready for it. See 79b, 100b.
- 207 Because of this unreadiness and his feelings about time and age, he believes he has to get it right first time, making it a 'murderous choice'. There is a hint of inflexibility here, not recognition of the possibility of 'satisficing'. See Chapter 8: 3 (a). It is unlikely that Holland's matching approach (Chapter 8: 2 (b iv)) would be of value until he has adjusted affectively and cognitively.
- 209 What would help? The recognition that he is not yet ready for choice and permission from himself (and the Resettlement Service?) to delay it. His other needs are probably interwoven: more information about his environment, a coherent and realistic view of it and confidence in himself.
- 212 He answers in terms of information from the environment.
- 214 'excites': enthusiastic, stimulated by his environment: 96a, 237a; 249a.
- 217 As with Mr. Jordan (117b), there seems to have been a change of mood.
- 219 Mourning his loss; idealising his job.
- 222 See 103b, 116a ff.: seeking a replacement comprehensible environment?
- 224 There are practical problems in contacting potential employers so far in advance of leaving and away from the area in which he will then live.
- 225 His previous words sounded like defeating 'this death thing'. Scenting 'mid-life crisis' I asked, 'When did this become an issue for you (...) this death thing?' 'Oh, it never was'. He continues with this reference to 'the male menopause'; I did not explore the 'death thing' because, I assume, of the need to change tapes at this point. However, I had probably already (79b, 185b) detected some of the symptoms of 'mid-life crisis' (Chapter 6): his anger and questioning of his own identity; the aspiration-achievement gap; his attitudes to time and age. Can this be best explained as 'mid-life crisis' or in some other way? He rejects this (226a).



what you've done with your life and how much of your life have you got left, is a natural progression from that. (...) I might even get more bitter as time goes on, particularly if things don't work out - once I lose my drive and enthusiasm then I become, in my honest opinion, an ordinary average mediocre bloke, because what (...) I've got going for me is my enthusiasm and drive, my desire to create and do things and, you know, it's a very important question that first one, (...) at the Resettlement Board - how hard do you want to work? - if you can answer that question you're half way there and I, unfortunately, I'm undecided. I know I thrive on hard work, but for whom am I working? I mean my children very shortly will be off my hands and there's just my wife and I to cater for. I've got my own house, I've got a useful pension, I don't have to work very hard.

245 (...) have you thought of dropping out?

(Laugh). Do you know, it's funny you should say that, because I often make a joke about - I tell the boss that I'm just going to become a latter-day hippie (...) I've always had that potential within me. And it comes out in my music. I've always enjoyed Dylan, I've always liked the rebel, I've always liked the cause ... (...) That's just a dream though, I mean that's like the island in Scotland (...) That wouldn't satisfy my wife at all in fact, I know she wouldn't like that at all, but it's just my man dream, it's this Good Life thing, that's why it's got to be one of the best programmes on television because inside that programme is something inside every one of us. We all want to drop out - we all know we're part of a rat race but it's that rat race that keeps us living. So it's biting the hand that feeds you a bit but yes I could drop out. I don't think I'd be very proud of myself though.

260 Does being proud of yourself matter?

Oh yes, I don't like being ashamed of myself. I like to look back and, I mean I've always said to the kids you know you ask me what I want out of life, the day I go to my grave I want to look back and say I made a success of that.

265 (...) What do you see looking back on your life at the moment?



- 232 'Mid-life' stock-taking: see Chapter 6. Other men also referred to this: Mr. Dickens (93a); Mr. Hampden (136a ff.); Mr. Jordan (128a ff.: 'everything's balanced').
- 235 'drive and enthusiasm': the manner and matter of his speech (37b, 214b) convey a sense of his energy, an energy expended to no avail as he tries to force his world to yield to him what he wants. He says he would like 'to shake British industry by the scruff of its neck' (113a); he appears to be doing this to his environment. Contrast this with Mr. Dickens (92b, 96b) who expresses his energy through generativity (e.g. 233b).
- 238 A question asked by the Resettlement Officer: see 1a.
- 241 'undecided': an uncomfortable experience for the enthusiast with bounding energy. He looks to the future, he is active but he perceives his environment as very constraining.
- 245 I am referring here to a mention he made very much earlier of his youth, when he liked 'rebel, protest type of music (...) when I was very arty and open-toed sandals and all that sort of rubbish'. At times he does speak like a rebel, though this seems out of character with his respect for military virtues, to which he refers several times (e.g. 119a).
- 251 'dream': see 15b. It would seem that this 'dream', like Mr. Bolton's 'fantasies' (267b), is not as urgent as the now thwarted ambition 'to have done better' (5a) in the army.
- 252 See 146a,b.
- 253 'man dream': I am not altogether sure that this is what he said and, if it was, I do not understand what he meant by it.
- 257 'rat race': one interpretation of his frustration is that he suffers approach-approach goal conflict (see Chapter 9): the 'rat race' versus 'dropping out'. But see 271b.
- 259 'proud of myself': see his other values (245b).
- 264 'success': is this an indication of a strong need for achievement (see Chapter 9 and 268a ff.)?



It's okay. I'm a little unhappy about the way things are going in the family but that's been dictated a lot by the circumstances of my employment. (...) so looking back, yes, I'm quite happy with what I've achieved. But I want that to continue.

270 You're still hoping to achieve more ...?

Yes, I want to achieve more because I want the good things in life like everybody else.. (...) I think this is quite a natural thing and I'm prepared to work to get them. But what I'm not prepared to do a second time is work and not get them. And that is fundamental to all  
275 of this.



266 By this he 'apparently means standard of living and 'teenage' problems:  
'everybody I speak to shares the same problems.'

271 See 275b. He talks of a powerboat, a cruise, a better house. This suggests that the talk of 'dropping out' is not a rejection of these 'good things', but an angry gesture, similar to the postman gesture in 101b. As well as anger and frustration, it may also represent his present confusion. The 'good things' are the rewards of the 'rat race', of the world as he hitherto perceived it. Now that that world is topsy-turvy, he is not going to 'bust a gut' again (102a) and be unrewarded for doing so (10b); he might just as well drop out into a vaguely hedonistic, fantasy world, as in 245b.

274 'fundamental': certainly fundamental to this interview: see 10b, for his attitude reflects his response to the jolt he has received to his perception of his environment.

275 Almost the end of the interview, which lasted 135 minutes.



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER' AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'

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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. JORDAN



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. Jordan

Had you, during your period of National Service, increased rank?

No, but the reason ... I could have done but didn't because I was National Service. They had the same class system .... but very, very few National Service got promotion because they had the Regulars  
 5 to think of, you see. But I knew there was an opening there for me because I was getting on that well and that was the reason I wanted to stop in the army and I thought, in fact, well, like I said, we were engaged at the time, and I could see a better future there for both of us than what I could coming out. But she (his wife)  
 10 didn't want it at that particular time and so ...

Again, is that a matter of regret, looking back?

Yes, I think it is to me. The wife knows this in fact, because had I stopped where I was when I was I would have been a lot higher now than what I am. And second because the Unit I was with we  
 15 would have seen more of the world than we have. I mean, she's only been abroad once and that was to Germany because we're in the wrong regiment, you see. And lots of things like that. I could have made a lot more money. I could have been out last year, with a pension, you see, no - 1975 - I could have been finished, you see,  
 20 now - still young enough to get a job. But now, in fact, I'm worried about going out and searching to get a job because of my age: I think it's going to be a struggle.

(...) You said earlier you hadn't started to think about coming out into civilian life until about 5 years ago. Was there any particular  
 25 event which made you start to think about it?

Just my age. I suddenly realised, you know. We were talking, I think it was in the Mess one night, in fact, we had a function on. We were just discussing things in general and there was somebody going out, one of my acquaintances who was leaving at that particular  
 30 time. We were on about jobs, you know, and he said, 'Bloody hell!



b. Commentary upon edited transcript of interview with Mr. Jordan

- 1 He had had National Service deferment, but had waived this to escape the humiliations he felt at home and at work because of his family's poverty. Mr. Scott (3a ff.) also indicated dire poverty during his childhood.
- 2 'could have done': see 13b, 113a,b, 130a.
- 6 Compare with Mr. Dickens (41b).
- 7 So enjoyable had National Service been that he wanted to join the regular army, but his fiancée would not agree. Several years of financial hardship later made her change her mind. This seems to have been a sore matter between them for many years (12a, 113-6a,b); he speaks of 'blame'.
- 8 'future': see 26b.
- 10 Just as extra-occupational factors (poverty) had influenced the move into National Service, so other extra-occupational factors (personal relationship) influenced his decision on the next stage of his 'career'. Cf. Mr. Bolton (62b). He leaves the impression that he felt that he was not responsible for the events of his life. There is no sense that he was at this stage 'implementing his self concept'; his decisions seem based upon reactions to his environment.
- 13 'had I': a characteristic response; a concern for what might have been. He could be right. Starting from the age of 19 instead of his re-entry age of 26 he might have risen higher; in a different regiment he might have travelled more and thus earned more through the overseas allowances; certainly he could have finished earlier. However as Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Hampden make clear, length of service is not the only criterion of advancement: ability and the army's specific needs at any time also play a part. Cf. Mr. Bolton, (194b) and contrast Mr. Dickens, 205b; Mr. Driver, 238a,b; Mr. Jackaman, 77a,b; Mr. Southwell, 65b.
- 21 'worried'. A characteristic response: 42a, 76a,b, 107a, 118a. Cf. Mr. Bolton, 256b, Mr. Southwell, 112a,b. But see also 134b below.
- 22 'my age': he is now 45. He refers to his age several times and is evidently very concerned about it: 32a, 42a, 51a, 83a, 89a. Others shared this concern: Mr. Baldwin, 185a,b; Mr. Bolton, 163a; Mr. Dickens, 134b; Mr. Hampden, 128b; Mr. Southwell, 89a,b. Contrast Mr. Driver, 268b, Mr. Jackaman, 154b.
- 26 Although he speaks of looking to the future (8a), he apparently had only a hazy view. He would have known from his re-entry into the army his likely date of leaving unless some contingency like promotion intervened. He had long known it, yet now 'suddenly realised'. See 66b. Cf. Mr. Bolton (204b); contrast Mr. Jackaman, 4b, 81b. See also Mr. Bolton (326b) for difference between objective and subjective experiences. Also Mr. Scott (40b).



I'm nearly 40 and I've got to start a new life.' And I thought, 'Good God, I'm over 40 and I've got a long time to go yet. It doesn't give me much of a chance either.' And it was only that conversation that it struck it home. I mean, I was quite happy  
35 to carry on, you know.

By that stage (in 1973 when he was thinking about leaving) had you formulated any plans for the future?

Well, I was beginning to and then I thought, well, if things go right, with a good bit of luck I might get to Warrant Officer 1.  
40 Now, if you get Warrant Officer 1 then you're now talking about long service good jobs, you see. So I thought if I can get that then I won't have to worry so much about my age because I can get a good job on WO1 side for long service. But, of course, you wait and wait and that didn't come, so then I had to start ....

45 During this period of waiting and waiting and it didn't come, was this a matter of disappointment?

It's always a disappointment, I think. I think it's even more disappointing when you see .....

.... there would have been a lot of people much younger than you  
50 but who ....

That's right. You fight all this competition with the youngsters, you know, who can probably run twice as fast as I can (...) you're battling against the younger people whose brains are more active than your's even as far as that ...

55 Were you aware of this battling against younger people when you were much younger or was this something that you're more aware of now?

I'm more aware of now. And you see I didn't realise this problem when I came back into the army, I never gave that any thought; I  
60 just wanted to get back into the army. I don't think you realise you see, that from when you're 18 to when you're 24 or 26 when you come in, years gone by and you're not as young as you thought you were, but you didn't think of that then, you see. It's only when



- 31 new life': become a civilian. There were several expressions of concern for this major transition. The Resettlement Service is the institutionalised recognition of the considerable adjustments to be made on leaving a 'total institution' (Goffman, 1959): see Mr. Hampden (115b). Mr. Jordan had had some experience of civilian working life, though many years before. See Mr. Bolton (292b) on 'starting again'. Also Mr. Scott (37b).
- 33 'chance' used in the sense of opportunity.
- 35 Could have come out three years later, but decided to take pension earlier and not risk being transferred elsewhere and thus dislodging his son from his apprenticeship. See 10b. His wife, so reluctant for him to enter the army, now does not want him to leave. Cf. Mr. Southwell (79b).
- 39 'luck': he uses this word in the sense of 'good fortune' eleven times (e.g. 84a, 120a, 128a). See 10b: there is a strong sense in both the use of this word and in other comments that he is not responsible for the happenings his life. He offers a marked contrast to Mr. Jackaman (e.g. 66b).
- 40 The army promotion system: see particularly Mr. Baldwin, 20a ff. for discussion. Cf. Mr. Hampden, 39b; Mr. Jackaman, 59b; Mr. Southwell, 55b. Mr. Jordan explains that the highest age for promotion to W01 was 42 and before that there had to be two years at least as W02. When he was 38 he was 'acting' two ranks higher than his substantive rank and 'got a lovely report'. However, he eventually made W02 just too late to achieve W01: 'so I was blocked there'. W01 holds the key to future jobs.
- 44 'wait and wait': because he had received the signals ('lovely report') which raised his expectations. See particularly Mr. Baldwin, 47b for discussion of annual reports. See also 91b. 'that didn't come': another hint at events beyond his control (39b). Are the reports significant to these particular men as signals from the powers in the external world which rule their lives?
- 48 End of tape; presumably he is talking of younger people while I change tapes.
- 51 Competition from younger men, mentioned by Hall, 1976; Levinson, 1969. See also Mr. Bolton, 288b; Mr. Baldwin, 39b; Mr. Jackaman, 67b. This remark also reveals concern for age (22b) and for his physical ageing: physical condition is important in the army. See 89b.
- 53 Mental deterioration: a stereotype of 'middle age'. See Chapter 5.
- 58 Cf. Mr. Dickens (293b) on changing awareness of priorities.
- 59 When he was 26.
- 62 'years gone by': cf. 'slipping away' (86a,b ff.).



you start getting around the 30 mark you look at a young lad  
 65 of 20 whose got Sergeant on his arm. 'By God, he's a young lad  
 for that.' Then you suddenly realise that he's not young: you're  
 old. (Laugh)

He, in fact, may have as much service as you.

That's right. But he's younger, you know.

70 (...) All of a sudden you suddenly realise, you see a young man -  
 he's a young fellow for a Sergeant - it suddenly dawns on you -  
 he's probably just about right! (Laugh) We're the odd one out.

What about now? Have you plans for the future, any ambitions,  
 any dreams?

75 No, no. No, I think it's too late for dreams and ambitions now.  
 All I'm particularly worried about now is just getting decent  
 employment with a decent living.

You say it's too late for dreams and ambitions. Would you say  
 that you have had them in your time?

80 Well, I had ambitions in the Services, of course, and dreams.

To do what?

That some day I would get a commission, you know. But then, again  
 I wasn't thinking of the age at that time. You see, if you're  
 lucky enough, if things come quick enough you can do this. (He  
 85 gives an example of this) (...) That was the ambition. But I  
 could see that slipping away and I could see that slipping away  
 quicker than I could see the RSM thing slipping away and then that  
 began to slide, you see. Then of course by that time, you're  
 getting on a bit.

90 Was this a very upsetting thing to see or did it slip so gradually?

Oh yes, no, no, it doesn't slip that gradually. You feel it all  
 the time, but then you've got no option but to go on because you  
 can't, you see, when you've done this long - you can't just - for



- 64 His subjective assessment of the 'young lad' is based on his re-entry to the army at 26. This is another version of the young policeman or shaving mirror anecdote. There comes a sudden recognition that it is the personal norms which are out of step (72a), a Gestalt re-patterning of figure and ground (see Chapter 9). This is akin to the 'mid-life' recognition of mortality (see Chapter 6). See Mr. Southwell (107b).
- 66 'suddenly realise': see 26b, 70a. He is clearly not a reflective man who constantly assesses himself and matches himself against others. Contrast with Mr. Baldwin (109b). See also Mr. Hampden (61b).
- 74 I introduce the notion of dreams: he may not think in these terms.
- 75 See Chapters 5 and 6 on dreams in 'mid-life', for example, 'There is a pervading sense of sadness in these mid-life men of unfulfilled dreams' (Brim, 1976, p. 5). Mr. Jordan, indeed, conveys this sense as he watches the 'slipping away' of his dreams: 86a, ff., 106-9a. Cf. Mr. Bolton, 34b and contrast Mr. Dickens, 275b; Mr. Driver, 251b; Mr. Jackaman, 72b.
- 76 'worried', 'decent': adjectives which betoken a concern with the present, the tangible and attainable, not some distant, hoped-for event. See 21a and also 26b. Like Mr. Bolton, he seems to have a present time perspective: 'without goals and dreams and hopes there is no longer a sense of future' (Schultz, 1974, p.10). See Mr. Southwell (100b).
- 80 'ambitions': cf. Mr. Baldwin (15a,b).
- 83 'the age': see 26a,b ff.
- 84 'lucky': see 39b.
- 87 'RSM thing': an ambition to become the Regimental Sergeant Major (see 100a ff.). 'slipping away ... began to slide': a sense of the gradual fading of the dreams (75b) and of events beyond his control (39b, 44b).
- 89 Time is also slipping away: 62b. Chronological age marks the inexorable and rapid passage of time: see 22b. He seems to be concerned more with the erosion of time than with the ageing process, though this is at times implied (51b).
- 91 A poignant passage: 'you feel it all the time'. This is not the 'sudden realisation' of 66b, but a gradual seeping away of future potentials. See 75b, 76b and Mr. Baldwin (79b) for a fuller discussion. Is this seeping inevitable after a 'sudden realisation', the recognition of time-left-to-live (Neugarten, 1967: see Chapter 6)? See also Sofer, 1970.
- 92 He does not generally speak as though he perceives many options.
- 93 See Mr. Bolton, 373b on funnelling and investment. This is particularly true of the army where it does not pay to leave before the pension date (98a).



one thing because it's your life - you can't just leave it like  
 95 that. Secondly, to settle down in civvy life after so long  
 you've got to have the maturity behind you - getting a house,  
 furnishing it - then when you get this far you've got to go  
 the end to get the benefits ... (...) Of course your biggest thing  
 is to become an officer if you ever manage it, then from that -  
 100 you see, you would get RSM or WO2, you can become a commissioned  
 officer. But once you see the officer go, then you think 'Oh,  
 well, probably get RSM.' And the main ambition, really, to  
 become RSM because we have a strange theory in the army, we have  
 all the officers but Number One in any unit is the RSM, he's the  
 105 big boss, really. And that was the ambition to get that and  
 then to go on to higher things. So when I saw the higher things  
 slipping then I wasn't worried, because there was still a chance  
 of getting Number One. And then I could see that, that slipping  
 away, so there was no more but then just to go on and finish the  
 110 time off and that's another reason I'm coming out ...

And so the things you most wanted to achieve are just not possible...

No, not any more. Could have been had I stopped in (...) the  
 wife knows I've got this thing. Really, a lot of years ago I  
 thought she was the one that killed it off anyway, by not wanting  
 115 to come in, you see. I think she realises it as well (...) I  
 don't blame her any more - she was a young girl....

(...) when that chap first brought it up 5 years ago (age on leaving  
 army), I started really worrying and then I thought, well, you can  
 ease off a bit because by that time all the kids will have left  
 120 school and with a bit of luck we'll have three of them married and  
 gone - I didn't realise it was going the way it did - three of them  
 married and that will just leave the youngest. I could get a  
 small flat, no need to go buying a big house (...) Things started  
 to go right all of a sudden: my youngest daughter got married, the  
 125 eldest daughter wanted independence and of course the eldest son  
 was in the army. (...) so that was all settled. And there's  
 just the three of us, so things worked out right in time. And  
 then I thought, well, I suppose it's a luck, it's a luck that every-  
 thing's balanced. Had I stopped in and come out after 22 years,  
 130 say, I could have still been with all the kids at home. But I'm



- 96 He will have lived the greater part of his adult life in army married quarters. I was told that since the soaring house prices of 1972/3 soldiers are increasingly buying property both as investment and as preparation for re-settlement. This could be expected to colour their sense of commitment. Several of the men I interviewed mentioned either this kind of preparation or the fact that their house influenced their decision to leave in some way. See also Mr. Bolton 355b, Mr. Townley, 125b.
- 99 He breaks off and goes back to explain that once W02 is attained, then W01 becomes possible, which could lead to commissioning or RSM.
- 104 Presumably RSM, 'the big boss', comes from the same mould as the 'men' and the post is, therefore, understood, respected and also realistically attainable. Cf. Mr. Morgan speaks of the W01 as 'top of the tree'. Mr. Stephens indicates the vast social distance between 'officers' and 'men', however highly promoted.
- 106 It is implied that the 'higher things', the commission, were perceived as only distant possibilities. The real sadness lay in seeing the 'Number One' 'slipping away'.
- 107 'chance' again in the sense of 'opportunity'.
- 109 Mr. Baldwin (93a, ff.) and Mr. Hampden (100a, ff.) also describe the frustration of having to continue to see one's 'time off' despite major promotion setbacks.
- 110 See 35b: he could have stayed longer but chose to come out earlier because of his son's apprenticeship and also because 'I'd rather say this is it, I've got to go out sometime and make a date of it'. Is this a characteristic response of someone orientated to the present, who dislikes uncertainty and wants immediate action? Cf. Mr. Bolton, 204b; Mr. Hampden, 126b; Mr. Southwell, 79b.
- 113 'could have been': see 10b, 13b.
- 116 'blame': he speaks of blaming people on two other occasions. Like 113, this implies that someone else is responsible for his life.
- 117 This is much later in the interview. He is now showing a much more positive approach and starting to rationalise, 'to work it out' (142a). See Mr. Hampden (104b).
- 119 While the empty nest may cause grief in 'mid-life' (Chapters 5 and 6), it also lessens expenditure.
- 120 'luck': see 39a.
- 127 'things worked out': no sense of personal agency in this. Are there objective changes or is this the result of a re-ordering of perceptions (26b, 64b)?
- 129 'balanced': he recognises that had his life worked out as he had originally hoped (13b) he could have had other problems to contend with in the present. This appears to be a reactive response to his environment, dependent upon external contingencies and without the exercise of autonomy. However, he is now looking for the silver lining and appears to be making a more positive adaptation to his circumstances, more like Southwell (112b). Cf. Mr. Baldwin (184b). See Chapter 9 on homeostasis and the tendency towards equilibrium.



older, which makes it probably a little bit more difficult to get a job, but at least I haven't got problems. So that's why, really, I'm not sweating too much on that, not at the moment, I think I'm going to be very particular about what I take .... I've never been  
135 on social service in my life, but if it means having to do that or just go out and accept anything then that's what I'm going to do - I'm not going to rush into anything. I want to make sure that I've got the right job. I don't want to come out after all these years and start moving from job to job to job. It doesn't  
140 look very impressive, does it (...) With pension and gratuity (...) I can come out of the army with £X cash (...) I think that way I'm working it out pretty well in my own mind. It's just the employment side and I'm not too fussed because as I say I'll take my time and look around.



131 Age again: 22b.

'a little bit more difficult': a more positive approach than in 21a,b.

132 'problems': the cost of dependents.

134 'very particular': much more positive: cf. Mr. Southwell, (112b) but contrast with Mr. Jackaman, (204a ff.) who is knowledgeable and confident.

136 Cf. his earlier responses: he is now asserting his own needs to some extent. And cf. Mr. Bolton's acceptance of jobs with relief: (161b).

138 I did not explore this, but there was little indication that he knew what the 'right' job would be.

140 Cf. Mr. Bolton (112a). For the first time in his life, Mr. Jordan can afford to 'look around'. His army 'career' has enabled him to escape the toils of his opportunity structure. (He also refers to his children's education: his daughter is 'a lady in her own right now'). He also seems to be able to view his situation differently, 'working it out ...' Perhaps he is not merely adapting to his circumstances but, by a strengthened self concept, transcending them?



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER' AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'

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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. AND MRS. JACKAMAN



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. and Mrs. Jackaman

(Wife) (...) it's only five days from 8.30 to 2.30, which still means that I go out after the children and I'm in before them. But it does entail three nights, which we agreed (slight hesitation) (...)

(Man) (...) we know when we're going out, we know that that we've  
 5 got plenty of notice of when we're going out, (...) So we've got something to aim at, you know, for when we do go out. And as we say, we've contemplated taking on a pub and we need a little bit of money. (...) I'm not saying that the most important thing in  
 10 life is to make money but you need a little bit of money if you want to do what you plan to do, you see. So we sort of sat down and said to ourselves - well the fact that you work in the evenings, all right, there are certain sacrifices to be made - the children don't see you perhaps as often as they should and we sort of had a look at the other side and said, well, it's the money. If we can get the money, then  
 15 we'll have a better life later on any way.

(...) For how long have you been thinking about taking a pub and what else have you considered?

(Man) Well, we haven't considered anything else and I'll tell you what the reason is.

20 (Wife) For the last 12 years we've been going to take a pub.

(Man) When my father-in-law, (...) said, (...) 'How would you feel if you was to take over a pub and I came in with the money?' (...) So



b. Commentary on edited transcript of interview with Mr. and Mrs. Jackaman

- 1 Mrs. Jackaman has a civilian job in the army; which gives experience relevant to their plans (36a ff.; 171a) and the additional income needed for their venture (9a ff.), making them independent of her father (216a). Her job affects their children (12a ff.), but their needs are considered and contribute to the decisions made (26-7a; 121a; 177a ff.).
- 3 'agreed': there are several references to their joint approach and agreement (120a ff.; 265a ff.) and to less happy marriages (253a ff.).
- 4 The date of leaving the army. A clear, realistic view of the future, which gives them a timetable and an aim. Cf. Mr. Bolton, 254a; Mr. Jordan, 26b.
- 9 Another aspect of their realism, the recognition of the need for resources to effect change. Contrast this with the more vague approaches to possible change of Mr. Bolton (276b) and Mr. Townley (71a ff.).
- 11 An example of the relationships between the domains of the individual's life (see Chapter 9). See 136b. Here the demands of the work domain affect the family; Mr. Baldwin, 146b; Mr. Driver, 120b show how the demands of the family affect the work domain.
- 13 'look at the other side': the aim is to achieve balance, not just in the present but over time. Cf. Mr. Baldwin, 184b; Mr. Jordan, 129a.
- 18 This sounds as though they have foreclosed all other options (cf. 29a ff.; 40a ff.): this was the comment made by the Resettlement Officer (192a ff.). They recognise the 'funnelling' (40a) but point out that they have made and retained many options within it. An examination of their decision-making (92b) reveals the extent of their proactivity. Having identified a potentially suitable niche for themselves as a couple, they have thoroughly investigated and decided upon it. Contrast this with Mr. Bolton's (237a, 302b) attitude to keeping his options open.
- 21 He signed on for 6 years with 3 year options thereafter. Although unhappy after 6 years (85b), he accepted an advantageous offer with rapid promotion (70a). It was at the end of that 3 year period that her father raised the idea of a pub (21a, 24b). Nearing the end of the next 3 years (the 12-year point), they considered it again (25a, 97a) and were 'undecided' (102a). However, he received another tempting offer (102a), which he accepted, knowing that it meant that he would in effect be committing himself to the army for a further 10 years (105a ff.). To leave sooner would be 'stupid' (25a) because of the pension provisions. They knew, however, that they would take the pub after that (109a).



we come home, (...) and sat thinking about it and said, well, you know, we really haven't got enough behind us to take on a venture  
 25 like that (...) we reached the 12-year point and it was stupid looking at the pension, gratuity and one thing and another. The kids are still young and one thing and another. So now, even at this stage, the seed had already been planted then you know at our nine year point. (...)

(...) you've not really considered anything else?

30 (Man) No, no we haven't. The other couple of important factors are that, by virtue of being (his rank) (...) I'm responsible for (...) the accommodation, the messing, the bar, the sales, the bookkeeping - I've got to have a working knowledge of all the accounts and every-  
 thing and I've done an accounts course and I've spent 6 months as  
 35 treasurer, so I know every aspect of that side of it. Value Added Tax is another thing I know. (...) She deals with exactly the same things that I do in that she orders all the commodities that they want across there (...) so we know it's well within our capabilities to be able to do that sort of thing. We feel it's the sort ... we've  
 40 been pushed down the funnel, as it were to that one particular ...

You use the expression 'pushed down the funnel', it sounds as though you might have resisted it (...)

(Man) No, no, no - it's just that everything else is outside the funnel as it were, and we've just sort of been fed down that way.

45 (Wife) It's been to our benefit because, even before (...) was put in (...) I got this job there, we wanted a pub and it just seemed to come our way ...

So you didn't seek to be in charge of (...)

(Man) Oh no, no, no, no, no ... it's an encouragement to know that  
 50 everything we've done has sort of led us to believe that we're taking the right decision anyway.

(Wife) It's given a good grounding for a pub.

(...) Have there been other events ... which you feel that you have set up yourself? (...) You said you made a major change ...



- 24 They are realistic. The offer made by her father is attractive but they decide that the time is not yet right to pursue it. They consider it again three years later (at the 12-year point: see 21b), when they have to decide whether to continue in the army or not and conclude that it would be 'stupid'. They think through their situation and the implications of various possible decisions. Contrast this with Mr. Bolton (e.g. 167b).
- 28 'seed': a chance (in the sense of outside their control) idea which subsequent events (also outside their control) have nurtured. They demonstrate no belief in luck (they do not use the concept during the interview and they speak frequently of 'decision') and leave the impression that what matters is not the chance event but what is made of it.
- 38 Their appropriate experience is an important factor in their decision. See 91b. Their plan is grounded in a realistic self concept. Contrast this with Mr. Bolton (9b, 243b, 272b), who nursed aspirations despite little or contrary evidence of his 'capabilities'.
- 40 'pushed down the funnel': they explain that this does not mean inevitability, but rather continuous reinforcement for the original tentative idea. They are pragmatic in their approach (see 92b) and it is likely that, had more promising avenues opened, they would have explored them. They are not blinkered nor are they shackled by their ambition and compulsively pursuing it like Mr. Bolton (365b). They optimise the experiences their external environment makes for them: cf. Mr. Hampden (31b).
- 45 He had not applied for his current posting which gives him the experience relevant to their plan. She applied for hers because she had appropriate experience: experience acquired not by any particular attraction, but during an overseas posting where there were few opportunities for service wives to work. They, therefore, see their external world as reinforcing their idea and convey a sense of a belief in a benign and beneficent world. Perhaps it appears thus because of their pragmatic response to it. But whence comes this confident and competent approach? They both had similar troubled childhoods. His mother died when he was nine and on his father's re-marriage left home as soon as he could to escape his step-mother. Mrs. Jackaman, too, had taken a residential job to escape her step-mother. They married when she was 17 and their 'happy marriage' (265a) is perhaps an important source of confidence for them both. Their early tribulations perhaps taught them to cope with life effectively on their own, without reliance on others. Thus both self concept and social learning have explanations to offer of their perception of and response to the environment.



55 (Man) That was at the 14-year point, 6 years ago. I decided -  
 it's again another of the sort of funny things that happen in the  
 army. If I'd come in to the army when I was 18 I would have been  
 at the age - at 30 - I would have been eligible to have gone for  
 further promotion by passing certain courses. But they put an  
 60 age bar on them and instead of being 30 (...) was 33 (...) And  
 the army said then that at 33 you're too old to take up this course  
 (...) So I said, Well I'm not going to sit as a Sergeant operator  
 for the rest of my time. So I then decided that I would take up  
 other courses that were being offered to me, with a view to going  
 65 on to (...) And I took these courses and got qualified for promotion  
 on that side. (...) Again, I've been forced to move that way  
 anyway. I'd either got to stand still as a Sergeant in my trade  
 and continue for the rest of my service or I'd got to get qualified  
 somehow and move out which I did.

70 (...) the point I have to bear in mind is this, that I made Sergeant  
 in 6 years, which is when (...) with a 22 year engagement I didn't  
 want to spend 16 years as a Sergeant. So I'd then got to look at  
 the rules and regulations and decide which was the best way I could  
 go; there was only one way I could go anyway. So I did.

75 Did you have any feeling of regret at that point that you had not  
 gone in at 18? You'd deferred going in.

(Man) No, no. I'm a great believer in saying it's no good saying  
 what I could have done, if it hadn't been etc. etc. The thing has  
 already gone and is past, you know and anything that we might consider  
 80 is purely hypothetical. I didn't have any feeling of regret at all.  
 You've simply got to look to the future obviously. You got to say  
 well, I am here at this point, I've got to do this and you go ahead  
 and do it. I've benefitted (...) no point (...) saying, I wish I  
 had done this and I could have been this if (...)

85 (Wife) ... they'd made us an offer to stay in.

(Man) (...) Everything just seemed to be turning out right, (...) It was perhaps one of the best decisions we ever made (...) good overseas allowance, good prospects of a job for my wife, we worked with some nice people there, we had some friends across there (...)



- 57 He came in when he was 21. See Mr. Baldwin (20b) on promotion system.
- 62 This illustrates his proactivity (cf. Mr. Hampden, 14b; Mr. Townley, 155a,b ff.) and perhaps indicates his self concept at that time.
- 64 The courses led to a change of direction, from a trade to administration, and so opened the way to further promotion again. Contrast Mr. Hampden (60b).
- 66 'forced': not by external circumstances but by his self concept, which is strong enough to enable him to act and to change without agonising. Contrast Mr. Hampden, 60b; Mr. Jordan, 39b.
- 67 'stand still': cf. 70-1a and Mr. Baldwin, 184b; Mr. Hampden, 138a,b, had also made early rapid progress. The experience of a promotion plateau, which occurs because there are prospects for fewer people at the top of the organisational hierarchy, is noted by Hall (1976). At this stage the pressure of competition from younger employees is felt; see Mr. Bolton (288b). The possible reactions to this are stagnation; a change of direction (as here); the investment of energy in a mentor relationship with one of the younger employees; or investment in the other domains of life.
- 68 'get qualified': redirection demands investment of time, energy, resources of various kinds. See particularly Mr. Dickens (92b, 96b).
- 72 He is in charge of his life and uses his circumstances to his own benefit (he uses the phrase 'to our benefit' five times in the interview, as well as 'work for our own ends'). Cf. Mr. Dickens, 275b; Mr. Driver, 251b who display a similar approach and contrast Mr. Jordan (39b) who feels that others are responsible for the events in his life.
- 73 'rules and regulations': he is not making minor adjustments like Mr. Southwell's (19b) 'fiddling', but is using them to his own ends.
- 74 'only way': if he wants to advance.
- 77 See 116a. This is consistent with his sense of responsibility for his life and with his confidence in the decisions taken. Cf. Mr. Driver's (238b) 'having made the decision I'm going to stick to it'. Contrast Mr. Baldwin, 194b; Mr. Jordan, 13b.
- 81 His future perspective is one of the keys to his effective decision-making.
- 82 He does not waste time or energy on what cannot be changed but invests it in the present and future. By contrast the anger of Mr. Baldwin (79b) and the regret of Mr. Jordan (13b) may sap their energy.
- 85 After six years in the army: see 21b. Their first child had been still-born and at this point they were very unhappy with the army (259-60a). They thought 'we could do better things' outside the army until they received this offer, saw its advantages (88-9a) and reconsidered their decision.



90 (...) would you say you had by then formulated any plans for the future?

(Man) None. No we didn't because ... you see, things had been going right, hadn't they, (...) you don't knock a good thing, if things are all right - plod on. And that's how we were at that time ...  
95 We were reluctant to be drawn out of the army at that time because we were doing all right.

(Wife) (...) we'd been talking to my dad about the pub again. You see, he wanted us to get a pub in our name and use his money, which when we talked about it, - we hadn't any experience at all  
100 then and we thought if we don't make a go of it, we don't lose our own money, we lose some-one else's. And we were a bit undecided then. But then, getting near the end of the time the X posting came, which again swayed us. Oh, this is too good to miss, to go abroad again. Do we come out now and take the pub or do we go to  
105 X which means if we do, this is the start of the 22 (...) if we did accept, it wouldn't just be for three years, it would then be for 22. So we made that decision to go to X and we knew from then on that it was until 1980. But always in our minds all these years has been, well in 1980, we will take the pub. (...)

110 (Man) (...) there's a lot to think about - I wouldn't say it was particularly worrying. There's a lot to think about. What we do is, we sat down and we worked it out. We sort of said all the pros and cons and came up with a solution. It wasn't really worrying, in that, ultimately, we felt we'd made the right decision  
115 anyway. Perhaps if things had have gone wrong it would have been different (...) Having once made the decision we cut the remainder of it out of our minds (...) that's the way to go ...

(Wife) (...) though, if they'd come and said 'You're now posted to Y' then the decision would have been the other way (...)

120 (Wife) (...) we've always sorted it out between ourselves. We've not let anyone else sway - we've looked at our lives and our children and just felt that was best for us. Probably people have offered advice and you always keep it in your mind, but mainly we talk it over and see what advantages there are on either side (...) we've



- 90 This question refers to the time when he had completed 9 years' service.
- 92 This passage illustrates their pragmatic approach and dispels any suspicion that they have foreclosed their future (18b). An examination of what they say here and elsewhere in the interview reveals their response to their environment and the way they negotiate their way through life (see Chapter 9). They perceive their world open and offering opportunities which the individual can use (72b, 137a,b, 245b). They view it realistically (77a ff.) and are aware of the resources which are needed for change (9a ff.; 24a; 97a; 215a). They recognise the need for experience and skills (31a ff.; 99a; 171a ff.; 242-3a). They look to the future realistically (4a; 105a ff.) and recognise that their plan will be accomplished gradually (184a ff.; 224a ff.; 230-1a). They are similarly realistic about themselves and confident in their own abilities, experience and decision-making: they speak several times of activities being 'within our capabilities' (114a; 214b; 242-3a). They work as partners, agreeing upon objectives and methods (120a; 125a ff.; 136b; 156a) and are active in their response to the environment (67-9a; 132a ff.; 200a ff.).

In this positive vein they approach their decision-making. They scan the environment and gather data from many sources (163a ff.; 205a ff.) and sift and evaluate it carefully, identifying possible opportunities or difficulties (10a ff.; 110a ff.; 168a ff.). In choosing a course of action they take into consideration the needs of their family (11a ff.; 121a ff.; 177a ff.) and the advice of others (122a ff.; 210a ff.). In making the choice they are pragmatic, responding to the current situation (93a ff.; 103a ff.; 118-9a; 245b). They keep their options open (133-5a; 197-200a) and do not disturb the balance of the situation when it is satisfactory (93-6a).

Although they emphasise the cognitive aspects of their approach, they also make clear their positive feelings about their plans, in their several references to 'enjoyment' (148a; 158a ff.; 189-90a). Contrast Mr. Bolton (44b). See also 136b, 143b.

- 97 She is speaking of the 12-year point (see 21b).
- 105 'the 22': 22 years' service, the standard period for most soldiers.
- 111 'worrying': contrast Mr. Jordan (76b). They have no need to worry, for they have confidence in their decisions.
- 115 Cf. 77b.
- 118 Had the posting not been as desirable as it was, they would have left the army at that point. See Mr. Hampden (31b).



125 always decided together and we've always agreed (...) in a lot of cases where the man wants one thing, the wife doesn't (...) but that's not happened to us (...) we've enjoyed making the decision together, it's never been a problem to us (...)

(Wife) We've written to this one brewery and we've had an interview  
130 and we've had an answer back saying the interview was successful and we could have one of their houses in 1980 (...) But we're also applying to other breweries as well and hoping to get interviews with them so that, instead of being tied to one, and put where they want us to go, we'll see what one or two have to offer and pick the  
135 one that we want (...)

(Wife) (...) I'm not as keen to make the break as (he) is. He's looking forward to coming out and starting this second career, as he calls it. He says he's done 22 years in the army; well, at 43, he can do 22 years at something else then and probably make such  
140 as good a success of it. I don't feel as strong as he does just yet ... I'd quite happily stay on in the army. And yet, on the other hand, I'm looking forward to going out and getting a pub. It's just mixed feelings - sometimes I'm really sure that that is what I want and then another time I just have mixed feelings about it.

145 What option would he have to have stayed on after 22 years?

(Wife) Oh, he can extend his service - buy on (?) - till he's 55. But he says he wants to do something else with his life than wear a uniform. He's enjoyed his 22 years, but feels he could do more. I think it's just with all the experience you build up over those years -  
150 it's not just being a soldier, it's all the other things - you know, catering, entertainment, ... all rolled together - he thinks that he could be even more successful doing something else. And wants to do it when he's 43 rather than when he's 55. I go along with that. I don't fancy him coming out at 55 and trying to get a  
155 job then, or even get a pub then. I understand that it's got to be now. We both agree on that.

But in a way you're wishing 'now' hadn't come (...)



126 See 253b.

132 See 18b. They have narrowed their focus to a realistic overall goal but are open in their approach to it, making several options from which they will choose the one which suits their needs. Mr. Driver (230a ff.) seems to be speaking of the same range of decisions as the Jackamans. Contrast this with Mr. Bolton (302b) who, while appearing to regard the world as his oyster, in fact constrains himself by his narrow criteria.

136 See 253b. Because she expresses her feelings openly, it seems likely that the decisions are, indeed, made jointly (92b), that she does not merely rubber-stamp them. But see also 261a ff. The criticisms of major decisions a wife makes are significant, for they are often made from a position of particular insight into the man's strengths and weaknesses and into the needs of the family. Equally significant are her support or disagreement. The wives of the men interviewed play various roles in the decision-making. Some would appear to play an active part in the decision, like Mrs. Jackaman: Mr. Bolton (218b, 357b), Mr. Southwell (42b). The role of others is not made explicit, though they are not depicted as partners in the decision-making: Mr. Driver, 133a; Mr. Jordan, 116a.

137 'second career': a conventional Resettlement phrase.

139 A sense of confidence and of opportunity. See also 214b. Coming from a difficult home background (45b), he has learned to make his own way in the world and has developed effective ways of doing it. Social learning theory would thus explain his current approach.

143 Finding both goals desirable, she is experiencing approach-approach conflict (see Chapter 9). It is likely, therefore, that she will feel more positively towards the pub as his time for leaving the army approaches. Unlike Mr. Driver (192a, 120b) there is not in her case 'enough pressure to make the decision'.

148 Whereas others were apprehensive about civilian life (see Mr. Baldwin, 106b), Mr. Jackaman apparently appreciates the opportunity to extend some of the skills he has acquired in the army but which he cannot develop within it. 'enjoyed': see also 158a. Several others refer to the enjoyment of their work: see Mr. Southwell (100b).

151 'entertainment': he had been successful in this during the first overseas tour (86a ff.).

154 He does not share the others' negative feelings about the age of 40: see Mr. Southwell (89b). He sees the 50s as a greater problem; in this he is like Mr. Portman ('magic age of 50(...) stumbling block'), Mr. Prince and Mr. Scott. The latter two were already over 50.



(Wife) I think it's because I enjoy the rmy so much and I enjoy the job I'm doing, although I'll be doing the same job in my own place, in a pub (...)

Did you sense some of this when you were made the offer (of an overseas posting)?

(Man) Oh yes. I mean, the first thing that we did of course, was to go into the Pay Office and say 'What's the difference in the wages?' Where is the place? (...) Find out who'd been there, what it was going to be like. Once we'd found out all the facts about the place (...)

(Man) (of leaving the army) It's going to be quite a clear, distinct change. Yes, it's a thing that we're aware of... (...) even on the man-management side there's going to be a big change, which we're prepared for anyway. I mean, my wife's already dealt with trade unions... looks after a civilian establishment in an army unit (...) on the strength of that it will be far easier to make the change even after doing 22 years in the army (...) provided I'm aware of that sort of thing then I don't think the change is going to be too difficult (...)

(Man) (...) And one of the other things that we've always, that we do, look at even nowadays and even in the older days when we got to three year points was the age of our children, and their schooling (...) we're even prepared at the moment to take over a pub close by so that my son can continue his schooling (...)

(Wife) What do we see ourselves, 10 years time? (...) By then probably the children will both be married, we'll be on our own then, maybe not in the pub we'll move into next year - we hope by then, if we like the life as much as we think we will, we'll have our own little pub - we'll own it - (...) We see a free house, a smallish, countryish type free house, (he'll be) behind the bar (...) me doing a bit of food, catering (...) just generally being better off, sort of in semi-retirement but still working and enjoying it (...)



158 See 148b and Mr. Southwell (100b) on others who express enjoyment of their work. Mr. Morgan demonstrates his enthusiasm by sprinkling his interview with adjectives like 'wonderful', 'terrific'; he used the verbs 'to like', 'to enjoy' twelve times. Mr. Bolton, who particularly valued job satisfaction, scarcely referred to his enjoyment of his work, except in 120a,b; on the other hand, he frequently expressed his feelings about aspects of work which worried him (44b).

(The differences in the colour, imagery and style of the language used in the interviews is fascinating and reveals insights into the individual. For example, the synonyms for perseverance used by Mr. Dickens (96b) tell of the will-power and energy needed to make a new start in 'mid-life'. Mr. Baldwin's forceful and colourful metaphors (37b) convey his energy, rebellion and frustration (235b). Mr. Homer's elaborate similes, in which he likens certain experiences to a liner, an explosion in a closed box, a laser or an engine on test illustrate one of the ways in which he tries to make sense of what appears to him to be an incomprehensible environment.

161 At the end of their first six years: see 21b.

163 See 92b. In their scanning and sifting procedure they get first-hand information and make use of their network of contacts (194a ff.). Cf. Mr. Bolton (125a ff.) who confers with his boss but, he leaves the impression, with few others. There are few whose advice he values (362b).

170 See Mr. Hampden, 104b; Mr. Jordan, 31b. The existence of trade unions was among the differences they expected to find in civilian life and was pointed out in the Resettlement Panel interviews. Mrs. Jackaman and some of the others (Mr. Hampden, 52b) had experience of working with civilians.

174 Another demonstration of confidence in himself. Judging from his overall approach, the 'awareness' is likely to be realistic.

177 See 1b, 11b. The interactions between the promotion system and the other domains of the individual's life are complex and make the scheduling and matching different timetables in the attempt to maintain an overall balance very difficult. Cf. Mr. Driver (120b).

179 See Mr. Baldwin (53b) on children's education.

182 See also 221a ff. She paints their gradual, incremental view of their future; again a realistic view, for 'we want to feel our way' (230-1a, 240-1a). First, they see themselves as managers (237a), with their own catering; then as tenants; then as owners (186a) or perhaps running a hotel (219a). Compare this gradual evolution of the self concept with Mr. Scott (10a,b ff.).

189 A sense of sure-footed confidence and an expectation that they will enjoy their future. Contrast this with the 'limbo' of Mr. Dickens (160b).



(Man) I went to the Resettlement Board purely as a duty (...)  
 I don't go too much on what they said. They tended to say don't  
 put all your eggs in one basket. However, we sort of decided and  
 even through the connections that we've already got, - through the  
 195 Mess, through the NAAFI, the reps that come round (...) that there's  
 no great difficulty in getting a place anyway (...) So we then  
 said, OK let's put a few feelers out and although we have put all  
 our eggs in one basket in that ultimately we're going to do this  
 particular job, we haven't put all our eggs in one basket with  
 200 regards to who we apply. (...) we attended a course (...) Let's  
 have a look around. Look in the Yellow Pages (...) we've got  
 about 6 applications out ... I made this curriculum vitae (...)   
 photographs (...) it's commonsense to do that sort of thing (...)

(Man) We've spent a lot of time looking at it. We've maybe gone  
 205 a little bit premature, but we're absorbing information. We've  
 been round to see some one who is a manager in the area (...)   
 to find out about these things. How many staff do you have? How  
 do you go on with the dinner hour? (...) We have a lot of friends  
 in the trade anyway (...) and we go round and we see them (...)  
 210 There's only one good point came out of that Resettlement interview  
 (...) the guy said don't undersell yourself (if asked 'Have you done  
 catering?' say 'Yes') (...) It is an important thing, looking back(...)

(Wife) The thing is we still want to do the same thing, but from  
 when we first started out we've a lot more confidence in ourselves,  
 215 we've a lot more experience, we've more cash available (...) we know  
 that it's us - my Dad is not going to support us in our venture,  
 he's going to be a guest, a working guest (...) and we feel that  
 we're more ready for it now (...)

(Man) (...) We have said that, if it came to it, we could manage a  
 220 hotel quite easily (...)

(Wife) It's gone through my mind, well we've spoken about it. I  
 think that with two men (husband and father) there's no need for  
 me behind the bar and I don't want to be left with nothing to do  
 and that's where I thought about catering and even progressing  
 225 from small snacks even onto having an assistant and doing meals  
 on an evening and maybe move into a bigger place and doing bed  
 and breakfast (...)



- 191 Attendance at the Resettlement Panel (a Resettlement Board deals with ranks below his) was compulsory for him.
- 192 See 18b.
- 194 See 163b.
- 199 See 132b.
- 200 Further examples of their activity (see 92b), which give both feed-back and reinforcement to their decision. Social learning theory and self concept theory (they are gaining confidence in the selves they present to others) are both appropriate to explain their continued activity.
- 203 Although Mr. Jackaman is here playing it down, their 'commonsense' activity is very different from the 'fiddling' of Mr. Southwell (19b). It is an aspect of their proactivity. But Mr. Bolton's experience (178b) indicates that it is not 'commonsense' activity alone which yields effective results. There are other factors involved, such as the time perspective, the degree of realism about self and environment, as well as confidence in self, which interact with each other and with the activity.
- 205 'premature': this is potentially a negative aspect of the future perspective, to be guarded against by a realistic approach. The Jackamans' earlier pragmatic behaviour suggests that they will benefit from their 'premature' explorations and that they would change course again if these explorations brought unexpected opportunities or threats to light.
- 206 'to see someone': as well as collecting information from others, they may also be modelling themselves on these others and learning from their mistakes.
- 211 'don't undersell yourself': the importance of a realistic self concept and the confidence it gives.
- 214 'confidence': see 139b. They have gained confidence from their life experiences so far and their success is likely to generate further confidence: see Chapter 9 on psychological success. Mr. Dickens (136b), who has experienced loss of confidence and Mr. Driver (315b) both point to the significance of having confidence in oneself.
- 216 Despite childhood traumas, she now has a good relationship with her father.



(Man) Really you've got to find out what the ultimate of your capability is anyway. (...)

230 (Wife) I don't think we want to go too big to start with; we want to feel our way.

(Man) The brewery would want to know whether or not we were capable. (...)

(Wife) If we worked for 7 years as manager or tenant and keep on  
235 saving, say (he) was 50 we might even have enough money then to get a free house ... certainly well before retirement.

(Man) (...) We've said we've going in for a managership at the moment, which is working for the brewery at a set wage. But the catering side of it belongs to the manager. But we can go on from  
240 manager to tenant ... start at the bottom and work up: we don't want to run before we can walk. (Long pause) When we think about it nowadays we're looking forward to it, we feel it's well within our capabilities (...) I suppose if I made application I could stay on in the army until I was 55, but I don't want to. We've  
245 made a decision, we've said 'Right, I may never pass this way again.' I don't want to be a khaki man all my life, I want to do something else. (...)

(Man) (...) No, there's more for me in life than that and more in life for both of us (...) people that want to be tied and they want  
250 somebody else to do their thinking for them (...) But I think there's a little bit more to life than that, there's got to be a little bit of struggle somewhere, not so much struggle as challenge.

(Wife) (...) there's a lot of wives don't like it and they make their husband's lives miserable by being the way they are and  
255 they eventually come out of the services when they don't really want to. They take a job in Civvy Street and all the time they're regretting coming out of the army so their lives just go from bad to worse.

(Man) Right from the very start, except for the initial stages when  
260 we lost our first kiddy when the army was a load of rubbish (...)



- 228 See 92b on 'capability'. He uses it to denote 'competence' (e.g. 243a), but is also talking here about self assessment. There are several indications in the latter part of the interview (246a, 248-52a) that he is aware of parts of self which at present have no means of expression in his life. He has overcome the various difficulties of his life so far (45b) and has not yet encountered a barrier which proved insurmountable (e.g. 66b ff.). He seems to accept that there is an 'ultimate', but is still exploring himself and his world and feeling out towards their limits. Compare this with Mr. Driver (251b) who says 'there doesn't seem to be any limit to what you can do' and vigorously protests against imposing self-limitations. ..
- 230 See 182b, 240-1a.
- 234 Realistic planning: again see 182b.
- 245 See 92b. For him life is open, but the opportunities are not perpetual: they have to be grasped as they arrive. Such a perception of the world calls for the kind of pragmatic approach he has successfully adopted: cf. 40b.
- 246 'a khaki man': see 228b. He is perhaps talking not merely of occupation but also of identity.
- 248 'more for me in life': see 228b, 246b. This is a questing, perhaps a yearning; perhaps a ripple from the stirrings of growth in 'mid-life'? See Chapters 5 and 6. Cf. Mr. Dickens (191b) who is experiencing such growth.
- 249 'tied': cf. Mr. Hampden (14b). Characteristically, he seems not to have been socialised into reactive responses by the army, but, on the contrary, has used it as his vehicle to escape his opportunity structure and to develop skills and confidence.
- 252 'struggle': cf. Mr. Dickens (96b). His history would suggest that he is accustomed to struggle and social learning theory would suggest that he may now be habituated to it. However, there is also the sense here, as in 228b, of a struggle for growth, as in metamorphosis, a struggle to achieve a new identity; self concept theory again is appropriate to explain this.
- 253 See 3b, 126a, 136b, 261a,b ff. The picture she paints contrasts strongly with their own experience, where they work and plan together; it is, however, she seems to suggest, not an uncommon picture. This again illustrates the interrelationships between the various domains of life and some of the difficulties in keeping a balance between them.
- 259 See 85b.



steadily the acceptance as far as she was concerned that she'd got to play a larger part in my army (...) it's a thing that she's got to accept and she does accept and she does do because it's part and parcel of my job.

265 (Wife) (...) all things put together, first is a happy marriage which is really the basis of it all.

(Man) But again, if you look at that in a different way, you perhaps have a happy marriage because you've had no conflicts.



- 261 See 253b. She has a regimental role to play because of his job (264a).  
Because of his occupation she, too, has many learning experiences which  
distance her from her social origins (214b).
- 263 'got to accept': see 136b. Does this imply some degree of reluctance?
- 265 Are these two views upon their marriage characteristic: hers warmly  
sentimental, his realistic and pragmatic?



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER' AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'

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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. TOWNLEY



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. Townley

(...) I went in to University ... I was reading a number of subjects, I couldn't really just decide what I wanted to do so I went in to a general curriculum ... (...) I sampled architecture, I sampled sciences ... sociology ... political science (...) I worked with them  
 5 for about a year and I decided to give up both of our jobs (...) We left our jobs and so we took off - six months in Australia and then 4 months South-East Asia - a year in India sub-continent, about six months in the Middle East and six months in Europe ... (...) I did consider taking any sort of job just to put money in (...) we'd  
 10 spent most of our savings coming across.

(...) I'm looking for probably the top end of middle management - most likely - I ... don't think I would go much below that because I feel that I'd be wasting my time ...

(...) you were looking at the time for something permanent - you  
 15 weren't talking about fill-in jobs last year?

Yes and no, I was really after money. Now if that developed into a long term thing, fine.

(...) During this period of time has your wife been working all the time?

20 No. (...) We have ... spent a lot of time doing the house ... and my brother-in-law's house (...) and now quite frankly if I don't find work I would ... be willing to build a house ... for myself ...

How important to you is finding work?

... more and more critical I think - it is important now, very impor-  
 25 tant ...

On what level?

(...) An economic level, yes. I've got various commitments and I can't make - I can't meet now.



b. Commentary on edited transcript of interview with Mr. Townley

- 1 One of the three men interviewed who went to university (in this case, a university abroad) on leaving school and one of the few who spoke of any choice of action or of the ability to pursue their own interests at this point.
- 2 'couldn't really just decide': like the Jackamans he speaks frequently of decisions but, unlike them, he does not seem to make them. This phrase, therefore, seems typical of him: see 3b; 78a,b. Compare this with 102a,b; 141a; also Mr. Driver (260b).
- 3 'sampled': this does not suggest great involvement or commitment. Cf. 2b, 108b.
- 4 After university and National Service he worked abroad for almost ten years. This refers to the last job he held over three years before the interview.
- 5 'both of our jobs': his and his wife's. See 100-5a,b on the reason for the decision and 64b on his wife's part in it.
- 8 They arrived in this country 15 months before the interview and were staying with his wife's parents. See 135a,b ff.
- 9 'just to put money in': cf. Mr. Scott's 'make money for the house any how' (5a). Their need for money is the same, but the circumstances are very different.
- 10 Contrast this with the careful planning and accumulation of resources of Mr. and Mrs. Jackaman (92b).
- 11 This seems realistic in the light of his previous experience. But see 38a,b ff; 47a ff. He is placing limitations on the type of middle management jobs he would consider (cf. Mr. Bolton, 302b) and therefore, perhaps, keeping himself out of a job. He is also (142a ff.) contemplating the possibility of opting out entirely.
- 13 'wasting my time': what does this mean to him? He has used his time during the last 15 months in applying for jobs and in odd-jobbing at home. See 20a ff.; 34a ff; 75a.
- 14 The question refers the time he has spent in this country.
- 16 'yes and no': approach-approach conflict. He needs money and thus will consider any kind of job on the one hand and on the other he is 'selective' (47a). There are other conflicts, 38b, 56a, 125b. See also 34b for discussion.
- 20 He conveys a sense of filling in time: see 13b. There is little indication of exploration.
- 22 'willing': willing, but not actively doing. Cf. 128b. See also 34b.  
'build a house': see 127b.
- 27 Money is now a major need: see 9-10a,b; 16a. Contrast 99a. There are suggestions of other family problems: see 135a,b.



So the time has gone on and it is becoming increasingly more important -  
 30 what - does this mean to say that you are altering the kinds of things  
that you are looking at - to start with you said that you wouldn't be  
looking below middle management.

That's for the longer term, not for the short term ... the immediate  
 objective ... I think I'd probably do as well doing part time work,  
 35 cutting grass, painting houses, that sort of thing. (...) if a person  
 can commit himself to a job and get it done, any sort of manual job -  
 he's liable to build up a helluva big business. (...) So this is a  
 possibility and I wouldn't mind going outdoors - I've sort of had it  
 with the desk really - the last jobs that I've had were with Manage-  
 40 ment Consultants and that sort of thing which took me out of an office -  
 I didn't have an office - my office was right here (brief-case). If  
 I had to go in and sit behind a desk it would drive me nuts, I think.

You said though, not long ago that for the long term you were think-  
ing about jobs not below the level of middle management. Quite  
 45 clearly those sort of jobs are sitting behind the desk sort of jobs,  
aren't they?

Not all of them - I think I'd be very selective. I would think that  
 being a representative for a company abroad would be right up my  
 alley - something like that - I would have to get out - look at and  
 50 create business - that wouldn't keep me in an office more than, say,  
 thirty per cent of my time ... Now that would be satisfactory.

And how do you balance the need for immediate economic satisfaction  
with the need which you've just expressed now to find the right sort  
of job - being selective - the right sort of job for the long term.  
 55 How are you balancing these things?

I would say there's a conflict there ...

What does it feel like? Does it feel like conflict?

No - I feel like if I could find any sort of a job at the moment that  
 would satisfy me - so long as I could be earning enough money to be  
 60 able to then either commit myself to staying in this country with the



- 33 He makes many references to the future, 'the longer term': e.g. 61a, 67a, 78a, 88a. This 'longer term' apparently means 'a year or more from now' (73a); 3 years is a short time (127a). Although a significant aspect of time for him, the future offers only a hazy prospect (147a). See also 83b.
- 34 'I'd probably do as well': he uses the conditional tense frequently: e.g. 13a, 22a, 38a, 47a ff., 58a ff., etc. This reinforces the impression noted in 2-3b of a lack of commitment, intention, decisiveness. Later he says he is 'very relaxed about work (77a). This is consistent with his hazy view of the future (33b, 83b) and his goal conflict (16b, 125b).
- 35 'cutting grass': cf. 75a, 128a, 135a,b.
- 36 'can commit himself to a job and get it done': contrast his apparent lack of commitment and intention (34b). See also 60b. Contrast Mr. Driver (238b): deliberate postponement of commitment.
- 38 Cf. 11b: he is here refining his requirements of the 'middle management' job he would consider. He seems to want it to involve change, as in his last ('ideal') job (108a,b ff.) and to be an out-and-about sort of job (40-2a; 47-51a). He seems to want the interest and status of a 'middle management' job combined with the 'freer (...) easier' (76a) atmosphere of odd-jobbing in the United States; or he may 'completely opt out of the normal routine job' (143a). This presents him with yet another conflict: see 16b., 34b.
- 50 'create business': cf. Mr. Baldwin's (237-8a) 'desire to create and do things'.
- 56 He acknowledges this particular conflict and later refers to some of the discomfort it must cause him: 'unease' (65a), 'intolerable' (138-9a).
- 58 'if I could find': another conditional statement, with some faint suggestion that the world outside has some responsibility for his situation? He is in conflict about the kind of job he wants and, further, seems to be doing little about finding even 'any sort of a job'.
- 60 'commit': see 34b, 36b.



longer term view or completely moving out of this country which is still a very, very big possibility.

How structured are your plans for the future?

Not terribly structured, no, which is probably giving my wife (...) a feeling of unease - and also myself I think. You've got to have goals to be working towards - on this trip, for example, we had daily goals and we had a long term goal ... and it was a mid-term goal, as a matter of fact - I think it is very important to have a structure.

Do you have goals now?

70 I think, yes, vague ones - 'What are they?' - very ill-defined - the first has been to get enough money together that we won't be dependent ... on anybody or anything - that's very important for both of us - and in the longer term say, a year from now or more, it may be that we will have decided to leave this country (...) I would prefer to do lawns, paint houses and things like that - in the United States, not here - because I think the society there is freer, it's easier - you don't have social hang-ups. (...) But I'm very, very relaxed<sup>as</sup> to work. I think I have long term goals to do - excel in what I decide to do.

You were talking earlier about the college courses that would suggest that in fact your goals are not that ill-defined (...) it would suggest you're narrowing your field of vision a bit ...

Well, like I said this has given rise to - not conflicts in myself because I think I have a feeling for what I'm going after - it's very difficult for me to describe to my wife - she's asked the same questions. 85 what the hell are you applying for a course for - you're very highly trained and don't really need it - I say a course may be needed in that it could be a bridge into my past ... that I could use as a spring-board into the future.

That makes sense.

90 ... She doesn't see it that way ...



- 61 'longer term': see 73a, 'a year or more' and contrast 140a, 'in the next two months'. He has considerable experience of foreign residence and travel (6-8a) and thus he is accustomed to this kind of move. Social learning theory would point to these experiences as contributing to his desire for change (108b).
- 64 It was he who apparently made the decision to leave their jobs (5a), though she supported the idea (100-3a). He indicates that their present position is causing her 'unease'. There are problems in accommodation (135-9a) and she does not understand his approach: 84a, 90a, 122a ff. See Mr. Jackaman (136b) on the part that other wives play in the decisions of the men interviewed.
- 66 'goals': he is talking like a management consultant but not acting upon his words. He admits that his goals are 'vague' (70a) and that he does not see his future 'terribly clearly' (147a). Contrast this with the pragmatic, incremental view of the future of the Jackamans (182b).
- 71 'get enough money together': again contrast this with the Jackamans (9b, 92b), who wanted money so that they could fulfil their plans without dependence upon her father. They achieved it by responding to opportunities as they arrived, though these delayed the fulfilment of the plans. In their case, the money was needed for a desirable future. In his, it is needed for everyday life in the present. See again 9b.
- 76 See 135b.
- 77 'very relaxed': cf. 'I wouldn't mind' (38a). See also 34b.
- 78 'excel': bombast? See also 'sampled' (3a); 'wasting my time' (13a); 'helluva big business' (37a); 'create business' (50a); 'goals' (66a).
- 79 Before the interview he had talked of the possibility of attending a short management course.
- 83 'feeling for': he feels rather than knows what his goals are, hence they are difficult to communicate to another. While he does not see his future clearly (147a), he has brought one aspect of it (an enjoyable retirement) into the present (104-6a). He does not know how to take himself forward into that 'vague' future and is toying with the idea of this course, which presumably would delay even longer the need for positive action. Contrast Mr. Southwell (65b), who has a narrow but a realistic vision.
- Mr. Townley seems to be very like Mann, Siegler and Osmond's (1972) intuitive type (see Chapter 4). They suggest that such a person 'first experiences the future and then is constrained to return to the present and wait until chronological time has caught up with his vision'. Although he can see the future, they say, he cannot plan for it.
- 87 'springboard': to thrust him forward into the future in which he is at home?



Are you saying that in fact the chasm that exists between your experience in Australia and now ... I mean you do experience this chasm in job hunting, do you?

That's right - a terrible one - it's getting terribly difficult to  
95 bridge ...

What - presumably you're asked why you gave it all up ... and did this fairly unusual thing, you know, what sort of answers do you give to that?

Well, fairly straightforward. I said I had the money, I had the time  
100 for it - what I felt was time - I wanted to - I had my wife behind me and I could see a window ... that was accessible right through - there was no political hangups, and so we decided to go - or I decided to go - my wife was right behind me, so we left - I did this because I felt that I would rather enjoy my retirement now, than when I'm too  
105 old to be able to climb the Himalayas and snorkel in the South Pacific ocean ...

Is that your style, this up and going when opportunity presents itself?

Yes ... I'm used to change, I look for change ... and the last job I had was ideal because the change that I experienced was daily.  
110 Weekly I had 3 different offices to go to - 3 different jobs - and I had three or four different bosses - I thrived on it - I hated to leave it actually but I saw this chance and so I took it. When I've described this to an employer if he's sympathetic, then I think I can work for him; if he's not, I feel it immediately and (...) go no  
115 further ...

(...) I remember you said that you were a person who valued change - you know, you sought it out - you enjoyed it. Do you at the same time have ... other aspects of life in which you seek for security and stability?

120 Yes, yes. Definitely.

What sort of aspect would that be?



- 94 'terrible': is this his experience, or is he responding to the concept of 'chasm' (91a), which I have introduced?
- 96 A question likely to be asked in job interviews.
- 99 See 27b: money is now a major problem.
- 100 'wife behind me': see 64b, 131b.
- 101 'window': a vision of the future? See 83b.
- 102 'no political hangups': no uneasy political situations in the countries en route.
- 'decided': see 2b, 141b. Here he decided and acted upon his decision. Was this because in this instance he could see the future?
- 104 'now': see 83b, 128b. He has thus brought the future into the present. He has anticipated gratification rather than delayed it. Such an approach is not generally consistent with either organisational commitment (see 113b) or with the values of the people with whom he is staying (see 135b).
- 105 'too old': elsewhere he talks of a 'slowing down' because of age. For discussion of ageing see Mr. Baldwin, 185b; Mr. Southwell, 89b. He has made his fantasies happen: cf. Mr. Bolton (267b). See also Mr. Baldwin (271b). Mr. Townley has paid for the fulfilment of his fantasies with his job: contrast this with the Jackamans (92b). I did not explore with him whether he had indeed enjoyed his 'retirement' and what he thought of the price paid.
- 108 See also 3b, 41a, 49a, 61b, 131-4a. Social learning theory offers as explanation his many experiences of change from childhood onwards. As a child, he said 'I was being baby-sat, as it were, by my aunt and uncle and I went to school with my cousin'. While living in their house 'I was the one who was shifted and changed' (between beds). He mentions this when talking of his love of change, which he says 'rather fits in the whole family cycle, too'. See also 125b.
- 110 See 38a,b; 143a,b.
- 111 'hated': see Mr. Southwell (100b, 158b) for references to enjoyment of work. Mr. Townley's enjoyment of his job and reluctance to leave it (unless he is overstating his enjoyment) suggests the great significance to him of change or the opportunity to enjoy the future in the present; or, indeed, both.
- 112 'chance': in the sense of opportunity. Cf. 'window' (101a). He apparently sees his environment as open (148-51a) and offering him many opportunities.
- 113 This is not a characteristic likely to be appreciated in certain types of organisation or certain types of jobs within it. It is, however, appropriate for such jobs as consultancy. There are some similarities here with Rapoport's (1970) 'metamorphic' manager: certainly the background is similar (p. 172).
- 116 He mentioned this when I first met him before the interview.
- 118 I am interested in the possibility of 'stability zones': see Chapter 9.



(...) but in essence we would like to have a place to hang our pictures on the wall (...) we've picked up a few things here and there (...) and to be able to have them out so that we could admire  
 125 and remember things through them - that gives rise to a longing for a place to call our own. (...) I think if we could get a flat or a small house, cottage, whatever for a short time - three years - I'd be willing to do anything in that 3 years to put it all in one spot and then we'd probably want to start changing again ...

130 Is your wife a person who values change as well?

Yes, I think so, I think so ... (...) I look for the change and I go for it. I lived on a ship for 18 months and thoroughly enjoyed it. I moved (...) something like a dozen times in the three years (...) always looking for a little something a little bit better.

135 (...) We are having a bit of difficulty in making two life-styles match ... (with his in-laws) and that's why I'm leaving there at the end of next week (...) I'm not burning a bridge ... but I'm certainly leaving the situation ... which has become, I think, rather intolerable on both sides.

140 (...) if I can't find a job in the next 2 months - right, we're off - it will be a solid move - I mean a considered decisive move - and then from that time forward (...) I might change my lifestyle completely - because I might completely opt out of the normal routine job, the striving for middle management - a better this, a better that. I  
 145 think I'll build my own house in the mountains; I have a bit of land and I'll go up there and build a log cabin - something like that.

(...) I don't see the future terribly clearly now but I think that's because my opportunities are so great - I'm looking at it that way - then it's open ended. I've reached a - if I'm travelling up the trunk  
 150 of a tree I have got into the branching area, and so that's why it's vague, I have so many options now.

Does this worry you, the fact that at some point you may have to make a decision between the options?



- 122 Is this 'longing' (125a) the other face of the love of change? See 108b. Social learning theory offers an explanation.
- 125 'remember': Mann, Siegler and Osmond (1972) suggest that the intuitive type (see 83b) may have a weak feeling of connection with the past.  
 'longing': perhaps the concept of home is attractive because of his love of change (122b) and because of his childhood experiences (108b). There is further conflict here (cf. 16b, 38b, 56b) between the 'longing' and the need for change.
- 127 'small house': he makes several references to dwelling-places: 22a, 146a. See the significance of Mr. Bolton's (355b) house; Mr. Driver, 71b, Mr. Jordan, 96b.  
 'a short time': see 33b.
- 128 'willing to do anything': cf. 9a, 22b, 34a,b. See Matthew X111, 45-6: 'when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.' This is what he did when he bought the 'goodly pearl' of retirement (104b)?
- 129 He is realistic enough to know that he would re-sell this 'pearl' for something else in the future. See also 134a.
- 131 Is this a realistic assessment of her?  
 'look for change': see 108b.
- 133 'moved': moved house.
- 134 'a little bit better': see 128b, 129b. See also 144a,b.
- 135 He is at present living in a household whose social conventions demand decisive action and achievement, the 'solid move' of 141a and which looks askance at his desire to earn a living odd-jobbing and perhaps also at his pursuit of immediate gratification (104b). Of such values he says, 'you're circumscribed by so many regulations, rules, social pressures' but says that 'I wouldn't, shouldn't give them any heartburn' by making such a living. However, the number of references to grass-cutting, etc. during the interview suggest that this is a matter which currently irritates him. Perhaps their disapproval attacks his basic 'wait and see' (155-6a) attitude to life?
- 136 To move into other (essentially temporary) accommodation.
- 140 But see 60-2a, 73-4a. Why he is waiting a further two months?
- 141 'a considered decisive move': see 2b.
- 142 'from that time forward': again, why not now? See 140b. This is part of his conditional approach to life (34b)?
- 143 'normal routine job': see 40-2a; 109-11a. Has he actually experienced such a job?
- 144 'a better ...': but see 134a.
- 147 See 33b, 83b.
- 148 See 112b.
- 150 'branching area': another visual image (cf. 87-8a) and a depiction of many opportunities. For other images of the present transitional state see Driver 213



I've been told that I'm slow to make decisions and probably that's  
155 true but I don't worry about making the decision, I think once it  
starts it'll come and I don't have terribly much influence on it, I  
don't think.



154 'told': by whom? Perhaps by his wife and family (90a, 135a) and also in his work?

155 He sees the future, perceives his environment as open, appears confident of himself, though somewhat baffled by his immediate surroundings. He is however, unable to make the choice and take decisive action. He talks about it, but does not do it. He does not act because 'I don't (...) have influence'. Although he perceives the environment as open he feels it is outside his power to control it.



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER' AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'

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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. DRIVER



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. Driver

(...) My father was left an orphan. It was quite a tragic story ...

(...) I think the family must have been living under very poor conditions and I understand that my father had 3 sisters who all died (...)

5 (...) he was brought up by an aunt. (...) I can't help but having a lot of admiration for him (...)

(...) He was quite bright (...) But he went into the army because probably the family ... the aunt had limited ideas of what boys did anyway and the best way to go seemed to go into the army. So he  
10 went into the army at 17 (...)

(...) My father worked for the (...) and he got an application form and it was the only one I filled in and I went along and was taken on.

(...) he was busy developing his own career - he was a(technician)  
15 but he did, in fact, pursue a course of study which led him to become a chartered engineer. So he was studying at night school and so on. A fact that this again was quite heroic.

(...) he kept telling me to get myself qualified (laugh).

You said that he got the application form and it was the only one  
20 that you filled in, etc., does this actually mean that you did not  
consider anything else at that stage of being 15?

I hadn't got a clue, to be quite honest, what I was going to do.  
My secondary education was a disaster.

(...) My father was obviously a little bit upset, although he  
25 never actually, sort of ... it's just the impression I got. My mother was perfectly happy to talk about cousins and so on who had passed the 11+. And so ... I think I started off in the top stream



b. Commentary on edited transcript of interview with Mr. Driver

- 1 See Mr. Southwell (4b) on the influence of fathers on their sons' choice of first job. While it should be remembered that I introduce the topic of his father when I ask about his parents' occupation and refer to him again later in the interview (296a), Mr. Driver talks of him a lot and leaves the impression that he has been very influential. His father seems to offer a point of reference and comparison (e.g. 43-5a); he impressed on his son the need for educational qualifications (18a); he arranged his first job (19a). His son in 'mid-life' still talks of 'trying to measure up to my father'. Perhaps the father also makes comparisons with his son (44-5a) and is now 'on the defensive' when he sees how successful he has become. Mr. Driver notes a 'gulf' between then now and this 'saddens' him.
- 9 His father's story offers another example of the existence of the opportunity structure and of the unavailability of choice in the first job. (See Mr. Hampden 4b and Chapter 8: 1 (b ii).) His start in life is very similar to that of Mr. Stephens.
- 11 Eventually, on leaving the army, he joined a large corporation. The application form he obtained for his son was for an engineering apprenticeship ('quite a goal for a working-class family', says Mr. Dickens, 26-8a).
- 12 See 22b.
- 14 'career': he uses the word three times: see 82a, 84b.
- 15 Having responded to his opportunity structure in his first employment, in adulthood he started to break down its limitations through education. Others made a similar escape through promotion in the army: see Mr. Scott (1-33a).
- 17 'heroic': this adjective suggests again the admiration (6a) Mr. Driver feels for his father and possibly also a degree of identification or modelling? (Soci. learning theory.) It also suggests that this course of action had been a struggle and again one which he could no doubt identify with: 50a ff.). The expenditure of energy which such a struggle demands (as Mr. Dickens makes clear: 96b) suggests that the driving force came from the need to implement the self concept.
- 18 'qualified': see 38b.
- 19 'he got ...': see 11b.
- 22 The year was 1957. He seems to have had little or no vocational guidance (see 31b) and, as he tells it now, no inclination towards a particular job nor urge to explore the occupational world. (Contrast Mr. Luke, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Roberts whose fathers arranged apprenticeships for them despite their expressed interest in a completely different field.) Perhaps his father did not encourage this for he was determined his son should have a different start in life from his own? Mr. Driver has remained in the same industry to the present time.



and ended up somewhere near the bottom stream. Until the last exam when, and then for some reason, I sort of clicked into gear  
30 and I seem to remember getting 9 (good grades).

(...) I did play the violin when I was younger.

(...) And I started playing it (again) and I played it at least 2 hours a day every day.

(...) And it's a helluva (?) therapy, playing the violin.

35 (...) It's just an essential part of your life?

I think so, yes. Probably becoming more so now - you know, I don't know. Maybe as you get older you appreciate these things.

(...) My father's attitude was that it was a way out of a rather depressing situation that he had in his youth.

40 (...) and he kept impressing this on me.

(...) My mother provided the security, I suppose that you - you know, I've never felt insecure.

(...) I don't think (my father) got the drive that I've got.

(...) He was quite happy to stay at the stage that I reached  
45 when I was 30.

(...) did you have any dreams for the future? (...)

Yes. I got very mercenary and I started putting a value on qualifications and when I took HNC I put a value on it. I worked out that it would be worth £1,200 a year and I went and did it for  
50 that reason. And then I found certain doors closed to me. I tried to get into the Institute of (...) and they said, HNC really isn't good enough, you need to have endorsements. So I started doing these endorsement things and all the time they kept putting the level of standards up, so I said I'll try (...) so I went and did a  
55 Higher National in (...) which was another 2 years. And I just got that and they shoved the qualifications up on that, you see. So



- 31 Because he had 'a certain artistic talent' his headmaster, to his father's 'horror', recommended that he become a window dresser. He has never capitalised upon his talent but now plays the violin 'to compensate'.
- 34 'therapy': a stability zone for him? See Chapter 9. With his dedicated pursuit of qualifications and his later demanding job (293b) he is likely to have needed relaxation like this. See Mr. Dickens (266b) and Mr. Bolton (278b) on how some of the other men enjoyed music.
- 35 Playing the violin.
- 37 For another reference to ageing see 208b.
- 38 'it': education (see 18a). His father (15b) had experienced the constraints of the opportunity structure but attempted to overcome them through educational qualifications. His experience must have been such that he saw the value of education and 'kept impressing this' on his son (40a). So effectively did he do this that his son now began a long and hard drive to become qualified (see 50a ff.).
- 42 'insecure': see 67a ff., 70b. The persistence with which he pursued his qualifications suggests that 'security' does not connote acceptance and complacency.
- 43 He says that his mother has a 'tremendous amount of drive'. See also 236b, 301b.
- 44 Perhaps his father is content to rest after the struggles of early life (1a ff.): he had already metaphorically, travelled a long way and Mr. Driver starts from a more advantageous position. Perhaps, having 'heroically' effected an entry to his profession he did not have the 'drive' to 'broaden' his 'career' (84b), or perhaps Mr. Driver underestimates himself (301b). Here Mr. Driver is comparing himself with his father (as he does also with other people: see 100b, 114b, 142b, 313b). See 1b. Such comparisons are one way of self assessment, of charting progress and giving confidence: see Mr. Hampden (63b, 139b) on other comparisons.
- 47 'mercenary': see 66a ff. He makes several references to money: see 194b.
- 50 'certain doors closed': he makes many references to the barriers he experiences ('this brick wall', 144a; 'limitations', 251a,b). In part, his response is no doubt due to his father's indoctrination (40a); in part, to the challenge he sees in other people's judgements of him (he recounts several incidents like those mentioned in 255a ff., in which he has set out to disprove a prediction someone has made of him); and, in part, by his determination not to limit himself (251a,b ff.). The higher the barrier, as here, the more the incitement to effort. His pursuit of qualification was as avid as that of Mr. Bolton (83b) and must have called for tremendous energy and commitment. He was, he says later (289a), 'trying to prove to myself something'. Both self concept and social learning theories offer explanations of his behaviour; it could also be interpreted within a psycho-analytical framework.



I'd got 2 Higher Nationals, I'd got a spread of endorsements which covered everything anybody needed two years ago. So then they introduced another thing (...)

60 (...) So, from again a Higher National the motivation then was to get the status of a Chartered Engineer which I finally did ( I got it in 1975).

(...) I asked whether you'd had any wild dreams and you said that you set yourself certain targets in the way of qualifications which  
65 you equated with money. Was it because you were basically interested in money?

No, it was (...) It was security.

Security in your job?

No, my father - we'd spent most of our time living in a council  
70 house which is never really your own and although, as I'd said, I'd had a very happy childhood, it doesn't represent security when somebody can come along and mess you about. Right? So the idea was to buy a house and I bought a house, when I was 23, nearly (...)

It was the year before I was married.

75 (...) and that was one thing achieved.

(...) The next thing on my list was to travel (...) So in 1969  
(...) when the opportunity occurred I went abroad.

(...) So, your decision on the first (move in his) job was very much linked to what you wanted to achieve in the security field,  
80 in your private life (...)

(...) But you find that when you come to try and broaden your career you can't really claim to be a specialist at anything (...)

(...) I changed course - I applied for a job at (...) And they sent us away to (...) which opened up another avenue and which I  
85 found extremely interesting.



- 62 From HNC the whole process took about thirteen years (in Mr. Bolton's case it was about six years).
- 67 'security': see 42a,b.
- 70 'never really your own', 'mess you about' (72a): his concern for avoiding 'limitations' (50b) indicates his desire for independence and this further illustrates it. See also 283b. For him 'security' means control over his environment and his life? Is this what his mother instilled in him (41a)?
- 71 'represent security': has the house more symbolic than practical significance (he bought it a year before marriage, 74b)? For the house as a symbol in other lives see Mr. Bolton, 355b; Mr. Townley, 127b.
- 73 'I bought a house': was this something which his father had also urged him to do? See 325a ff.: his house and capital are still of considerable concern to him.
- 75 'achieved': rather than 'accomplished'. He indicates a strong need for achievement (see Chapter 9): see 289a, 293b. His pursuit of qualifications and refusal to accept the limitations imposed upon him by others illustrate this. See also 197b. At the same time he seems unwilling to admit to his achievements: see 301b.
- 76 'travel': see 88a, 112a: another ambition fulfilled.
- 77 'opportunity': although he perceives various constraints upon him, 'limitations' (see 50b), he will not allow himself to be limited by them (251b). To him the barriers are permeable or superable and so he perceives his environment as basically open (e.g. 84a, 86b).
- 78 This question refers to his early 20s when he rejected the offer of a job which carried with it a university sandwich course: 'I'd just got this house and that killed that little attempt to do that course'. This suggests that the need for 'security' in the form of the house was then stronger than the drive for qualifications: see 92a,b. This is reminiscent of Mr. Bolton's earlier job decisions which were strongly influenced by personal and family needs (62b, 79b).
- 81 Although the branch of engineering he chose (because he was a 'contrary devil') against the advice of the Personnel Department, paid more than the alternative and thus enabled him to buy the house, it also made him into a 'jack-of-all-trades'. He started to feel the 'limitations' of this in 'mid-life' (171a,b).
- 84 'another avenue': 'career' as avenue. Struggling like his father and Mr. Bolton did for qualifications to give him entry to the 'career', he is now acting to maintain and to broaden it (274b). See Mr. Bolton (89b).



(...) but then there was this cutback in the (industry). Every-  
thing stagnated. And then the job came up which gave me the  
opportunity to travel and I took it.

(...) You've got your house, you've got - you're married and you've  
90 had 2 children by this stage. Was this security thing still  
important?

It had altered a little bit. I was more interested then in developing  
(...) They came round with an edict that the next step could  
not be achieved until one was 30 and I was 26. (laugh) A long time.  
95 So, I thought, 'Well' (pause) I put in for the job in (...) So that  
was quite a big change (...)

What sort of job?

Same (field of operation). But at a more senior level, with consider-  
ably more responsibility.

100 (...) you start to compare yourself with other people and I was  
comparing myself with the guys that ran (...) I said, 'Well, I've  
been through probably one of the best apprenticeships in (...) in  
the world and if I can't handle this job, now is the time to find  
out. And I went out and everybody said it's a helluva risk and so  
105 on.

Did you see it like that?

Yes (laugh).

Did it worry you?

No. The only thing that did worry me was taking the family out there,  
110 I must admit, but I did take certain precautionary steps.

(...) I ended up responsible for the operation of the whole place.  
My salary (sextupled). We got a free ticket around the world every  
year.

(...) No, I'm not particularly surprised about it. I mean, it's  
115 not really been instantaneous, it's taken over 20 years. (...) So,  
I would caution you against putting too much emphasis on it, because



- 86 The effect of exogenous factors upon the individual's job (see 120b). The factors leading to that cutback have since changed and there is now (220-2a) likely to be growth. Mr. Driver looks at the changes in his environment for opportunities: see 77b. Cf. Mr. Bolton, 212b; Mr. Dickens, 43b, Mr. Scott, 24b.
- 92/1 'altered a bit': see 78b.
- 92/2 'developing': broadening his 'career' (84b). By this he seems to mean wider experience. He is aware of what steps he needs to take to maintain and extend his 'career' (see 120a ff.).
- 93/1 'they (...) edict': see 70a,b. 'They' are trying to impose restrictions upon his life but he will not accept them.
- 93/2 'the next step': this indicates that he had thought ahead to the 'next step' (see 94b, 236b). Cf. the army's change in its promotion system and the effect of this upon individuals: Mr. Baldwin (20b, 79b).
- 94 'A long time': he looks to the future. This is a long time at this stage. Cf. Mr. Bolton, 204b; Mr. Townley, 33b on concepts of time.
- 95 See 260b. Cf. Mr. Jackaman, who would not be beaten by the army's changed promotion system (59a, 64b ff.) and found further promotion through the 'rules and regulations' (73a). Mr. Driver overcomes his limitations' in this instance by taking a 'more senior' (98a) job overseas (87-8a).
- 96 'change': he makes several references to change during the interview.
- 98 'at a more senior level': see 111-2a. Contrast this with Mr. Bolton (89a ff.) who, when concerned for the attainment of his qualifications, took another job 'as a junior'.
- 99 'more responsibility': he says, 'everything you'd ever learned through the apprenticeship you were calling on (...) it was really stressing: just the sort of situation you find yourself in when you're coming toward an accident and you've got to do something - it just sort of happens instinctively'. The learning had 'soaked in through the soles of (my) feet'. This is very different from the incremental learning possible in the situation Mr. Scott describes (10-33a).
- 100 He makes what valid comparisons he can: cf. 44b. See Mr. Hampden (63b) on comparisons with others. Here the intention is to assess himself and to give himself confidence.
- 102 This suggests a realistic and positive self assessment: it needs to be because of the 'risk' involved (104a). To take such a step (99b) requires either considerable self confidence or foolhardiness.
- 104 'risk': see also 194b. He assesses and responds to the risk realistically: See 110a,b. Contrast Mr. Bolton (326b).
- 109 'worry': contrast Mr. Jordan (21b) and others.
- 110 'precautionary steps': see also 316b. Cf. the Jackamans' approach (92b).
- 114 Replying to my question about how far he thought he had come: see 301b.



it's not difficult to do (...).

So, let's take us back to this year, when the 8½ years (overseas) finished. Why did it finish?

120 Well, my children were beginning to look at (...) as their home. There was no way they could, in fact, continue to live there - sooner or later we would have to leave. That was the big motivation - to get them back to England so that they would become conversant with the educational system here.

125 (...) But on the other hand, the company pay all school fees, so I could have sent him to a public school and I must admit I was in a quandary. What is a public school education worth? My wife kept telling me that the baby was inhaling lots of pollution. It's not a very clean place to live. (...) From my own personal point  
130 of view, my point of view, I had to make a decision to commit myself to staying in (...) or coming back to England. There were pressures applied to keep me there (...) which I could see was a big carrot, I must admit a big carrot. (Pause) My wife said 'Well, look you'd better let me know whether you intend to stay here until  
135 you're 55 (which was when I retired) or whether we're going to move because I don't want to live in limbo any more! So, anyway, I finally decided to come back because I thought if I leave it any longer I'll have difficulty getting established. And then the other thing I was finding was that there were no real limitations put on  
140 me in (...) But I could see it coming when people would say, 'Well, look, this guy's o.k. but he hasn't got a (higher education).'

(...) Some people consider working in the sticks is not really any success at all.

(...) I did feel that I was coming up against this brick wall.  
145 And it had been an ambition to (get a higher education). I was coming back to England - I'd been away for 8½ years - lots of things had changed since I'd left (...) legislation - the role of the unions. If I want to practise here I've really got to get in with it, find out what the score is, which led me to a situation  
150 where - there was going to be a break anyway - quite a traumatic break - probably a period of adjustment would be good rather than jumping straight into a job. And I could also have a look at



- 118 I want to know how he has come to be in his present situation, 'a distinct and new phase' of his life (see Chapter 11).
- 120 He enumerates many factors which contributed to his awareness of the possible need for change and which finally precipitated it. This passage clearly illustrates the interaction of both exogenous and endogenous factors upon an individual's work-life (as discussed in Chapter 8). The effect of these factors upon him is analysed on the following page. See Mr. Bolton, 125b, 145a ff., 155a,b; Mr. Scott, 24b on exogenous factors. See Mr. Bolton, 62b, Mr. Jackaman, 11b on the relationships between domains.

Mr. Driver's handling of these factors (See Chapter 9 and Mr. Jackaman, 92b. Contrast Mr. Baldwin, 10b; Mr. Bolton, 191a; Mr. Townley, 34b.) He is aware of pressure from both outside himself and within: of simultaneous attractions and disadvantages (see 120 continued over page.)

awareness of environment: the world at large (127a, 138a, 147a, 172a, 220a)  
his organisation (132a, 139a, 166a, 175a)

awareness of needs of domains: wife (133a, 185a)  
children (120a, 125a, 128a)  
parents (188a)

awareness of own needs: dislike of 'limitations' (139a, 144a, 205a)  
ambition for further qualifications (145a)  
need for further training (171a)  
future prospects, development (180a)

trying to achieve a balance between these needs (125a, 131a)

realistic appraisal of environment (147a, 170a, 194a)

forward thinking (124a, 135a, 138a, 150a, 208a)

taking others' advice (245a)

making the choice (137a, 191a)

- 124 Importance of children's education: see 38b and Mr. Baldwin (53b).
- 125 See Mr. Southwell (35b).
- 131 'pressures': see 192b.
- 136 'limbo': see 213b.
- 142 'Some people ...': see 299-301a. For comparisons see 44b.
- 144 'brick wall': see 50b, 251b.
- 145 'ambition': the references to this (141a, 154a) suggest that this may be his 'Dream': see Mr. Bolton (34b).
- 151 'period of adjustment': see 213b. The present phase serves to achieve an ambition (145a), to update his knowledge (146a) and to offer a period of adjustment between two very different ways of life (150a, 207a).



and achieve my ambition of getting rid of this question that hung over my credibility (...) Then I got a prospectus from  
 155 here which had (name of someone whose work he admired) written on the bottom and I thought, 'Well, probably as good as any' because I don't know anything about any of the other establishments. And I applied here and was offered a place.

(...) apart from questions of pollution and baby's health and  
 160 children's education and a feeling that this educational thing was not exactly a barrier but something you kept hitting against - apart from all those things, had you gone as far as you could have gone with that company in (...)?

No (firmly), not at all, no. (...) My wife said '(the boss is) going  
 165 to offer you something to keep you here.' (...) And this is what he did. (...) I got a wage packet, shoved in a pay rise of about £150 a month. And he came along and said 'You know, what do you think of it?' And I said '(...) No, I'd really made my mind up', and he said 'What sort of management training do you want?' which is  
 170 another thing I'd come up against was I was beginning to feel limitations with a (technical) background. I think to get any higher you've got to have a certain polish (...) you've got to have a few other instruments at your finger tips. You've got to know a bit about law and a bit about economics and so on. And so  
 175 I said this to him and he said 'Look, why don't you - in fact we'll take you right out of this job for a year and we'll put you in all different departments.' Which was fine and had it been England, that would be great, but there was still the other thing about living (overseas) (...) So that led me to believe that I did have quite a  
 180 good future with that company (...) More's the pity that it wasn't in England.

(...) How long did it take you to make up your mind? Over what period of time were you tossing these things about?

Over the last year or so.

185 (...) (his wife) precipitated it. She said 'Well, look, you've been messing about this - one minute you're going to leave and the next you aren't going to leave. I think I want a decision.' (...) So (ill health of parents) was another thing that brought it home,



120 cont.	<u>forces in the present situation</u>	<u>attractions outside the present situation</u>	
	<u>driving forces</u>	<u>resisting forces</u>	
<u>Exogenous factors</u>			
<u>children</u>	stability (121) education (123) health (128)	fees paid (125)	English education (123)
<u>parents</u>	far away (188)		
<u>standard of living</u>	unreal (205) not permanent (208)	very high (202)	
<u>finance</u>	had savings (194)	increased salary (133, 166)	
<u>prospects</u>	overseas experi- ence not valued (142)  needed further training (170)  more difficult to change with time (138, 141)	no 'limitations' (139)  training offered (175)  future in company (180)	new opportunities in UK (220)    university education (145)
<u>Endogenous factors</u>			
'limitations'	ambition for higher education (145)  feels can achieve more (197a)	future in company (180)	
<u>ageing</u>	more difficult to change with time (138)  will have to move in time (208)		

154 'credibility': present or future? See 140-1a.

'Then I got ...' Cf. Mr. McMillan, who also by chance encountered the information which brought him into the present phase.

156 This seems uncharacteristic.

171 'limitations': see 50b, 251b.

See also 81b, 274b and Mr. Hampden (60b).

180 'More's the pity ...': he would not equal that standard of living in England.

184 See Hiestand (1971), Robbins (1977) in Chapter 7.

185 'precipitated it': see 133-6a. Her father's death helped make the decision and the chance event (154a) influenced the action he was to take.

186 Not an easy decision to make (see also 235b), for it involved the balancing of many factors and the needs of several domains.



you're living all these miles away but what was it worth when it  
190 comes to families?

(...) Anyway, the whole thing just came together, as it were.  
There was enough pressure to make the decision and I made it.

So you are saying that it wasn't a difficult decision, in the event.

Not really. I was reasonably financially secure, I wasn't going  
195 to be on the bread-line or anything like that. In fact, I would  
indulge myself to the point of spending a year (in education).

(...) I think that I can achieve some more. I can't feel any  
limitations at the moment.

You could have achieved it there also, from what you were saying.

200 Yes. The thing you've got to understand is the ex-patriot way of  
life really to appreciate..... You see you can build yourself a  
paper mountain (there) - you can make an awful lot of money (...)

It was free electricity, free rent. People said to me 'Well,  
you must be mad to give it up.' But the fact is that it's not  
205 your's. And I've seen people get older (...) abroad (...) They  
get so used to a way of life which they can't possibly maintain in  
England that when they do come back, it's a traumatic experience  
at 55 or 60 that they don't really get over. (...) And I didn't  
want to reach that state. (...)

210 When you were pondering all this, what sort of time scale were you  
working to: were you just working to the end of this course here  
or were you working further in the future than that?

No, I think this course is a period of adjustment.

(...) I've applied for about 5 jobs and got positive replies.

215 (...) I don't think there's any particular problem there. My  
problem is going to be selective. The next decision has got to  
be a good one, because if I make the wrong one I could - another  
year I can't afford. It's got to be the right decision.



- 192 Force field analysis (see Chapter 9) identifies the forces for change and those which resist change. When the strength of the driving forces equals that of the resisting forces there is equilibrium. Change takes place when the driving forces increase in strength or the resisting forces lessen. The pressure of the exogenous and endogenous factors upon Mr. Driver is analysed in 120 (continued). From a state of equilibrium the forces for change must have built up (see 184a) until, augmented by the precipitation of 185b, they overwhelmed the arguments for staying (192b). Presumably the earlier 'messing about' (186a,b) was the weighing of these various factors. He must have experienced a degree of goal conflict (see 301b and Chapter 9). See also his 'theory about decisions' (228b).
- 194 'financially secure'; see also 104b on risk. He had accumulated sufficient savings to enable him to forego at least one year's income. Cf. 112, 166-7a, 202a ff., 327a. Cf. the Jackamans (92b), and their financial planning and contrast Mr. Townley (27b).
- 197 'achieve': see 75b. He feels that he has by no means exhausted his potential for growth. See 268a,b. Contrast Mr. Baldwin (185a,b).
- 198 'limitations': see 50b, 251b.
- 204 'it's not yours': cf. his concern to buy a house (70a,b).
- 208 '55 or 60': 'they tend to age a bit faster (abroad and on return to England) (...) they've got the difference in climates to get used to (...) the difference between the way of life'. Is this a concern for ageing? But see also 268b. See Mr. Baldwin, 185b; Mr. Southwell, 89b.
- 213 'period of adjustment': cf. 151a,b. He assesses the present transitional period in a positive light. Since there will be a 'traumatic break' (151-2a) between life in two different countries, he will use it positively by taking a course. Cf. Mr. Bolton's 'breathing-space' (392a ff.): 'a time to cogitate, to consider and to really think very carefully about what I'm going to do with the next part of my life.' Mr. Townley who, like them, entered this period voluntarily, also regards it positively. He speaks (150b) of the 'branching area' of a tree; in considering the possibility of attending a course (87-8a), he refers to that as a 'bridge (...) springboard'. Some who had not chosen their particular present were not as comfortable with it. Mr. Baldwin says he is 'frightened' (106b), facing as he is 'Spaghetti Junction' (195a). Mr. Bolton (248a) also speaks of a 'vacuum': Mr. Dickens describes his present as 'limbo' (127b), 'between the Devil ...' (160b).
- 214 Contrast Mr. Bolton, 244a; Mr. Townley, 11b.
- 216 Cf. Mr. Townley (47a); Mr. Driver is likely to be more realistic and to act upon his assessment of potential jobs.
- 217 'got to be a good one': cf. Mr. Bolton (112b), who also recognised the realities of the job market. Mr. Driver is now aged 36, 3 years older than Mr. Bolton was at that time and 7 years younger than him now.



(...) There's one thing I forgot to mention which is another  
 220 reason I left (the job abroad). And that's because the U.K.  
 Government last year announced a (development) programme (in his  
 field) between now and the year 2000.

(...) So that was another .... There weren't many people around  
 with experience and qualifications which just slot in and I can,  
 225 in fact, do that.

(...) You recognise it's going to be a very significant decision  
 that you'll be making. How will you go about making that decision?

How will I go about making it? (Pause) I've got a theory about  
 decisions - it's just a thing which works for me - I don't know  
 230 whether .... I say, right, I've got to make a decision in a certain  
 period of time. Now, I will not commit myself to anything up to  
 that period of time but I will get as much information as I can by  
 all avenues that are open. When you've done that, what I find is  
 that you get to a point where all this lot's milling around. Really  
 235 you know what you should do, but you keep putting off making the  
 decision (...) . I give myself a time limit and I say, 'Right, I'm  
 going to make the decision in such and such a time.' Until that  
 I won't commit myself. But having made the decision I'm going  
 to stick to it.'

240 Did you operate this mode?.....

When I came back? Yes, yes. Deliberately. It worked quite well,  
 actually.

(...) your mode of decision - making works, but does it work if  
 anybody advises you differently? (...)

245 No, I weight (their advice).

(...) somebody I can respect, if you like, then they will get more  
 consideration than somebody that just says, 'Oh, you'll never be  
 able to do that,' (...)

(...) (referring to the Chairman of his company) I don't have  
 250 any ambitions like that. The only thing I do say to myself is,



- 220 Contrast 86b. See also 120b.
- 221 Exogenous factors: see 120b.
- 224 'experience and qualifications': his past efforts (50a,b) are now paying dividends. Contrast this with the very different experience of Mr. Bolton (138a) who, at the same age was still anxious to consolidate his experience and felt threatened by younger men with up-to-date experience (288a,b). The differences in their prospects may perhaps be accounted for by the different ways in which they approach life (Mr. Bolton, 191b; Mr. Driver, 120b).
- 228 See also 192b. The focus of his theory is upon the collection of information and the generation of alternative solutions, which he refrains from evaluating for a specific period of time. See Chapter 8: 3 (a). The Jackamans (132b) describe how they gather intelligence and refer also to their timetable (4a,b). Mr. Flint has set himself a deadline by which he will make a choice between two possible courses of action after the present phase has ended. Contrast Mr. Driver's approach with that of Mr. Bolton who, though he had gathered information (203a,b ff.) about promotion, was not prepared to wait 'another year or so'; and who (302b) placed a number of constraints upon his possible actions.
- 234 'milling around': he is allowing his unconscious mind to mull over the information gathered.
- 235 'keep putting off': see 186a,b. Is this prevarication or a pause to allow the assimilation or evaluation of the information?
- 236 'time limit': he is aware of the need to schedule. See 93b, 94b. He seems to fit Mann, Siegler and Osmond's (1972) thinking category (p. 157-8): 'Before starting anything, the thinking type examines what he conceives the whole situation to be (...) They want to make up their mind, arrive at a logical conclusion, before they act. (...) They do not blunder into a situation (...) No other type can equal them in ability to plot things through time...'
- It is, perhaps, not coincidence that he uses the word 'logic' three times in the interview. He thinks he inherited the 'bit of logic that I have' from his mother, his 'artistic talent' from his father (whose 'retirement thing' is painting). He says he used 'logic' when assessing whether to take the overseas job (100a ff.).
- 237 Contrast Mr. Townley (34b).
- 238 'won't commit myself': contrast Mr. Townley (34b, 36b). Mr. Driver deliberately postpones commitment in order to gather, sift and mull over data. 'stick to it': cf. Jackamans (77b). Contrast Mr. Bolton, 194a,b; Mr. Dickens 205b; Mr. Jordan, 13b.
- 245 Cf. Mr. Bolton (362b).
- 247 Cf. 50b, 251b.
- 250 'ambition': cf. Mr. Baldwin, 15b; Mr. Bolton, 5b.



'if you put limitations on yourself you've got no chance.' The establishment will put limitations on you and the trick is to know when that's happening so that you don't end up in a job where you can't cope. And there are always people that tell you you can't  
 255 do it. You can do it. People have said to me 'You'll never get an ONC,' 'you'll never be an engineer,' 'you'll never own your own house,' things like this. And they just mean nothing to me now at all. I don't even bother listening to that sort of moan because, if you think positively, if instead of talking about some-  
 260 thing you go and do it, there's tremendous amount of - there doesn't seem any limit to what you can do.

(...) does this mean that you've got any picture of what's out there in the future?

(...) And the exciting part about it is that you don't. I would  
 265 never ever have guessed that I would be doing (such a) course, but I am.

(...) the exciting part is there's really no limit to what can be done. People might say that age is going to be against me and so on, but I don't think that's right. I think that's probably  
 270 an excuse in a lot of cases. People don't do it because they think they're too old.

(...) I think that what I hope to gain from this course is not to be limited if I want to.

(...) The more tools you've got to use, the more you can do.

275 (...) You see, I can get a job now in (technical area) and in maybe 5 years' time I would come up against this brick wall, when they'd say 'Well, you don't really have much financial experience,' or 'you don't have this or that.' This is just equipping me so that that doesn't occur.

280 (...) Having got all the tools, you can say, 'well, right. Whatever I get now depends on me.' Nobody's going to point a finger and say 'he hasn't got a degree, he hasn't got this or that'. It's going to depend on me.



- 251 'limitations': see 50b, 171a, 267a.
- 'no chance': no opportunities: see 77b. (He uses the word 'lucky' once, when quoting someone else.) He seems to think that, although there may be constraints upon the individual, they can be overcome. One way to do this is to know and use the system (252-3a). Another way is to tackle the system, which is permeable or superable: 'You can do it'. A third way is to avoid self assessment in the system's terms, not to 'put limitations on yourself'. He does not accept that the barriers are insuperable as others suggest: he has witnessed his father overcome them and has overcome them himself (50b, 255-61a). Mr. Bolton (296b) is acting as though he recognises no limitations, but it is not clear that he is fully intent on such action. Mr. Dickens (218b) recognises but resists his limitations, and Mr. Jackaman (228b) sees little to constrain him. On the other hand, Mr. Jordan (75b) seems to accept limited opportunities.
- 259 'think positively': even though 'limitations' may be perceived, it is not necessary to accept them. They may be surmounted or transcended: 'there doesn't seem any limit to what you can do.'
- 260 'go and do it': and, indeed, he does. See, for example 95a,b. He contrasts strongly with Mr. Townley who talked, but did nothing.
- 264 Although he has explored many possibilities and carefully chosen a line of action (230a ff.), he apparently does not constrain himself within a tightly specific plan, but leaves further options open. Cf. the Jackamans' pragmatic approach (e.g. 40b, 92b, 205b).
- 268 Ageing: see 208b. This is another 'limitation' which other people try to impose and which he will not accept. In this he is like Mr. Jackaman (154b).
- 273 He uses his qualifications to break down his 'limitations' and opportunity structure or to evade them (276a ff.). Cf. Mr. Dickens, 98b; Mr. Southwell, 27b.
- 274 See 81b, 171a. It is not enough to overcome the initial barriers of the opportunity structure and gain entrance to a 'career'. Effort has also to be expended in 'broadening' it thereafter (84b). Cf. Mr. Bolton (391a) who seeks 'additional skills'; Mr. Jackaman (92b); Mr. Stephens, who 'takes advantage of' the various courses he has been sent on, 'another string to the bow'; Mr. Townley, who sees a course as a 'bridge' to his past and a 'springboard' into his future.
- 275 'in maybe 5 years' time': he looks to the future and deals with possible future 'limitations' now.
- 281 'point a finger': contrast 257a. What they say does 'mean' something to him and it goads him into action (50b).
- 283 'depend on me': qualifications, like the ownership of his house (71b), give him independence and control over his life. Contrast Mr. Bolton (373b) for whom they 'became yet another shackle for a while.'



(...) I'm doing it because I'm interested. Financially I  
285 don't want to gain anything.

(...) you get to a point where you've got everything you need and  
the extra money is frittered away to (...)

What do you want from your life then?

(Pause) I think basically I want to prove to myself something.  
290 (laugh)

What?

I've got a pretty shrewd idea that I've got a little bit of a complex,  
I suppose - all this effort and - is, well, it has been to prove to  
myself that I can do these things. But now it's changed a little  
295 bit and I'm doing them because I'm interested.'

Who initially asked you to prove (...) you said right back at the  
beginning that you had the feeling that your father never said  
anything but was disappointed (...)

(...) And it's been the reaction of quite a few people. You can  
300 feel them sort of resenting....

(...) I can't really understand it. I don't think I've really  
achieved very much at all.

(...) I've spent hours and hours in having jobs that I didn't  
particularly like.

305 (...) It saddens me a bit that people could be so easily impressed

(...) I haven't got a job - so just put a value on my achievement.  
All I've got is the money I've got in the bank.

(...) But the fact of the matter is I have got 2 kids and I'm not  
employed.

310 (...) And anybody can do it, it's just that a lot of people....



- 284 'interested': see 303b.
- 285 Cf. 47-8a, when he evaluated qualifications in financial terms. Now he no longer wants more money, having everything he needs (286-7a, 327a).
- 289 'prove to myself': see 50b, 75b, 251b, 261a. See also 293b.
- 292 'shrewd idea': he analyses his own motives and behaviour: 41-3a. Perhaps others have prompted him to explore himself? Cf. Mr. Townley (108b), who offers me an explanation for his love of change.
- 293 'effort': see 34b, 50b. His achievements (50a ff., 99b, 111a) must have demanded considerable physical and intellectual energy; these have been fuelled by psychic energy? His driving need for independence and achievement has enabled him to break down the original barriers in his path and to sweep aside any likely to occur in the future. He can do anything (261a).
- 294 'changed': he says he is no longer looking at education instrumentally, but see 278a. Perhaps the change is that his efforts are for future rather than present needs? Perhaps he is becoming less driven? Mr. Dickens recognises that he has changed (230b). Mr. Bolton (362b) does not think that he has changed much, though he appears more realistic; he notes how liberating the achievement of his qualifications was (368a ff.). Mr. Hampden speaks of his change in attitude (104b). Mr. Jordan also seems to enjoy greater freedom from lifelong pressures (140b).
- 296 I re-introduce the topic of his father and he talks about 'trying to measure up to' him. He then refers to the 'gulf' (1b) between them.
- 299 'reaction': 'resenting': envy of his achievements and possessions?
- 301 See also 114a ff.. He is unwilling to admit to his achievement and disclaims his experience as an achievement: 303-4a, 307a, 309a, 310a. Yet it would appear (299a) that other people think otherwise; even his father is behaving as though his son has done exceedingly well. Perhaps he somehow combines need for achievement (75b) with avoidance of success: see Chapter 9? (This suggests the existence of very great conflict: see 192b). Or despite his capacity for analysis (292b), perhaps he does not recognise the strength of his own drive? He knows what his father has achieved (17a) but says that his father does not have his 'drive' (43a): he may well be underestimating this. Mr. Bolton (243a,b) recognises himself as an 'ordinary sort of engineer', but Mr. Driver thinks that 'anybody can do' what he has done (310a).
- 303 Unlike many of the other men (see Mr. Southwell, 100b), he has specifically not mentioned any enjoyment of his job, though he seems to respond to a challenge ('exciting': 264a, 267a) and is 'interested' (284a, 295a) in a course of study.
- 310 'a lot of people': he tails off here, but seems to be referring to people who have the sort of attitudes he mentions in 268-71a, people who do not take control of their lives.



(...) I didn't have it when I left school. It's a process of learning, isn't it? You see people who do get on. I have a friend who was an apprentice (...) he was highly polished and he failed his examinations.(...) And I just wondered how he could  
 315 do it and I watched the way he did it. It's just confidence. It does cross my mind - Am I going to come unstuck - you know, I could be on the dole for the next 5 years (laugh) but I don't think that will happen.(...) I think I could be happy doing quite a menial job - if that's how it's going to be (...)

320 (...) I've built in a lot of protection (laugh)

(...) I could fail this course, which would look bad - they'd say 'what have you been doing for the last year?' The tactics is to get a job before the course finishes, I think. And if you fail, you can brush over it a bit.

325 (...) I don't want to be without a house and I've made sure that I never have been as soon as I could afford one. I've got one now. It's all paid for and I've got a bit of capital and now I feel easier.

(...) Anyway, that's about it. A little bit of an ego trip for me,  
 330 I must admit (laugh).

END OF INTERVIEW



- 311 'it': the ability to deal confidently with prospective employers.
- 312 'learning': cf. Mr. Dickens (304b), who calls the ability to learn from your experience the 'crux' of adulthood. Social learning theory supports this.
- 313 Mr. Driver uses another form of learning, also supported by social learning theory, by comparing himself and other people and by using them as models. See 44b.
- 315 'confidence': Mr. Dickens is particularly aware of his loss of confidence and the need to regain it (136b). The Jackamans (214b) also refer to their confidence in themselves. Self concept and social learning theories both offer explanations.
- 316 He is realistic and considers the possibility of disaster, but, as when he went abroad (110a), he has protected himself (320a). See 325a ff. Contrast this with Mr. Bolton (326b) who, in certain circumstances, would take tremendous risks (344a ff.). Perhaps this difference between them could be accounted for by their different approaches to life: Mr. Driver thinks (see 236b), whereas Mr. Bolton feels (204b).
- Mr. Driver leaves the impression that he has prepared for most contingencies: note that he rarely mentions 'worry' (see 109b). His responses are cognitive rather than affective, though, as noted in 293b, there must be a powerful source of the energy he uses. (A psychoanalytic approach might offer an explanation.)
- 319 'menial job': see Mr. Southwell (91b).
- 321 Realism again: cf. Mr. Bolton (115a,b). The difference here is that Mr. Driver has planned his tactics and has a fall-back position (320a, 323-4a, 325a ff.).
- 25 Cf. 71b.
- 29 'ego trip': see 292b.



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER' AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'

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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. BOLTON



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. Bolton

(...) on the whole I found life in the Air Force tedious and a waste of time but .... but not unpleasant ... It was a change from what I'd had before ... and I travelled around a little bit - not overseas - but around the country - no responsibilities.

5 (...) Out there was this vision of your white coated medical figure ... did you, had you by that stage abandoned that as an ambition?

Well at the time I left the Air Force, yes, I had another crack at A levels while I was in it but that didn't come to anything. Well  
10 I wouldn't have abandoned it except that I didn't - I couldn't very well do full time any more - because I couldn't impose myself on my parents ...

(...) So I had to find a job. I couldn't go to university because I didn't have the matriculation qualifications ... So that was that ...

15 (...) When I was demobbed, I had a succession of unskilled jobs - I just went about thinking about it - I worked in a warehouse and various retail shops and that sort of thing - and I came to the conclusion that I didn't want to be doing that. I felt at the time what I wanted to do was something professional... (Laugh) I wanted  
20 an occupation that was useful and at the same time provided some kind of stimulus and job satisfaction and I wasn't sure that I could get this without professional qualifications of some kind but medicine was the only kind of profession I considered at that time ...  
Well ... I will tell you a story which is perfectly true. I went  
25 to the pictures one day and I saw a film called - I'm damned if I can remember, but it was about a (...) in Canada and I thought, 'that looks just the job out in the open air - interesting - dangerous perhaps - I think I'll be a (...)', so I went to the Royal Institute of (...) and I said I want to be a (...) and they  
30 .... gave me some documents/leaflets about training ... they even



b. Commentary upon edited transcript of interview with Mr. Bolton

1. He did National Service after failing 'A' levels. There are numerous references to the 'interest' and 'job satisfaction' that he seeks from work which contrast with this 'tedium': 'stimulus and job satisfaction' (21a), 'some sort of adventurous life', 'something that absorbs me' (272-4a). Such interest he often associates with substantial financial reward (275-6a) and with a profession (19-21a).
- 5 Since a stay in hospital when he was 15 he had wanted to be a doctor. It was a 'vocation': '... it wasn't just the glamour (...) I wanted to help sick people.' It was central to his self concept: 'I had a clear idea of what I wanted to be ... but the business of actually achieving it demands a different sort of single-mindedness.' This tension between self concept and the most appropriate way of implementing it (see Chapter 8) recurs throughout his history. He has mixed extensively in medical circles.
- 9 His school considered him 'stupid' at science and advised against medicine. He disagreed, did not 'question' his own abilities and was disappointed when he failed all the 'A' levels at school. This latest failure he attributes to 'not working hard enough'. His self concept was rooted in an unrealistic assessment of himself: see also 43b; 308b.
- 11 He came from a working-class family; his father had a skilled trade; his mother also worked.
- 13 He was thus excluded from the professions (see 1b) and from the 'conventional career' to which he later refers (e.g. his wife's 'more normal kind of pattern' and 379-80a,b). The achievement of professional qualifications becomes a driving ambition (34b, 83a,b; also Mr. Driver 50a,b).
- 15 An example of the constraints of the opportunity structure (Chapter 8:1 (b ii): school-leavers are restricted in their access to rewarding jobs because of their socio-economic background and level of education. (See also Mr. Scott 31ff., Mr. Southwell 5 ff.) Lines 221-5a,b hint at the kind of future he must have faced at this time.
- 19 See 1b, 43-6 a,b. Having failed 'A' levels twice it is likely that his assessment of himself was unrealistic; so perhaps also was his notion of a professional job. See 31b.
- 25 Mr. Driver (154a) and Mr. McMillan also report significant decisions taken on the basis of a chance event. The chance event made sense in terms of his current thinking; but it later proved unsatisfactory (49a,b). He could respond immediately to a chance event because he worked to a short time-scale (204b).



secured me a job - I had an interview with X and (...) despatched me to (...) as a sort of trainee with nice promises about day release and so on ...

(...) When I realised that if I wanted to get any qualifications  
 35 at all it would have to be while I was working and I had to start looking around for other things - I chose (...) simply because at that time it seemed about the only way, the only thing I could get into where I could support myself while I was studying in the evenings.

40 (...) did you seek any other kind of professional guidance at all in this area?...

No.

(...) I don't think I was aware of the existence of any career guidance in any formal way. I didn't feel the need for it, either -  
 45 I felt, probably mistakenly, that I knew what was available... it was a matter of sorting out ... the ones that I'd contemplate from the ones that were impracticable for one reason or another and making the choice ...

(...) It also transpired, which took me rather by surprise, that  
 50 the profession of (he had chosen) was almost impossible to get into - so despite having been to the Institute this didn't come over until after I'd started (..) Well I looked out for another job and I was interviewed at (...)

So by that time you had abandoned (...) bit entirely ...

55 Yes. Not that I wanted to, just that it seemed that the difficulties were insuperable.

(...) Well, I stayed with (...) for something less than 2 years - oh about 14 or 15 months and I left them because, while I was in (...) on the first occasion I'd met a girl and we saw each other at weekends  
 60 after I went back to London and got engaged and we intended to get married and it seemed for various social reasons better for her to stay in (...) and me to join her, rather than the other way around - so I wanted to get a job in (...) again somehow or other and I got



- 31 'nice promises', surface attractions which later prove misleading: a recurrent theme (73-7a, 103-5a,b). Other similar refrains are 'getting very disillusioned' and 'disappointment' (129a). This suggests an inaccurate picture of himself and/or his circumstances.
- 34 See 1b, 13b. The pursuit of qualifications, to overshadow much of his early adulthood, stemmed from his ambition for a profession. It influenced many decisions (81-5a), was compulsive (365a,b) and a tremendous burden (385a). See also Mr. Driver (50a,b) and Mr. Southwell (11a,b ff.) It cannot be fully explained in terms of the opportunity structure (see 15b and Chapter 8), but can be interpreted as the implementation of the self concept (see also Chapter 8). An early ambition (5b) is fuelled by the examples of friends: social learning theory, Chapter 8. The notion of the Dream (Levinson et al, 1978) is also relevant: Chapters 5 and 6.
- 37 Other professions were then demanding premiums for indentures or paid only 'pocket money', so that this profession, discovered by chance, 'seemed (...) the only way' to achieve what he so greatly desired.
- 43 This was 1957. In another reference to 'careers' guidance he may be implying his recognition of an unfulfilled need, but here he repeats what he says elsewhere, that he thought he had adequate information (e.g. 178b, 203a). However, he has misjudged either his own capacity or his situation (19b, 31b, 49a,b). With guidance he may have become more realistic.
- 44 'feel the need'; 'I knew': it seems significant that he refers to accepting jobs in affective rather than in cognitive, decision-making terms (118a; 140b; 161a,b; 292b; 326b).
- 49 See 25b. Having taken reasonable action (51a), he found that reality was not as he had expected. See 31b, 103b, 178b, 194a, 203a,b. He conveys a sense of powerlessness in this situation.
- 52 After ten months he left the traineeship which he had expected would lead him into the profession; he had actively searched for another job.
- 54 The desired profession.
- 55 A second profession has now eluded him: the 'want to'/'have to' distinction is perhaps significant.
- 57 He took a job which made use of his limited training so far.
- 59 They met during his last job. She came from a middle-class home and obtained a professional qualification when he was 26.
- 62 He has so far in the interview displayed great concern about entering a profession, but this job move is influenced by personal rather than by 'career' considerations: '... at that stage of my career, if it can be called that, it was of little consequence where I was: anywhere would have done'. After



a job with (...)

65 (...) Well I'll go on about employment - I stayed at (...) for a very long time, far too long, it was at least five years, I think, altogether and I got fed up - because there didn't appear to be a possibility of getting out of this work field. I was doing all right - got on well with the company ... but (it was not work in  
70 the field in which he was qualifying) (...) so I got a job with (...)

(...) I didn't work for them very long because although they promised me day release because I was doing my final year Higher National Certificate by then and they kept their word in as much  
75 as I was to go to the college (laugh).... things were so difficult from the point of view of work. I was technically permitted to go to the college and I could never afford to go - I was working very long hours for some time - 70 or 80 hours a week and my daughter then was a baby and it was very difficult for  
80 my wife, so I left.... I tried to get another job and couldn't. At the time I was faced with having to decide between studying and getting my H.N.C. or staying with the firm and virtually remaining unqualified and this was critical because it was at a time when the engineering Institutions were no longer going to  
85 accept H.N.C. as qualifying (...)

(...) Oh yes. Well, at the end I decided to leave anyhow and I went on the dole for about six weeks, still looking for another job during that time but nobody was interested. Eventually I got a job with a small firm (...) as a junior and at that time I  
90 must have been in my early 30's ... I went to work for them at approximately half the salary I'd been getting ... so I regarded it as a way of buying myself the experience because up till then I'd not really had any design experience or office experience very much (...) I stayed there for about 18 months until I felt  
95 that I knew enough to be able to apply for a job that carried more money ....

(...) I thought it was an opportunity of catching up on a lot of experience that I shouldn't have missed out on over the years so I accepted the job ... in fact I - it worked out quite well - I  
100 feel I did a fair bargain there ...



major setbacks to his 'career' ambitions he perhaps takes refuge in his personal life; or, experiencing the effects of poor decision-making, he panics and does something/anything (115b) to relieve the tension of cognitive dissonance (see Chapters 8,9). Ultimately (218b) his wife becomes very important to his 'career'. This illustrates the interdependence of the domains of the individual's world (see Chapter 9): Mr. Jackaman, 11b, Mr. Driver, 120b, Baldwin, 146b

- 66 All this time he was taking evening classes. The job proved not to be a good investment of time and learning, for it was not in the field in which he was qualifying. He presumably stayed because of his marriage and the birth of his child: family considerations again prevailing over those of 'career', though he now recognised the need to move (70a).
- 73 Another promise which did not materialise: see 31b.
- 79 The needs of family life and his 'career' needs for qualifications dictated a job move. He sounds under great pressure: a condition no doubt typical of young men aspiring to qualify and advance themselves at this stage of family life. He mentions later (214a) that his wife interrupted her 'career' only briefly after the baby was born. Did she return to work because of his difficulties or were these the result of her pressure to return to work? I did not explore this.
- 83 Mr. Driver (50b) paints the same picture of the professional bodies constantly raising their entry requirements so that during this period in the 1960s aspiring entrants had to run to stay still: I have not investigated whether this was so. However, for both of them the chase of qualifications became a major driving force in their lives, though perhaps for different reasons. Mr. Driver was influenced by his father (38a,b); was Mr. Bolton influenced by his wife, who was by this time qualified herself? It was at this point that he apparently set out to pursue his own 'career' needs and became financially dependent upon his wife in order to do so. See 92-100a.
- 89 This was apparently a deliberate and not a desperate move, for he says elsewhere that he could have taken a better paid job in another firm, though it would not have given him this experience. Like Mr. Driver (84b) he was now becoming concerned with job experience as well as qualifications. Whether or not this move was ill-advised is not clear: see 103b, 118b. He began to realise that he should not hold himself back too long and left after 18 months.



(...) I felt I couldn't spend too much time with them on a boy's wages and a job was advertised locally (...) and the nature of the job turned out to be quite different from what was suggested to me at interview but I accepted it and I went. The pay was very good  
 105 and everything from the interview seemed to be pretty good but it turned out to be a pill (?) - not exactly bitter, but it was a bad time for me. I spent 3 years with this particular employer; discovered too late it was the worst move I could possibly have made. The sort of work they were doing was not very useful from the point of  
 110 view of learning and gaining experience and unlike other places where I'd worked, I could not get along with the people there (...) I thought better stick it for a year because it doesn't look good to apply for jobs too frequently. Once I did start to look around for a job I couldn't get one.

115 (...) I think really the reason why nobody wanted me was that when they said 'what have you been doing for the last year or two?' (laugh) there was nothing I could tell them. (...) Eventually they advertised at (...) so I tried and with great relief I was accepted...

120 (...) Now when I got here I was very happy indeed and the work that was given to me was just what I wanted (...) it was perfect from that point of view, it was something that was really demanding ... and that went on for 2½ years when I made another mistake (laugh)... this was, must have been '73 and everything was changing - there was  
 125 going to be (radical) reorganisation (...) and I went to see the boss and said what's going to happen to me because by that time he'd have a fair idea of who was going to emerge from the reorganisation and he said, well, so far as he knew, nothing - which was a bit of a disappointment because I was hoping to get some sort of  
 130 promotion (...) It had been decided that the work I was doing would be taken away and given to private consultants ... (...) and looking at what was left for me to do which didn't seem to me to be very much ... I could see myself being back in the (...) situation that I'd left two years previously ... except that the people in (...)  
 135 were not the same sort of people, it was a much nicer atmosphere all round ... but I was getting older and if I couldn't keep up with my experience, I could see my prospects would be pretty grim, and it seemed like a good idea at the time to move to keep up my experience, so I applied to the firm that had taken the job over (...) and they



- 103 See 31b, 178b. He is not suspicious of his environment and appears to survey only its surface character and not to probe the deeper, longer-term issues. He does not seem to find it malign, but rather incomprehensible: he is surprised at what 'transpires' or 'turns out'. He indicates (49b) that he had put effort into his assessments, yet they were still wrong. It is implied here that it was not mis-representation on the employer's part that led to this 'worst move', but perhaps his mis-reading of the job offered. However, the man who came for interview earning a 'boy's wages' (101a) may have been underestimated.
- 106 Hard for the man who had earlier made sacrifices for his 'career' (91a). The people there are 'a very peculiar bunch' (115b, 135a). These are the only disparaging remarks he makes about others.
- 110 The drive for qualifications and appropriate experience again (89b).
- 112 Now aware of the realities of the job market he stayed for three years. (He had nine jobs between National Service and the time of my interview). He was 35 when he left. From his point-of-view, these job moves were purposive and had direction; they were not 'floundering' (Chapter 8: 2 (b ii)). The life-span development approach refers to the objective rather than the subjective 'career'.)
- 114 This was 1970. Was this because of the kinds of applications he made?
- 115 It is ironic that, despite his concern for qualifications and experience, he still had 'nothing' to report: 'an office boy could handle it from top to bottom. My position there was almost redundant.' In this organisation his qualifications did not match the demands of his job: he was better qualified than his boss. (He thought that envy possibly explained his poor relationships there: 106b.) Once again he had made a poor decision, or acted prematurely (102a): see 62b.
- 118 However, his stint as a junior (89a) now repaid his sacrifices, for it was the experience gained then which, he acknowledges, qualified him for this job which proved to be satisfying (120a,b). Mr. Baldwin (184-5a,b) speaks of taking 'the rough with the smooth' in a similar situation. He expresses his reaction to the offer in emotional terms (44b).
- 120 At last he is doing the kind of job he always wanted (1b): stimulating and demanding.
- 123 Probably the implied mistake of the 'worst move' in 108a. See also 45a, 171b. He is starting to make explicit his recognition of his poor decision-making. Has he started to trust me?
- 125 An example of the influence of exogenous factors upon the individual's 'career' See 155a, 191b, 212b. His response is to be active and enquire about prospects: see 49b, 103b.
- 133 Again anxious about experience: in view of this the decision (139a) is apparently reasonable. But see 194a ff..
- 136 He was 38. See 163b.



140 agreed to take me on and I went to work with them - not on the  
 (local) job which was quite a plum for them - at that price -  
 so they put their own experts on it ... they gave me other things  
 to do which were quite interesting and I was there for around  
 3 years at the end of which time I was made redundant. (...)  
 145 when the (new organisations) had come into being all the (...)  
 consultants in that field lost all their clients ... virtually because  
 all the old (organisations) disappeared and the new (... organisations)  
 took much of the work on themselves, so that put us into quite a  
 state and so I was about the first to go, being the last to be  
 150 taken on ... (...) This was a very unhappy experience and I got  
 very worried indeed - the jobs were just not available - obviously  
 if you were made redundant it was because things were quiet generally -  
 it wasn't only a matter of the (bodies) taking over a large  
 amount of what had previously been done by consultants, it also  
 155 coincided with the fact that there was the big cut-back in public  
 spending - there was no money, there was no work.

(...) At any rate, just before I left I managed to get a temporary  
 appointment with another firm of consultants ... this was a tiny  
 firm ... different type of work than I was accustomed to ... er ...  
 160 they offered me a twelve-month appointment (...) and well it was  
 a case of beggars not being choosers and I quite gladly accepted but  
 it was a temporary appointment - I was still looking around to get  
 back into the (...) industry as it were ... (...) and at that age  
 with 9 year's experience there was nothing else to turn to really  
 165 and (...) well, I took this temporary job on and after about 3 or 4  
 months the partners of the firm said 'Well, we like the way you  
 work (...) would you consider working for us on an established  
 basis?'

(...) and then this summer I was made redundant again ... (...)  
 170 there wasn't anything else for me to do (...)

(...) you said something like "again you made a mistake" ... Was  
 it a mistake in terms of what you could have known at the time -  
 could you have known otherwise?

No. It was a mistake in hindsight. I don't think so, I thought  
 175 about it very carefully and I've discussed it with my wife and ...



- 140 See 44b. This acquiescent style, which presumably reflects his self esteem, shows also when speaking of the job search before my interview with him: '... had they said, "Yes, we think you can do the job ..."', he would have taken it.
- 141 The consultants had taken over the 'plum' job from the organisation he was leaving (130-1a). He comments '... it was a big job and between six and seven million pounds and I was virtually the only person there who knew anything about it, but not enough, not to make a good job of it...' Presumably this was a realistic assessment and he did not undersell himself when joining the consultants.
- 151 He mentions 'worry' and 'relief' several times during the interview: see 256b. Here others were also 'very worried indeed'. All his concern and sacrifice for qualifications and experience were apparently coming to nought.
- 155 The influence of exogenous factors: see 191b, 212b.
- 157 See 194a,b. Why did he take a temporary job at this point? Was it to ensure continuity of experience or to buy new experience, as in the junior post taken earlier (89-94a)? With a well-paid wife, he could perhaps have waited longer: see 204b, 253b. I did not explore this.
- 161 See 44b, 140b. Relief and grateful acceptance, even though a temporary job can create problems, especially when it involves a 'different type of work' (159a): shunted on to a sideline to wait, regardless of what other opportunities arise, until the end of the stated period.
- 163 He was 41. Concern for age: see 136a; Mr. Baldwin, 131b; Mr. Dickens, 134b; Mr. Driver, 268b; Mr. Hampden, 128b; Mr. Jackaman, 154b; Mr. Jordan, 22b; Mr. Southwell 89b.
- 164 He had expected that his hard-earned qualifications and experience in this industry would liberate him and enable him to rise above his origins, but they have, in fact, shackled him in another way. See 365b, 373b.
- 167 Although it 'seemed like a good idea' (cf. 31b), it worked out badly (169-70a). Financed by a short-term research contract, it had no real permanence and took him into work 'I'd had only a nodding acquaintance with ...' Had the contract not folded, he would have had little 'future' on its completion because 'the sort of work they specialised in was outside my field and I wouldn't really be able to cope'; see 170a. He could, therefore, be said to have taken the short-term view in staying on and so made later difficulties for himself inevitable.
- 171 See 123b. I had become interested in the fact that he had been made redundant twice and was trying to understand what had brought this about.
- 175 He did not seek external 'careers' or other guidance.



(...) I didn't want to leave because I liked working with them and up till then work had been very interesting but it was a decision taken on an assessment of where I thought my best interests lay in the future and at that time I felt that the best thing for me to do was to keep up with my practice and I wasn't going to get much in the way of it there. Had they said to me 'Well, look on reorganisation you stand a very good chance of being promoted,' I'd have been tempted to stay because, all right for now perhaps the work wouldn't have been frightfully interesting but at least going a step up the ladder I could have started looking around at other jobs at a higher level, but they didn't say this ... In the event I found myself at a bit of a disadvantage in as much as when I was working for the consultants (...) I tried my hand at looking around at some of the new plum jobs with the (new bodies) only to discover that for the first year they were taking people only from (...) and so forth and I hadn't reckoned on that ...

So had you stayed at (...) you would have been in a better position to ...

Had I stayed at (...), as things transpired, I would have been in an infinitely better position because I could have had one of two things. I could have had a very substantial promotion - a double promotion - I know this because the engineer who was a junior to me got this particular job when I left or I could have pretty well have walked into the (higher level) job at that stage ... That I regret.

200 Do you suppose that you could in fact at that point in time have somehow divined this - you could have found out that this was likely to happen had you made the right sort of enquiries?

Well, I did make those kind of enquiries ... but I was ... what decided me I think was the prospect of waiting another year or so in (...) and twiddling my thumbs and then having to appear for interview in exactly the same way as I had on trying to leave (...) of people saying well, of course for the past twelve months I hadn't been doing anything and I couldn't face this.

(...) So that's why I made the decision - it's only in hindsight that I can see how much better off I would have been had I stayed - I really wasn't to know that at the time and neither was I to know



- 176 Referring back to the job of 120b, from which he resigned because his prospects seemed 'pretty grim' (137a).
- 178 He was active and made enquiries (49b, 103b, 125a, 188a) and an 'assessment' an apparently looked to the future (167b, 179a), but the conclusions he drew from them were inaccurate. He resigned from a satisfying job (120b) 'only to discover' (189a) that events worked out differently from expected (191-9a). See also 43b, 191b, 362b. What is wrong with his decision-making?
- 185 The ladder image of 'career'. He was working in a large organisation.
- 190 Again he 'discovered too late' (107a). Would such information have been available had he asked different questions or different people?
- 191 A telling phrase: he had been active and sought information (178b) but the decision based upon it was disastrous. Why? Perhaps he had inappropriate objectives in a changing environment ('to keep up with my practice', 180a): a toe-hold might have been a more realistic aspiration during the upheaval of the industry's re-organisation. Perhaps he was working with too short a time scale and too narrow a horizon, enquiring about the immediate situation instead of the possibilities of the future in a wider context after re-organisation. His decision-making so far in his 'career' has been influenced by the pressures of his profession or of his family; he does not accommodate the pressures of the wider environment. See 212b.
- 194 See also 49b, 140b, 178b. There is the suggestion that he felt little control over his environment: he could only acquiesce in what was offered him. For other attitudes to 'what might have been', see Mr. Dickens, 205b; Mr. Driver, 238b; Mr. Jackaman, 77b; Mr. Jordan, 13b.
- 195 A galling realisation, as in 106a (though might it have 'transpired' otherwise?)
- 203 There is bewilderment in his voice here and some impatience. As far as he could see he had done all the right things.
- 204 A year seems 'a remote period' (258a). Is his time perspective the key to his ineffectual decision-making? Although he is concerned with age (and thus the future, 163b), he said of his early 'career' 'I was only prepared to look as far as passing examinations (...) (and no) further'. He also appears to have an indistinct grasp of the past: he apologised for his inability to remember dates and details of family history. He can thus be said to belong to Mann, Siegler and Osmond's sensation type (see Chapter 4): 'for them waiting is denial'.
- 206 See 115b, 117a: when leaving his earlier unhappy job.
- See 190-99a,b. Could anyone else, using a different decision-making strategy, have known?
- 210



that there was going to be a terrible recession ...

Yes. Can you tell me a bit about your wife at this stage ...

215 She's always worked, yes. Yes, well except for a period of about  
six months or so when our daughter was born.

(...) I don't know what to call her ... a fairly senior officer,  
something like that ...

220 (...) As far as I was concerned it was it made things very easy  
for me: I could afford to take on a job with a title consultant with  
a boy's wages ... at that time ...

225 (...) Yes, I could say that had I been married to a girl who was  
earning wages as perhaps a shop assistant or an ordinary occupation,  
or not working at all, looking after a child, I could never have  
done it ... I would have had to have thought of something completely  
different so that was a distinct advantage to me ...

(...) My immediate reaction was to seek employment in my own field  
so in fact I approached ... wrote speculatively to every employer  
within commuting distance of my home ...

230 (...) Of course the normal way to approach this is to look at the  
advertisements in the professional journals and find the ones that  
suit you, but I was in a position where I had to take more active  
steps than that.

235 (...) I also did write to those advertisements such as they were  
that came up - there weren't many. I also went to PER right away.  
PER gave me a booklet which mentioned this course among lots of  
others. At that time I did not take too much notice of it but I  
thought I would keep my options open (...)

240 (...) You give me the impression ... I may have picked up a wrong  
impression ... that since (the last redundancy) you have deliberately  
kept a more open-ended future for yourself than you did before ...  
Is that the case?



- 212 It was 1973. See 125a, 155a, 191b. Of his latest redundancy he said, 'I was taking active steps (...) hoping that perhaps things generally would improve ... in the economy, more jobs (...) in the (...) industry.' See Chapter 9's discussion of the individual's response to the environment. He seems to concede control of his life to such impersonal forces (194b). He also seems unable to scan the environment realistically and so to plan (178b). When he looks to the future or to a wider horizon, it is sketchy, remote, unrealistic. Ironically, he says of his brother, a redundant teacher, 'I think he's misjudged things totally (...) hasn't realised how difficult it was going to be to get fixed up again (...) restricted his applications too much.' Perhaps he can see more clearly for others than for himself: a reflection of his self concept? For him, activity seems to be the most important tactic in his response to his environment.
- 213 The mood of the interview called for a change of topic: it was not as brutal as it reads here.
- 214 See 59b, 79b.
- 218 He said later, '... one of the most significant things has been marrying somebody who has (...) been able to allow me to take certain chances and is still in a position to allow me that.' Cf. 212b: this time circumstances have influenced his 'career' decisions favourably, he judges. He does not feel that her 'career' and financial support constrain him: 'the rest of my working career is for my own self-fulfilment'. It could be argued that her support has increased his reliance on others to control his life and has nurtured his lack of realism. (social learning theory: Chapter 8) rather than his autonomy and opportunity for self-actualisation (see Chapter 9). The balancing effect of a wife upon her husband's approach to life is seen also in 302b, 357b and in the interviews with Mr. Flint, Mr. Jackaman and Mr. Southwell, 42a,b.
- 221 This would have been the norm for most men from his background and, indeed, for most men of his generation. See 15b.
- 226 On learning of the unexpected redundancy from the research post (169a). See also 167b. A cliché ('immediate'), but for him perhaps a significant one: 204b.
- 231 His activity and intention to 'keep my options open' (237a) seem significant to him.
- 235 Another chance event? See 25b. It was within commuting distance, an important criterion to him, but did he consider other courses? Three months elapsed between learning of redundancy and starting the course.
- 237 Several minutes of the interview have been omitted here, during which he spoke of the possibility of starting his own business.



No, it isn't really. I felt that ... at the time I was made redundant the only thing I could consider was getting a job and had one of the applications that I made proved successful I would  
245 have been doing that.

(...) on balance I think I would have chosen the job and not come here - I'm not sure of that but I think so.

(...) at the moment I'm in a sort of vacuum ... I'm no longer employed ... I've absolutely no idea how things are going to be  
250 this time next year ...

(...) You describe the present state as being something of a vacuum ... Is that an uncomfortable experience?

No. No, not really. Temperamentally I'm the kind of person that doesn't worry too much about what's going to happen in a year's  
255 time. When I say that I don't mean I am not conscious of the problem, that I don't apply my mind to it, but I don't worry about it - I do worry about what's going to happen next month - or in three months - I'm worried about that. But a year seems a remote period to me, although I do think about these things and plan for  
260 them, it doesn't worry me.

(...) I am very concerned about my (education :) result, whether I get (the desired level) or not, that worries me ... what, how I occupy myself after leaving (the course) doesn't worry me. It concerns me but it doesn't worry me.

265 (...) Do you have any picture of the future at all? Is there anything out there? Any fantasy?

(Long pause) No. I mean, the fantasies, I have fantasies, but they are unobtainables ... obvious unobtainables ... like being an artist or a musician... or a writer... so my plans for the  
270 future are not based on fantasy at all ... How would I like to see myself in ten years time, it's difficult to say. I suppose I'd like to see myself self-employed, working at something that absorbs me, not exclusively, but something that is very, very interesting ... I'm not too particular about the security side of  
275 it... I would like it to be very interesting and rather better



- 243 Between the last redundancy and the present phase he considered moving into an entirely different field: 237a, 296a. This may again reflect an unrealistic appraisal of himself and/or his environment; or it could suggest that he had modified his self concept. He was not, he said, committed to engineering as he had been 'as an adolescent to medicine'. He was now 43. Was he in a stage of exploration, in Murphy and Burck's renewal stage (Chapter 8: 2 (b ii))? There are several indications that his self concept is now more realistic, more consistent with objective reality. He refers to himself as 'the average kind of professional engineer', an 'ordinary sort of engineer' as compared to the 'high fliers'. See also 287b. Perhaps the struggle to achieve professional qualifications, after twice failing 'A' levels, has boosted his self esteem so that he is now able to appraise himself more realistically, more in terms of what he is than what he would like to be?
- 245 Instead of entering the present phase in which I met him.
- 248 I asked him to look back to see how he had arrived at the present. See also 392a. Other men described the present phase in the process of change in a similar way: Mr. Dickens called it 'limbo', 127b; Mr. Baldwin 'Spaghetti Junction', 195a; Mr. Townley the 'branching' area of a tree, 150a.
- 254 Cf. Mann, Siegler and Mann's thesis: 204b.
- 256 Note the repeated use of 'worry' (see 151b). Although used rhetorically here, it is perhaps not far-fetched to suggest that it connotes a pre-occupation with a current situation and is thus appropriate to express the concerns of some-one with a short time scale. In 264a he distinguishes between distant 'concern' and present 'worry'. Cf. Mr. Jordan, 76b, Mr. Southwell, 100b. Contrast Mr. Jackaman, 111b.
- 259 What is his notion of planning? See 267b.
- 261 This follows immediately, as does 265a.
- 267 I introduced the notion of 'fantasies'. His distinction between them and 'plans' is not clear and I did not probe it: it would be interesting to see whether the time dimension and probability were significant. 'Fantasies' include a 'rather nice Georgian house in Brighton'; the plans are perhaps those in 272a.
- 272 See 237b. This is attractive because, after redundancies, 'I want to be my own boss', 'a bit tired of being an employed person' (unemployed?). This hints at a changed self concept (see 243b), but how realistic is it?
- 274 'Security': see 218a,b. His wife's job is significant here. See also his discussion of risk-taking 320a,b.



than average reward while going about it.

(...) What are your outside interests?

Well, never very startling, but I like music and I do a good deal of listening.

280 (...) I've taken up piano instead (...) I have a lesson on it once a week and I like it very much. Oh, I play squash and I do a lot of reading and I ...particular charitable organisation that I work for in my spare time.

(...) I think that's what you said - that you - that one couldn't  
285 start afresh at that sort of age.

Ah, I couldn't start afresh ... within my own chosen sphere (...) No end of bright young graduates doing their first couple of years in the profession who would walk rings round me at that aspect of the job.

290 (...) you are saying that in other spheres one can begin again, one can start afresh.

(...) That's right, it was before they offered me a permanent post then I was considering starting all over again, being in the happy position where I could afford to (...) - of thinking of  
295 going into an entirely different line.

(...) law, accountancy, and I went as far as making enquiries. I wrote to the Law Society and to the Institute of Chartered Accountants and got documents, made enquiries about training courses, and so forth... and I did take it very seriously... I even had an  
300 offer. A solicitor offered me articles and I think, had the solicitor been local, I would have accepted at that time but she practises in London and I just couldn't have managed that - couldn't have afforded to move to London, really.

(...) but on balance I felt that to embark on 3 years full time  
305 study - in law or accountancy or something like that ... It would have taken me 5 or 6 years minimum to get back to the position that



- 276 Asked elsewhere about the significance of money to him, he replied that he never had to worry about necessities because of his wife's job (218a ff.). I had concluded that he was not unduly motivated by money (hence my remark several minutes earlier 'You've not mentioned money before ... you are mentioning (it) now'), but the transcript contains several hints, as here, of its importance to him. He says, 'I would like to live in a certain style', but continues, '... perhaps the money is a red herring ... mostly my reasons for wanting to branch out on my own are at a deeper level than that.' I did not explore further.
- 278 Mr. Driver, Mr. McMillan, Mr. Morgan were also actively engaged in music, Mr. Flint with art, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. McMillan and Mr. Morgan with sport. Other domestic and community pursuits were also mentioned as enthusiasms. See 'zones of stability' in Chapter 9.
- 284 Several minutes have been excised here. The question refers back to 163a,b, when he said that he had to persist within the same field because of his age and particular experience.
- 287 He has already referred to the 'high fliers' whom he contrasts with the 'ordinary' engineer like himself: 243b. This again suggests that his evaluation of himself is not unrealistic.
- 288 The classic 'mid-career' situation of feeling chased by younger men with up-to-date qualifications. See Chapter 6 and Mr. Baldwin, 39b; Mr. Jordan, 51b.
- 292 In the job immediately before the present phase.
- 292 Starting again: a problem which was particularly felt by the men leaving the army, who were starting not merely a new occupation but a totally new life-style. Compare his calm approach with the patent anxieties of Mr. Baldwin, 106a ff., Mr. Hampden, 113a; Mr. Jordan, 21a; or with the concern of Mr. Dickens for making a 'start', 92b. Compare his calm approach here with his emotional responses to finding a job earlier: see 44b. Perhaps this 'starting all over again' was a mental exercise rather than a tangible option; he was playing with the idea and so not emotionally involved?
- 294 Presumably a reference to his wife's financial support: 218a,b.
- 296 He perceives his environment as sufficiently open to permit this. The offer in 300a suggests that this was not unrealistic or fantastic. Another example of his busy activity; see also 178b.
- 302 After such a display of pro-activity (see Chapter 9), he indicates that he was again swayed by extra-occupational factors: see 62b, 66b, 79b. Although he sees the environment as open, he chooses to adopt a narrow perspective upon it: he sets such constraints as not 'splitting the family' and not selling the house (355a,b, 357b).
- 303 'Afforded': emotionally, symbolically or practically? See 355b.
- 306 Is he jibbing at the distant time scale?



I'd been at, arrived at at that time. If it went all right and my previous academic record suggests that everything might not have been all right because I'm pretty good at failing exams and so I  
 310 didn't think it was worth the risk - but this course appealed to me because it's one year and I thought I could just about manage it ... and it would lead to either enhanced employment opportunities or some new skills which would be very, very useful indeed if I decided to go into business myself...

315 So you feel you are covering various exits.

Yes, yes, I am at the moment. I'm not committed even in my mind to any particular direction once I've finished the course but ... my preference at the moment, I think, is for starting my own business.

320 We've used the word risk several times, I think actually I was the one who introduced it in the conversation, ... do you regard yourself as a risk-taker?

That's something that's occupied my thinking for a little while actually. I don't really know. I've been debating this with  
 325 myself, it's funny you should mention that... If you look at the things I have done over the years, on past performance you would have to say no, and yet I feel that I am ... but my own feelings might be misleading my evaluation. I may not have an accurate assessment of myself in that respect. I still feel that I am a  
 330 risk-taker up to a point.

What do you think you've put at risk?

Well, as I say, if you look at my previous history, very little.

Yes, but ... you feel you've not put much at risk but yet you feel you have been at risk? Is that what you're saying?

335 No, I feel that I would be prepared to take a risk. I think in the past nothing has happened really that involved me in taking a risk, except if you count taking on a job at half salary, leaving a job without another job to go to ... I suppose they were risks ...



- 308 Like 243b this suggests a realistic appraisal: he has learned from past experience: see 9b. Compare Mr. Baldwin, 109a,b; 153a,b; Mr. Dickens, 304b.
- 316 A reasonable strategy in decision-making when there is sufficient time (Cf. Mr. Driver, 120a,b. ff.): keeping an open mind and scanning as widely as possible for as long as possible. This does not, however, accord with 244a: because he was unsuccessful in getting a job he started the course. It is possible, therefore, to interpret his use of the course, which he later describes as a 'breathing-space' (392a), not as an investment but as a means of postponing problems for a year without upsetting his family life and (though not mentioned by him) without the stigma of unemployment.
- 318 Although he does not appear to fit the conventional image of the forceful entrepreneur, he has many of the characteristics Kets de Vries identifies as being typical, particularly the short time perspective. See Chapter 9.
- 321 I had asked him (213a ff.) whether his wife's 'career' had enabled him to take risks.
- 326 See 274b. Here he perceives a discrepancy between his objective experience and his subjective interpretation of it and allows that he may not be making an accurate assessment of himself. He feels he is a risk-taker but thinks that he has acted prudently. See 44b for other references to cognitive and affective responses: he has described earlier job decisions in affective rather than cognitive terms. He has also shown that he can appraise himself realistically (e.g. 308b): are his feelings misleading him here? The observer might judge him to have been a risk-taker and an imprudent one: he took a job at a boy's wages and so lowered the financial base-line from which to get another job; he resigned from a satisfying job; he took a temporary post. Objectively, therefore, he risked much, though it should be noted that it was the experience gained in the boy's job which gave him access to that satisfying job. Subjectively, these moves made sense to him (cf. 112b) because they bought experience and qualifications. The 'feelings' he speaks of now may be the driving compulsion to act upon his environment, to get qualifications and experience, to break out of the confines of his opportunity structure and so to rise socially. His self concept may be realistic in terms of his abilities but it may also incorporate a sense of unworthiness.
- 333 At the time I could not understand what he was trying to express.
- 336 See 80a, 91a.



I'm quite prepared to investigate risks - may not be a very good  
 340 answer...

Are you saying that at the end of this course you may well, once  
 you perhaps identify an area which, in which business could lie,  
 you might be prepared to put something at risk to follow that ...

Oh yes. Oh yes, for example, I mean if I thought there was an  
 345 opening for someone to market pairs of shoes that had two left  
 feet on a vast quantity I would probably take the risk by investing  
 my savings in it and even possibly borrowing money personally  
 as well as from a bank. I think I am that much of a risk-taker.

Would you risk sufficiently to move house?

350 It would have to be something pretty phenomenal...

Because that... moving house, equals shifting your wife's career  
 presumably...

No, no. It isn't so much that. This is of course the acid test  
 of how much of a risk-taker you are. Moving house, yes, I would  
 355 be prepared to do that. What I had in mind was selling the house -  
 a different proposition altogether (...)

(...) it won't entirely be up to me. When it comes to deciding  
 whether to dispose of a house - obviously I've got to discuss it  
 with my wife. We must both of us be a 100 per cent committed to  
 360 it, otherwise I wouldn't try to persuade her. I might try to  
 persuade her up to a point, but I would not put too much pressure  
 on her.

(...) I didn't get membership of my professional institution till,  
 what was it, 7 years ago, 1971 - it was only 7 years ago that I  
 365 qualified and up to that time I felt I had to do this - I'd  
 embarked on it, spent a long time on it, I felt I'd invested a  
 great deal into it and nothing else occurred to me really because  
 I felt I just had to get that - and once I'd got it, it sort of  
 (laugh) it allowed me to think more freely about other things in  
 370 life which I could do.



- 345 See 203b. 'In the past he has confidently (apparently) acted upon his investigations: if he 'thought' he had thoroughly investigated this impossibility he would doubtless act as he suggests here.
- 355 He continues, 'the very big risk that should my ideas fail I have lost all in a sense.' He describes his house as desirable and unique; it would be impossible to replace should he lose his capital in a business failure. It is also, presumably, one of the fruits of his wife's 'career': she may also be unwilling to risk it (257a ff.) But it may also have symbolic value: 'lost all'. (Cf. Mr. Southwell, 79b; Mr. Townley, 125b.) It may represent his break from his class of origin. He says elsewhere that his friends are 'all professional people' and that most have risen in the social scale. He compares himself with his brother who 'seems to have achieved more (than me) with the resources at his disposal'. His house, of value in its own right and doubtless prized by his wife, may epitomise for him his upward social mobility so that he is loath to risk it.
- 357 Another instance of the influence of other areas of the individual's life upon the 'career'. See Chapter 9 and 302b. His wife seems to feature strongly in other areas of decision-making: for example, when thinking of starting the present phase he said that he had 'to get her approval' (his emphasis). Compare with the Jackamans, 11b.
- 362 He goes on to discuss the value of other people's advice. Because his friends are in the professions and not employed in the 'industrial hurly-burly' (he has not previously pointed to the industrial scene), he does not give their advice on his job decisions 'much weight' because 'I felt that I knew more about it than they did'. He would, however, take note of 'a specialist opinion, a highly qualified specialist's opinion'. While basically realistic, there is perhaps a touch of arrogance here? Would an outsider's view give a better perspective to his own? See 43b, 178b. Compare his approach with that of Mr. Driver, 245b; Mr. Jackaman, 136b, 163b.
- 362 There now follows a long discussion about whether he has changed over time. He thinks not; the big difference in his life has been his professional qualification. But see 308b: he appears to be more realistic in his self-assessment.
- 365 The compulsive pursuit of qualifications has funnelled his thinking and actions for many years: see 164b and compare Mr. Jackaman, 40b. If the house represents his upward mobility in the external world (355b), does professional status symbolise his eventual attainment of the self image he had nurtured from adolescence (5b)? He needed the qualifications to implement his self concept. Thus both they and the house are symbols in both external and internal worlds.



It was a goal though... Once you'd achieved it it was liberating.

It was not so much that it was a goal, it was ... all right it had started as a goal but once you've got half way or two thirds way through or three quarters the way through you feel that the closer  
 375 you are to it the less - the sillier it would be to go into something else, to give it up - you are nearly there, you'd have to get back - all right once you've got it you could perhaps be thinking of other things. How I would have been ten years ago if I'd followed a more normal sort of path - left school, gone to university  
 380 and got qualified and then worked in the normal way and at the age of 33 said to myself what am I going to do - I really don't know. (...)

The achievement of your professional status, the event of achievement - was this a great red letter day, you know, celebrations or ...

385 Tremendous relief... (long pause) yes I think that accurately describes it ... well I don't think I've achieved anything ... I just felt well thank God that's over, don't have to worry about it any more.

(...) I'm here (on course) for a very practical reason as I've  
 390 already explained. What I'm hoping I'll get out of it is some additional skills and something else to (give him credibility) - carries a little bit of weight - and a breathing space - a time to cogitate, to consider and to really think very carefully about what I'm going to do with the next part of my life.



- 370 In his early years he had been constrained by the opportunity structure: see Chapter 8: 1 (b ii). Over time he has achieved both status in the external world and greater consistency between his self concept and external reality (243b). The attainment of professional qualifications had played a part in these interwoven processes. This perhaps explains the significance of those qualifications to him and hence the compulsion to pursue them. Having achieved them, with 'tremendous relief' (385a), he could now 'think more freely' (369a); he could re-define himself and start to break down other limitations in the environment. However, he has other weak spots in his strategies of dealing with the environment (e.g. 204b) so that he has not yet gathered a full harvest from his achievements so far.
- 373 This must be a classic double-bind situation for those whose self concept has become intimately linked with their occupation. So compulsive has become the need to act in a certain way that there arrives a point at which the investment is too great to be abandoned: see 164b, 365b. The funnelling process (Mr. Jackaman, 40b) becomes inexorable and there is no room for manoeuvre. See Chapter 9: the tendency to approach grows stronger the nearer the individual comes to the goal. Cf. Mr. Jordan, 93b. Where there is no such compulsion, it is possible to remain flexible and responsive to whatever opportunities the changing environment presents (as the Jackamans, indeed, are) or to make 'side-bets' (Becker, 1960).
- 379 He refers to the normality of certain 'career' paths several times: see 13b. These were the norms of the middle-class boy of his generation and involved a university education. Because of his social background and his educational attainment he has had to take a circuitous and demanding route to arrive at the same destination.
- 385 Relief rather than a sense of achievement that the struggle is over: this suggests that he had never been sure that he would attain his desired goal. He need no longer be anxious for he has confirmed his tentative self concept and is fully assured that his subjective and his objective images coincide.
- 394 This was the end of the interview. Having reviewed his history, it seems that he is now concerned about the way he approaches his decisions: 'think very carefully'. There is some sense here that he may be able to take stock and plan for his future more realistically.



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER' AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'

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Edited transcript of and commentary upon the tape-recorded interview with

MR. DICKENS



a. Edited transcript of interview with Mr. Dickens

What sort of things had you been good at at school?

English, History, Geography. I was really good at them, you know. Above average. The Maths was a bit of - I managed but I was never very good. I used to scrape through and passed it, you know. I  
5 must admit, I was pretty good at all the others - except that - sports as well.

And what sort of occupation did you think of following at that time, when you were coming up to leaving school? (...)

I tried, I went for carpentry, you know. I got an apprenticeship  
10 with carpentry, but I'm afraid I never had the patience on the economic side - the money was too low and with the National Service at the time I (...) knew that in a couple of years they'd be after me so I left and went down the pits of all places to ward off National Service. In the end I had to finish and do the National  
15 Service. (Laugh)

So although you'd been good really at art subjects, you know, English and what not you didn't try and use these in a job?

Well, there's no encouragement there, really.

From your parents?

20 No, my parents were all right, but from school - sort of in one end and out the other, sort of attitude in those days. Certainly isn't as it is now where a child who's good at something is pushed, (...)

Had you thought of anything else, or was that really the thing you went for?

25 That's the thing I went for, yes. See, you never raised your intellect higher than get an apprenticeship. As I said, they're changed days



b. Commentary on edited transcript of interview with Mr. Dickens

- 3 'Above average': later references show his continued interest in such areas: 'O'level English passed at the age of 41 (91a); a future 'A' level in English (239a). He mentions other interests: 'reading (...) politics' (82-3a); travel and other cultures (81-2a, 116-9a). See also 89b.
- 4 Maths: he is still struggling with this: 139a, 169a, 170a ff., 206a.
- 9 He would have 'loved' to have continued his education (89-90a), to 'have gone on to something like writing' (103-4a). This hints at his self concept at that time: 'I'm not stupid' (170a). However, the working-class boy of his place and time was not encouraged in that direction (see 22b, 25b, 218b); despite inclinations and abilities he was placed, apparently unresisting, in another 'pigeon-hole' (169a): 'it's typical working-class mentality (...) to do a job of work' (84-6a). His experience illustrates the opportunity structure: see Mr. Scott (3b) for other examples and Chapter 8: 1 (b ii).
- 11 'money': another aspect of the opportunity structure, which continues to influence subsequent job history. Financial need dogged him and dictated his job moves through early adulthood: 'the crock at the end of the rainbow' (59a): 39-40a, 47a, 61a. Mr. Southwell (23a,b) recounts similar experiences and Mr. Bedford emphasises them: 'I always went for jobs with more money'; 'not doing what you wanted to do but just doing wherever the money...'
- 12 'they'd be after me': National Service (see 30b).
- 14 'I had to finish': see 32a ff..
- 22 'pushed': while he did what was expected of him when he left school (9b) he has since 'learned' (229a ff.) of the significance of education (89b, 98b) for self fulfilment and social mobility. Children have to be 'encouraged' to realise and take advantage of this (see 25b); this now happens and his sons are benefitting from it: 22a, 86-7a, 231-2a, 295-6a. It was not the practice, however, when he left school (18a, 20-1a, 83a ff.; 'you never get the idea that you're good enough' (105-6a). There was no model for him to follow (195b) and no-one to affirm his tentative self concept (see 9b); he presumably modified it accordingly and hence perhaps his references to confidence (136b). Self concept theory and social learning theory offer explanations (see Chapter 8).
- 25/1 'intellect': he makes several references to brain and 'logical thought': 94a, 135a, 137a, 285a. He seems to use these words to represent the ability to think for oneself, to assess oneself realistically, not to accept others' evaluations uncritically. He is perhaps, therefore, also referring to the self concept.
- 25/2 'raised your intellect': see also 'look across over the horizon' (220a,b). Although he accepts that there were apparent limits to his early choices (218a), there were also opportunities which he never recognised (205a ff.). Cf. Mr. Driver: 'if you put limitations on yourself ...' (251a,b).



from then, that was what everyone done, tried to get an apprenticeship. It was quite a goal for a working-class family.

30 (...) as far as you're concerned it didn't work out, so thinking you might get exemption from National Service you went down the pit. Why didn't you get exemption in the end?

Well, in the end, being young, everything went wrong (laugh) down the pit. The young lads who were due for National Service were always getting the blame, you know, for any accidents happening.  
35 It was never the older men's fault, and it got to a point one day that it was just too much, you know, you were blamed for everything and I said I'll do the two years and get it over with, which I did. (Laugh)

40 (...) I went for two years but again the money situation - I signed on an extra year to get extra money, you know.

(...) Did you think of signing on permanently?

Yes I did. When I got demobbed in 1958 the situation was as it is now, you know, with a lot of unemployment, and they wanted us to sign on, but I thought a lot about it, I wanted to get back into  
45 the civvy street, and I'd met my wife by this time and was courting, and, er, I came out. I went working at (...) which is a good job, it's good money.

(...) It was fitting, you know, bench fitting and things.

50 (...) I didn't fancy it much, because in a factory, you know, closed in all the time. I stood that for about eighteen months, then I got this job (...)

(...) It was a good job, that was, a very good job. I was happy at that.

(...) They gave you good training - I soon got into it.

55 (...) Er, from the end of 1959 to '62, then the contract finished and it meant travelling, city travelling, and I got a job as (...)



- 27 Apprenticeship: the normal aspiration of a working-class family, the normal response to the opportunity structure. Cf. Mr. Boatman, who came from a small rural community: 'the thing was always to do a trade, that's what they'd say'. If this was 'quite a goal', then Mr. Dickens could well have been perceived as both fortunate and successful at that time.
- 28 'working-class family': it was he who introduced the reference to social class in the interview. His father was a supervisor in a small firm in the building industry; his brothers had skilled jobs.
- 30 National Service: see 11a ff.. The existence of National Service influenced the degree and nature of job choice for boys leaving school. Some sought work which would give them exemption or deferment (13a). Others took jobs in which they had no particular interest in order to fill in the time until they were 18 (e.g. Mr. Southwell, 5a, b ff.). Others used National Service as an escape from a situation in which they were unhappy (37a); see also Mr. Jordan (1b). Mr. Luke and Mr. Morgan both used conscription as a means of escaping jobs they had been directed to by their fathers.
- 34 The distinction between conscripted and regular servicemen was noted in several interviews: Mr. Hampden, 24a; Mr. Jordan, 3a.
- 39 'money situation': see 11b.
- 41 'permanently': Mr. Jordan (6a ff.) would have liked to sign on as a regular when he finished National Service, but his wife would not agree to this. Mr. Morgan (see 30b above) found the first fortnight of National Service 'shocking' and thought that, if he could stand that, he could stand anything. So he signed on.
- 43 'unemployment': the influence of exogenous factors on individual decisions. See also 62a ff. and Mr. Driver (86b, 120b).
- 45 'wife': another example of the relationships between the domains of the individual's life and their effect upon job decisions. Mr. Bolton (62b) thought that 'anywhere would have done' for a job when he was engaged. Mr. Jordan (7b) for many years 'blamed' his wife for her reluctance to agree to his return to the army. See Mr. Southwell (42b) for a discussion on the influence of the wives of the men interviewed.
- 49 'closed in': he says elsewhere that he enjoys outdoor work (as in the 'good job' in 52a).
- 51 'this job': a skilled manual job, where he worked for about 4 years.
- 52 'happy at that': see Mr. Southwell (100b) on enjoyment of work.
- 56 'I got a job': a similar skilled job.



ended up with them for ten years.

(...) enjoyed it, but I went and left that because I went for more money again, which has always been the crock at the end of the rainbow, (...)

(...) But, er, then I left it to follow more money and that fell through. The economic situation started to get a bit rough and this firm I was working with was on a Government contract. The Government started to cut public spending, and it was one of them that came under the axe so we had to become redundant.

(...) so you've had several jobs from which you've been made redundant.

Yeah, I've had two that I've been made redundant, and my last one I've had to leave because of my (...) condition, you know, it's forced us out of the job.

(...) About five years ago I started to get (...) terrific pain (...) And, er, the job I was doing was heavy work, you know, and with the heavy lifting and that, every night it was hurting my (...) I was having a lot of time off through it, you know. (...)

(...) I realised that I couldn't keep on that job, you know, (...) a matter of time before they got fed up with me having time off, and I went to see the Resettlement Officer at (...) and he put me on the list, you know, for the, well, if the inevitable did happen - I had to leave - (...) And, er, they sent me here.

(...) In those early days did you have any dreams for the future, did you ever see yourself doing anything else?

(...) I was very keen on travelling, I'd have liked to have travelled the world at the time, you know. I was keen on reading and, you know, politics, things like that, but, er, as I say, you were never encouraged in any of these things. So, I suppose it's typical working-class mentality at that time and you were on there to do a job of work (...) Like not now, I mean my own lad, he's doing A levels and everything and he's getting pushed all along the road. We



- 58 'enjoyed': see 52b.
- 59 'crock at the end of the rainbow': he colours the meaning of 'more money' (61a) with a hint of unattainable dreams and fantasies in this reference to the legendary 'crock'. Money was needed for the fulfilment of some of his early dreams (the desire to travel: 81a, 108a, 116a), but money was in short supply in early adulthood (11b): 'then marriage comes along, and children (...) you put the dreamsto the background ...' (112-3a). Now, however, although money is still important (121a, 164a ff.), it is no longer a driving force: 'there is a change coming' (128-9a). Like Mr. Jordan (119b, 120a ff.) he can foresee the lessening of financial pressures (130a) and his wife has now been trained for better-paid work (129a, 313-4a). The present driving force is his struggle to regain confidence (see 96b). (This is relevant to the opportunity structure/occupational choice debate: Chapter 8: 1 (b ii).) His dream of foreign travel lingers (115a) and could well be fulfilled in the future. He does not have unrealistic 'ambitions' (to become 'Governor of the Bank of England', 303a), but goals which are attainable with effort; those already achieved have brought great satisfaction (202a, 302a). The goals would become even more attractive the nearer he comes to their attainment (see Chapter 9). In these respects he is like Mr. Driver ('ambitions', 145a) and the Jackamans ('we see a free house ...', 186a); and unlike Mr. Baldwin (251a) and Mr. Bolton (267a) who have fantasies, or Mr. Jordan, who no longer has dreams (75b).
- 62 The events mentioned here took place during the early 1970s. See 43b.
- 67 Mr. Bolton has also been made redundant twice.
- 68 'my (...) condition': he developed a physical condition (70a ff.) which eventually caused him to give up his job (78a).
- 75 Cf. Mr. Bedford, whose employer dismissed him after over two years' absence after an accident at work.
- 76 'I went to see ...': this was about one year before the interview and seems to have occurred after the period when he was 'in real pain, miserable and depressed' (261-8a).
- 78 'here': the Employment Rehabilitation Centre.
- 79 The question refers to the time when he left school: see 9b, 25b.
- 81 'travelling': see 49b on the work he enjoys; 59b on his dreams and ambitions.
- 84 'encouraged': see 22b, 86b, 87a.
- 85 'working-class mentality': see 9b, 27b. He seems to be saying that the working-class boy accepted without great resistance the constraints the society imposed upon him (that is, the opportunity structure).
- 86 'like not now': he recognises that life has changed (see 146b on changes) and that there are now more opportunities. Moreover, he has himself changed, and learned (229a) of the need to 'encourage' children (22b, 287a ff.).



never got that pushing. No matter (...)

(...) I'm a great believer in education, you know. I'd have loved  
 90 to have done it. I mean I have been sat here trying to do it myself  
 but I've got myself an 'O' level in English, you know, that's a  
 small start but it's a start.

(...) with my(...) going I thought I'd better start doing something  
 with my brain because I'd let it go to seed for the last few years,  
 95 you know, and er, that's why I thought I'd just make a start, and  
 I took it and I got my 'O' level, so I'll keep plugging away till I  
 get some ...

(...) But I believe in education, I mean, as I say I'd sacrifice  
 anything to make sure my lad's got one, you know. (...)

100 But looking back at the time (...) had things been different, had  
you have been perhaps in your son's situation today you would have  
liked to have travelled?

Oh yes, yes. I'd have gone on to something like writing or any-  
 thing like that, you know. I would have liked to have done that  
 105 really, (...) but you never get the idea that you're good enough to  
 do these sort of things (...)

(...) So, that was as (...) a dream more than an ambition, you know,  
 to write, maybe travel, (...)

(...) Did you as you got older, did you develop other sort of plans  
 110 or ambitions (...) Did you develop any new dreams?

No, I didn't, I thought of the same dream, I still wanted to travel, and  
 then marriage comes along, and children, and tied down on that. So  
 you put the dreams to the background, carry on with reality.

Are they still there then?

115 Yes, I think they are. Yes. I'd love to ...

(...) going and living in other countries and meeting other people and  
 other cultures and, you know, just to know these people (...) I've



- 89/1 See 22b, 98a, 213a. The strong affective tones ('sacrifice anything', 98-9a), his concern for his sons' education (see 22b) and his struggle to improve his own (90a ff.) suggest that this belief is long-held and deeply-felt and is not just an idealisation of what he himself could not have. This further suggests that his initial job choice (see 9b, 22b) must have badly bruised his early self concept, so that he now talks of having to 're-build my own ego' (153a); see al 152b. Contrast this with Mr. Bolton (5b,9b), who clung to his early self concep
- 89/2 'I'd have loved': cf. Mr. Townley's use of the conditional tense (34b): Mr. Dickens, however, has acted to achieve his aspirations (90a ff.).
- 92 'start': his several references to this (93a, 95a, 130a, 165a, 266a) do not seem to mean the initiation of action but rather the beginning of a new (and improved) life. They may also have some sense of a new and revised self concep
- 94 'brain': see 25b. After his illness he seems to have taken stock of his assets, for he realised that he had to make a new kind of life for himself. He had not hitherto exploited his intellectual assets.
- 96 'plugging away': effort, perseverance, striving form another refrain: 'striving' (131a); 'got to beat this' (140a); 'got to get in to it' (152a); 'keep fighting through' (156a); 'struggle' (178a); 'pull myself back up' (254a); 'can't just sit back or you're defeated' (275a). Such a response demands the expenditure of enormous psychic energy, which can presumably only be generated for a task essential to the individual: in this case the strengthening and mobilisation of an emerging self concept?
- 98 See 233a. Education offers self-fulfilment (289a, 295a), erodes the opportunity structure, allows a working-class boy to see new opportunities (25b). It would be worth his 'sacrifice' if his sons achieve this. Cf. Mr. Driver, 273b; Mr. Southwell, 27b, 37b. Contrast Mr. Baldwin (187b).
- 103 See 9b, 25b.
- 105 'good enough': see 22b. He had no 'encouragement' nor role models when he was young to help him evaluate himself, develop a realistic self concept and implement it in his job. He must, therefore, have abandoned, modified or shelved his tentative self concept of that time: see 136b.
- 107 'dream (...) ambition': see 59b.
- 113 'carry on with reality': a poignant indication that he did not then have 'a good well-rounded life', did not feel himself a 'real human being' (289a). This seems to be what Mr. Jordan ('too late for dreams' 75a,b) is feeling now.
- 116 Mr. Baldwin (60a,b); Mr. Southwell, 33b value a similar breadth of experience. Mr. Dickens has an interest in people (119a) and would like 'to help' them (247a). He seems to adopt a holistic view of them ('a proper, civilised way' (119a); 'humanity' (247a); 'unhuman' (251a); 'real human beings' (289a)), which contrasts with the 'pigeon-holing' of others (169a), which has been his experience.



only seen them through being in a uniform (RAF) (...)

(...) so we weren't getting to meet them in a proper, civilised way  
 120 (...) Still, I don't think about it much, but it's still an ambition.  
 If ever I got on my feet again I would - and had some money I should  
 soon make use of it.

(...) from what you're saying just then, do you consider that you're  
 not on your feet at the moment?

125 No, no. Far from it.

How do you see yourself?

Er, in limbo, that's the only answer I can give you in short. I don't  
 see what anything happen at the moment. But maybe there is a change  
 coming, my wife's got that (TOPS) course going and in a year or two  
 130 my youngest - (...) maybe we'll start to pick ourselves up again, (...)  
 But we're always striving to that, you know, no saying I'm giving up,  
 you know. But as the conditions are at the moment it's hard to  
 realise these things, these ambitions, you know. And being ... as  
 you say being forty (laugh) that's against you as well. (...) I've  
 135 not been using my brain. I've only been using it to do the silly  
 things like worrying and keeping a job (...) You lack confidence as  
 well when you haven't used your brain for a while, you know. I've  
 found that to my cost (...) You could probably say I'm illiterate in  
 that field, in the field of Maths - or I feel that way. (...) I've  
 140 got to beat this, because it's put my confidence back. At 40  
 you should be fully confident, not lacking it (...) I always thought  
 that when you got to 40 you could fall back on the experience you've  
 gone through to save you worrying about things, what you've picked  
 up. It doesn't work that way ... You think you've picked up a lot of  
 145 experience, but really the experience you've picked up is out of date  
 when this thing comes along, it's sort of changing and you're  
 left ...

(...) By not keeping on learning through the years you're at a dis-  
 advantage when you come to that age, aren't you? Because everything's  
 150 changed absolutely dramatically in the last 10, 20 years and I  
 haven't been going along with it, really, not keeping up with it.



- 120 'ambition': see 59b, 113b. He still hopes to realise them.
- 127 'in limbo': Its discomfort seems to lie in the uncertainty: 'up in the air' (163a); 'no concrete plans' (159a). There is also a sense of disturbance: 'when I get settled down again' (238a). To some extent his future depends upon the centre's assessment of him and the occupation and training recommended for him: he is anxious that he will be 'pigeon-holed' as 'stupid' because of his difficulties with Maths (169-70a). Until he knows this assessment he cannot make any plans (162-3a) nor, apart from the continuing struggle with Maths, act to implement his re-defined and slowly emerging self concept. It is difficult to see even the immediate future, though it is clear (238b) that he does look to the future. However, this 'limbo' is not a state of gloom: he expresses great pleasure in recent achievements (202a) and hopes for a brighter future (130a). See Mr. Driver (213b) on other descriptions of the present phase.
- 128 'maybe there is a change coming': like Mr. Jordan (119a,b) he recognises that there will be fewer family pressures in the future.
- 133 'ambitions': see 120b.
- 134 'being forty': see 178b, 317a and Mr. Jordan (22b).
- 136 'brain': see 25b, 137a.
- 136/1 'worrying and keeping a job': see 286a, 309-10a. Like Mr. Jordan (21b, 76b), he seems to be referring to worry about immediate rather than future concerns (like looking 'across over the horizon', 25b, 219a). He regards such 'worry' as 'silly' (135a, 309a): 'logical thought' (285a) is more effective in dealing with problems. Is this an indication that he is changing from a present to a future orientation (see 238b)?
- 136/2 'confidence': another refrain: 140a, 141a, 174a, 249a, 251a, 283a. He seems to be speaking of a positive evaluation of himself, a positive self concept. He has long had a negative self concept ('you never get the idea that you're good enough', 105a), but he now seems to feel it strengthening, perhaps in response to his learning from life (229a) and to the tentative but assertive steps he has already taken (the '0' level, 91a). Both self concept and social learning theories offer explanations. See also Mr. Driver (315a,b) on confidence.
- 139 Maths: see 4a,b; 169a ff.: 'I feel': an acknowledgement of subjective experience.
- 140 'at 40': confidence and maturity, further aspects of the stereotypes of 'middle age' (see Mr. Baldwin, 185b). Mr. Flint says that he expects to be at his best, physically and mentally, at the age of 43.
- 145 'out-of-date': is he speaking here of knowledge? Cf. 229a,b. See 148b.
- 146 'changing': he is aware of change at several levels: personal (230a: cf. Mr. Bolton, 362b); family circumstances (128a, 317a); societal (26a, 86b, 150a, 187b)
- 148 'learning': another refrain: see 229b. Here he seems to mean keeping up with new ideas, being flexible (see 145b).



(...) I've got to get in to it. Just for my own satisfaction, if nothing else, to re-build my own ego (laugh), because it's got a bit shattered over the last few years. But I'm not despondent or anything, down and out about it; it's just part of life - you've just got to keep fighting through, that's what I intend to do.

You said you thought that at present you were in limbo. Would you say that you'd got any plans for the future now?

No, None. No concrete plans that I could say to you in all honesty that I want to do this and do that. I'm still between the Devil and the deep blue sea. Once I can get myself - if things - if I can settle myself ... I can start planning. But I can't plan at the moment. Everything's up in the air.

(...) And if I'm working at the same time (as his wife), of course, that will be even to the better. We can maybe even start planning things then. Of course, she wants a lot of things in the house (...) that we've not been able to afford (...) yes, we've got those plans, that's what we're thinking about doing (...)

(...) Because, as I say, I don't want them to pigeon-hole me because of that, Maths. Because I'm not stupid - it makes you feel stupid. It's just something I've neglected and I'm finding it hard to get a grip on.

(...) as soon as they come in front of me I tighten up. If I could just get myself some confidence back, even the simplest Maths would do just to get the hang, to do them properly (...) I can do the ordinary subtraction, multiplication, division but when it starts getting to the technical Maths - I blow! (laugh). I struggle with my fractions, (...) I don't feel as though I'm 40 and over the hill, I still feel young enough.

(...) I still feel as though I'm 30, 30, yes 30 - I could go as far back as 20-odd. I haven't got that 40 in my mind.

(...) Unconsciously I know I'm 42, but I don't feel - I'm not going into an old cap and a pipe. I feel a young man.

Do you think that middle age is different now from what it used to be?



- 153 're-build my own ego': he seems to be expressing his awareness of the present strengthening of his self concept (see 96b) which, he has indicated (22b, 105b), has hitherto been far from positive. This 're-building' is a conscious and a demanding (96b) process started, it seems, after his illness (see 93a ff. and 154b). It is of significance to the opportunity structure/occupational choice debate, for it shows how the individual, having re-defined the self, may then re-define the opportunity structure, see the possibility of eroding it or perceive the total self-in-situation in a new light and so transcend the structure (see Chapter 9 on Gestalt psychology).
- 154 'shattered (...) despondent': cf. 76b, 261b. When he first became ill, 'everything started to crumble': his known world, his expectations of it and of himself. This jolt to his perceptions (see 259b) led to a re-appraisal of himself and his world (see 153b) and to a determination to so modify himself that he could cope with his changed circumstances. (Cf. Mr. Baldwin (10b), who also received a jolt to his perception of the world.) After the initial shock he fights back and is not 'despondent': see 'worrying' (136b) and Mr. Jordan (21b).
- 158 See 237-8a.
- 159 'concrete plans': see 127b. Contrast this with the Jackamans (e.g. 182b). Mr. Dickens, however, is not only changing his occupation: he is also in the process of changing himself and therefore cannot project very far forward.
- 161 'deep blue sea': see 127b. There is no suggestion elsewhere of a dilemma.
- 168 Plans at the material, practical level.
- 169 'pigeon-hole me': this is what he experienced when he left school (9b) and he is now having, with great effort, to break out of the mould which others made for him. (Driver 50b, Bolton 365b). He is anxious lest he be 'pigeon-holed' again. It is thus very important for him that he masters Maths, which symbolises another arena in which he fights the battle between social stereotyping and individual autonomy. He had previously 'neglected' significant parts of himself, like his intellect, and had almost accepted others' definitions of himself. He is now trying to throw off that incomplete identity and allow his strengthened self concept to emerge.
- 173 'I tighten up': because he is not engaging in merely cognitive problems: it is a fight for his identity.
- 178 The discrepancy between chronological age and the subjective experience of it (cf. Mr. Southwell, 107b). Although he knows he is 42, he feels 'a young man' (182-3a). The discrepancy is heightened by the negative stereotypes of 'middle age' (183a) which have no meaning in his experience. He recognises that the stereotypes are out-of-date (190-1a, 195a) and says that he will not be put off by his age (281-2a). See Mr. Southwell (89b) on age stereotypes.



Yes - because you're still, I think you're still a young man, whereas years ago by middle age was the start of the decline in feeling - bad psychological thing at one time when you reached 40. (...) Folks reaching 40 were looking down the hill and that was  
 190 it, that's all they had to go. I think it's not like that now - I think even men of 50 can look forward to something, today anyway.

Why do you think that is?

Because there are more opportunities for them, I think. Even old men - I was reading in the paper how some old man went and passed  
 195 (...) his 'A' level Maths - 78. I thought if he can do it, I feel I can at least try and do it. That gave me a gee (?) I feel there's opportunities for everybody. They weren't there all the time: at one time 40 was the end of the road. I don't know - unless you're really ill I think you're still fit enough - at 40 you're still a  
 200 young man.

When you got your 'O' level, what did you feel then?

Oh, magic, magic. The biggest ego-booster I'd had in years! (laugh)  
 O yes, great!

(...) I'll never forget that experience. I'm only too sorry I  
 205 didn't get stuck in when I was younger. I could have - when I was at X - I could have gone to night school for my Maths and things, though I never went. I regret that - that's one thing I do regret, not taking my chances: I've had the chance but I've not taken them so if you suffer at the end of it it's your own fault really.

210 What other chances do you think you've had in life which you've not taken?

(Pause) I think - I would say that had been the main one - my education.

Would you say that, going back to the time you left school, that  
 215 you regret the kind of decision you made then to take up the apprenticeship?

Yes, yes I think I do.



- 187 'years ago': see 146b for his sense of change at various levels. He sees that some of the stereotypes of 'middle age' (178b) are no longer relevant. However, some of the other men (see Mr. Baldwin, 185b) are still influenced by these stereotypes.
- 191 Mr. Jackaman (154b) sees 50 as a greater stumbling-block than 40.
- 193 'opportunities': he uses this concept several times (e.g. 208a) and seems to perceive his environment as open and offering opportunity.
- 195 'if he can do it': see Mr. Hampden (63b) on comparisons with others. Mr. Dickens probably had no relevant model upon whom to base himself when he left school (9b, 22b). This 'old man' offers him a model of the kind of achievement he values, a contrast to the 'old cap and pipe' image of 'middle age' (183a).
- 199 'really ill': he does not now construe himself in these terms (cf. 261a ff.) and can thus look forward to the kinds of opportunities he mentions.  
'fit enough': fitness seems important to him: 266a ff..
- 202/1 'magic, magic': a current popular expression of delight. Compare this with Mr. Bolton's relief (385b) on achieving his professional status. Perhaps the difference in their responses could be accounted for by the fact that for Mr. Bolton the achievement was the end of his long, hard struggle to vindicate his self concept, whereas for Mr. Dickens it opened his eyes to his many possibilities; it positively reinforced his new evaluation of himself.
- 202/2 'ego-booster': see 136b, 153b. It was a confirmation of his newly emerging and fragile self concept, a reward for his struggle and a public achievement, as well as an important event in the family. Social learning and self concept theories both offer explanations.
- 205 'I could have': cf. 'It could have been my own fault' (292a ff.). He seems to be saying that there may have been opportunities for him when he left school and later ('I've had the chance', 208a), but he did not take them because he was not aware of them (25b, 218b). This was largely because he was not 'encouraged' to do so, nor to become the kind of person who could do so (9b, 22b). He thus apparently believes that there are means (particularly education to overcome the opportunity structure but that not all children are made aware of them nor of their potential to use them.  
Cf. 'could have' with Mr. Bolton, 194b; Mr. Jordan, 2a, 13b, 113b; Mr. Townley, 34b. Mr. Dickens is akin to Mr. Driver, 238a, Mr. Jackaman, 77b.
- 207 'I regret': his own behaviour: Mr. Jordan (11a) 'regrets' his wife's.
- 208 'chance': opportunity (see 193b). He does not use the word 'luck' in the interview.
- 209 'your own fault': he accepts responsibility for his own life, even though he had no 'encouragement' when young (218b). Contrast Mr. Jordan (39b).
- 213 'my education': see 89b. The possessive pronoun suggests that he sees education as essential to personal development.



(...) Well the point is there was - we were very limited in what we could have done, but, there again, it's up to you to look  
220 across over the horizon, isn't it. I never did.

But could you have done? If you ...

I couldn't (...) say, say definitely could have done. There again, if I'd tried I don't know what I could have done: I might have done far better. You get into that way of life - I got into the  
225 way of life, like all teenagers, dancing, having drinks and so on. You're diverted away from that sort of thing.

Do you think you're the same now as you were then in your approach to these sort of decisions (...)?

Oh no, I've learned an awful lot. Yes. It's where the experience  
230 you do suffer yourself comes on handy. I've changed a lot. That goes for my lads - I make sure that they get stuck into their work. They are responding because they're doing well (...) So as long as they're all right that's the main thing - more important than me, even. (...)

235 Going back to your 'O' level: did you suddenly have visions of going on and doing more of these things?

Yes, and I still have that. If that's the kind what you mean any plans for the future: yes. When I get settled down again I'm going to go for my 'A' level in English, because I'm a good reader, that's  
240 what I'd like to take up (...) and then see what kind of career I could maybe make for myself out of that. I need that 'A' level. If I got that 'A' level I may go on to social work or something like that.

(...) I've been in and out of work over the last few years. There's  
45 times when you need help. (...) I'd like to be able to help someone who's worse off than I am - if I could, because I've got a bit of humanity in me and I'd like to help people. Social work would be the best field in that way. (...)

(...) I'm trying to get my confidence back. I really let it  
50 go too far. (...)



- 218 'limited': more by 'mentality' and expectations than by objective constraints? See 9b, 22b, 25b; Mr. Driver (50b, 251b) on 'limitations'.
- 219 'it's up to you': personal responsibility. See 205b, 209b, 249-50a.
- 220 'over the horizon': see 25b. He acknowledges the existence of opportunities beyond the immediately perceived 'limitations'. Does he thus perceive the opportunity structure as a complex of social expectations and attitudes rather than as an objective structure of occupations?
- 222 'definitely'; at the time the structure appeared impermeable or insuperable and he took it at face value and acted as though it were objective. He has since 'learned' (229a) that it may have been otherwise.
- 224 'that way of life': there are several possible responses to the opportunity structure, such as adaptation through habituation (Braverman, 1974) or through compensation. Socialised into accepting limited opportunities in his life, he compensated for the distortion that they caused to his self concept in his work life (preventing 'a good well-rounded life', 289a) by seeking satisfaction from other domains. This teenage 'diversion' (326) may also be habituation; easy pleasure 'diverted' his attention from his frustration.
- 229 'learned': whereas the 'learning' referred to earlier (148b) seems to mean thinking and acquisition of knowledge, here and in 287a, 304a, he seems to mean 'learning' about life and himself, understanding rather than knowledge. He sees this 'learning' as 'important', the 'crux' of adulthood. For him it has meant the realisation that he can fulfil his potential and that his sons can also, if they are 'pushed' (22b).
- 230 'suffer': this suggests that he has learned some hard lessons.  
'changed a lot': see 146b and Mr. Driver (294b) on change. Whereas he once accepted the 'limitations' imposed upon him he is now, by using his 'brain', looking 'across over the horizon' (220a).
- 231 'I make sure': see 22b.
- 233 'more important than me': his statement has two levels of meaning. If education does erode the opportunity structure, then his sons' education has a societal significance and their achievement is thus of more importance than his individual achievement. On another level, this 'importance' may be seen as 'generativity' (Erikson, 1950: see Chapter 5), his concern for the future generation, that his sons have a 'good well-rounded life'.
- 237 See my question (158a).
- 238 He looks to the future and in a similar incremental manner to the Jackamans (182b): first the 'A' level 'and then see what kind of career...'. Both 'A' level and social work seem realistic aspirations, given his stated interests and abilities: Holland's theory would be appropriate (see Chapter 8). He thus has a future orientation (136b suggests that this may be newly emerging), is realistic, sees his environment as open and is active in his response to it (e.g. the grappling with Maths).
- 240 Contrast the 'career' here with the 'jobs' he refers to earlier (51a ff.).



(...) Well you'd have to be unhuman if you didn't lose confidence, getting knocked back with unemployment and so forth. But I went into a bad decline but I'm coming round now and I want to try and pull myself back up again.

255 When did you go into your bad decline?

When I had to leave this job, because the last 2 jobs I had been made redundant and when this (...) started and I knew I couldn't keep the job, I was going to lose it I think I just - everything started to crumble around me then. I thought I'm in a mess here.

260 How did this bad feeling take you, how did it work itself out?

It made me very ill. At one stage when I finally left the job everything started - my (...), everything started: for 2 or 3 days I was in real pain, miserable and depressed. But I soon shook out of it.

265 (...) By just telling myself 'Come on, get out of this.' Then I got out and started - I went for some fitness first to get my mind off it and it worked. I went running, the pain went, I was back to square one again, I felt great.

Did anybody advise you to do this?

270 No, I just did it on my own. I always used to keep fit. But when this went I thought, well this is it - keep my mind off it, it will clear it up. It got me settled down again (...) I'm not as bad as I was, I've come over that. It was just that last knock-back.

(...) I think I'm on the right road. I think this is what you've  
275 got to do, isn't it, you can't just sit back or you're defeated and you're crushed aren't you.

(...) My life used to be troughs and waves. For the last few years it went ... nothing, just flat, everything went wrong, on top of one another. But I think I've come through the worst of that now,  
280 I'm all right now. I'm ready to try and regain - build myself up and get back into it again, I hope. I'm not going to be put off by being 40. (...)



- 251 'unhuman': see 116b.  
 'lose confidence': see 136b.
- 252 'knocked back': cf. 273a, 284a. A physical image, suggesting an unexpected, powerful and painful blow which topples him so that he has to 'pull myself back up again' (130a, 254a).
- 253 'bad decline': see 256a ff.
- 254 'pull myself back up again': see 252b. This physical image suggests considerable exertion to regain his lost position, to maintain his fragile and bruised self concept.
- 257 'this': his physical condition.
- 259 'everything started to crumble': the world and his sense of self? His changed physical condition changed his relationship with his world and demanded from him new responses to his environment. His sense of disorientation as he comes to grips with his new situation is echoed in the experience of the soldiers who realised that they would not achieve their expected promotion and would thus have to leave the army: see Mr. Baldwin (79b) for further discussion.
- 261 His positive approach to his physical illness is consistent with his approach to life generally; his success in this particular area would no doubt reinforce similar behaviour in others. When he perceived his world 'crumbling' (154b), he became 'very ill'. He treated his illness by using his mind, 'just telling myself' (265a); he then used his body ('fitness (...) running', 266a ff.) to quieten his anxiety, 'get my mind off it'. Could his inner struggle and the expenditure of psychic energy (96b) have physical repercussions? What is its relationship (if any) to his disabling physical condition?
- 266 'fitness': see 199b. This physical activity seems, like Mr. Driver's violin-playing (34b), to be a form of therapy and a stability zone during a period of change. See also Mr. Bolton (278b).
- 275 'you can't just sit back': he will not let himself be 'crushed'; he fights back (96b) when his world starts 'to crumble' (259a). This further display of energy and willpower is consistent with his sense of responsibility for his own life (219b). In this he paraphrases Mr. Driver (251b): 'if you put limitation on yourself you've got no chance'. Contrast the resignation of Mr. Jordan (75b): 'it's too late for dreams and ambitions'.
- 277 'troughs and waves': I am not now sure what he is referring to and I did not probe it at the time.
- 279 'through the worst': an optimistic view of the future which holds opportunity?
- 280 'build myself up': this constructive approach is used also in 153a,b; 283a, 307a.
- 281 See stereotypes of 'middle age' (178b).



(...) your confidence is built up for anything else that might happen in the future. You can't knock that back - you can get round  
 285 problems better by solving it by logical thought than by getting in a panic.

(Two sons likely to go to university) (...) that's what I learned from my own experience. I don't want them, I want them to have a good well-rounded life, to be real human beings.

290 You feel you have not had a well-rounded life?

Not really, no. It's been more what you had to do, it's more regimented (...) It could have been my own fault, I don't know - I should have broken out a bit sooner and tried it - you don't think of it when you're young - there's all years ahead to do it. But  
 295 they've got a good life, they've got - people are interested in them and they're getting tutored well. My lad likes this - he enjoys it, it's magic. I really think the world of him for that. I hope they get on to do what they want to do, because he'll go into law if he gets to university ... can't be wrong, something's coming out  
 300 right, I haven't done anything, he's done it.

(...) I like to see them get what I haven't got (...) I'll get that satisfaction for me in my own small way (...) that will suit me. I've no ambitions to be the Governor of the Bank of England.....

I think the crux of it, for a 40-year old, is to try - from your  
 305 experience - to try and learn what you've learned from that - use some of it. I think that helps. I let it all go, which was a personal thing, my personal weakness, but I'm building it back again. (...) It was a good lesson. Everything, no matter how hard it is, is a lesson (...) taught me not to be so silly as to worry myself.  
 310 I was getting to worrying about tomorrow before it came. I've got out of that now - I don't bother about tomorrow - at least today takes its course.

(...) (his wife) she's now independent. That's what I want her to be (...) She's terrific (after TOPS course) - she's completely  
 315 changed - great, marvellous (...) now she's really come out, she's really blossoming out. Brilliant. So she's doing all right and she's coming near to 40 - so that one's changing for the better! (Laugh).



- 284 'in the future': his present struggle is an investment for the future. See 238b on future thinking.
- 285 'logical thought': see 25b and his respect for the 'intellect'.
- 286 'in a panic': cf. 'silly things like worrying' (136a,b).
- 287 'learned': see 229b. His experience has shown him that education is a means of overcoming the opportunity structure and a means open to those who are 'encouraged' to see it and to take advantage of it.
- 288 'I don't want them, I want them': he is feeling for the words to express his meaning.
- 289 'a good well-rounded life (...) real human beings': see 116b. This is what he, having accepted the 'limitations' society hedged about him when he left school, has not had. His life has been 'more regimented' (292a,b) and driven by necessity (see 11b) with, however, some 'diversion' (224a,b). It seems that he perceives education as both the means of escape from the opportunity structure and thus the passport to the 'well-rounded life' as well as one of the pleasures (296a) of that life, for it nourishes 'the intellect' and the self concept.
- 292/1 'regimented': 'what you had to do', without freedom of choice. Cf. 'soldierly' (Mr. Hampden, 14b).
- 292/2 'could have been': see 205b. He accepts responsibility for his life.
- 293/1 'broken out': suggestions of a cage, prison: 'regimented' (292b): 'over the horizon' (220b). He implies that he now believes there are opportunities beyond the immediate constraints, but that he has only recently 'tried' to grasp them. See 220a ff.
- 293/2 'you don't think of it': there is a changing perspective with age: cf. Mr. Jordan (58a, ff.)
- 294 'all years ahead': changed time perspective in 'middle age': an element of 'mid-life crisis', see Chapter 6. However, although he has experienced problems (e.g. 256a, ff.), there is every indication of a positive response to them (e.g. 261b, 233b).
- 295 'interested in them': cf. 22b, 105b.
- 297 He had great satisfaction in their development and achievement: see 233b, 313a, f
- 298 'go into law': cf. his own background (28b) and his early adulthood (9b, 11b).
- 300 'I haven't done anything': he has, even by his own reckoning: he has 'pushed' (22b
- 302 'satisfaction': through sublimation. He has played his part in the erosion of the opportunity structure.
- 303 'ambitions': see 59b. He has a realistic ambition (242a ff.)
- 304 'crux': see 229b. This learning is as much about the potential of self as about the potential of the environment. A strong self can transcend the environmental situation. See Mr. Bolton (308b).
- 310 'worry': see 136b.
- 313 Another display of generativity: see 233b.
- 317 'near to 40': see stereotypes of 'middle age' (178b).