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'Mid-career change':

An exploratory study of the process of 'career'  
and of the experience of change in 'mid-life'

by

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A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy of the Loughborough University  
of Technology

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## 'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

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

Examination of a wide range of literature on both 'career' and 'middle age' finds many concepts ill-defined and underlying assumptions (such as 'development') unquestioned; and an emphasis upon intra-individual rather than contextual factors. The 'career change' research approached the topic from the perspective of the observer and that of the dominant theories as an objective event to be explained in terms of individual characteristics. In the present environment of change, the thesis argues the need for a wider exploration of this experience within a dynamic and holistic model of 'career' and with the recognition of the significant subjective dimension.

The fieldwork attempts this in its biographical approach in unstructured, tape-recorded interviews with 32 men preparing to enter a new occupation. Close textual analysis of the interviews (on a literary model) identifies the influence on the shape of the 'career' of the interaction of factors both exogenous and endogenous to the individual. It is interpreted that the individual negotiates a temporary 'truce' between these factors which holds until the interacting factors change and cause it to break down. The individual's re-negotiation of the 'truce', as seen in the present phase, may lead to minor adjustments or major re-directions through the several domains of life.

For some, the experience of the present focusses upon the re-definition of self and/or the environment: this 'broken truce' overlays the objective realities of occupational change. The examination of other aspects of this negotiation (use of resources, of advice and information, models and mentors; mode of decision-making) identifies the significance of the 'orientation to the environment': the time perspective and the perception of and responses to the environment. The implications for research, theory and counselling are noted throughout.

The study concludes its evaluation of theory by suggesting that systems theory offers an appropriate, fruitful and comprehensive approach. However, there remains the need to recognise the actor's view and thus an exploration of the 'soft systems' approach is recommended.

Through the thesis note is taken of the 'career' of the research itself and its relationship with the 'career' of the researcher.

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I should also like to record my thanks to Dr. S. Graham and Dr. R. Mackenzie.

Finally, and above all, I should like to thank my sons Matthew, Richard and William for whom and with whom the labours of these seven years have been carried out and at last completed.

Nevertheless, I am responsible for the work submitted in this thesis; the original work is my own except as specified in acknowledgements or in footnotes. I certify that neither the thesis nor the original work contained therein has been submitted to this or any other institution for a higher degree.



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PREFACE



## PREFACE

Research for a higher degree is a major investment of time and energy. My study has the added significance for me that both its content and its process have been closely bound up with the events of my own life so that to my ears this thesis resounds with my own experiences. In introducing it, therefore, I should like to record the nature and extent of this personal relationship.

The subject of this study is 'mid-career change'. While undertaking the research I have experienced such change: indeed, the study has been the vehicle for it. Further, the process of the research has responded to the developments in my life and I, therefore, have to refer to the interweaving of its 'career' and mine in order to explain its nature. I shall, however, restrict such references to the pink pages although, by disclaiming the conventional impersonal role of the academic in my use of the first person pronoun, I shall also be acknowledging the personal involvement I have felt in this research.

The thesis, therefore, concerns other 'careers' than just those of the men I interviewed. Its structure reflects the evolution, or 'career', of the research. The 'careers' of the theories of 'career' and of 'middle age' are also examined herein and will in turn perhaps be influenced by some of the outcomes of this study.

The potential contribution of this research to this field of study lies both in its content and method. Its critiques of the literature and discussion of definitions and underlying assumptions; its emphasis upon the processual nature of 'career' and the interaction of exogenous and endogenous influences; its recognition of the significance of subjective experience; its examination of the negotiation of change and identification of the significance of the time perspective and of the individual's orientation to the environment; its proposal for the adoption of a systems approach: all these have implications for future research and theory. Furthermore, its attempt to adapt a method from literary analysis for the study of subjective experience will, perhaps, offer a useful model for both this particular area and for the social sciences generally.

Much of the literature and my own fieldwork deals with the experiences of men: this explains the pervasive use of the masculine pronoun throughout the thesis. Where appropriate, however, I have widened the discussion to refer also to women and recommend that their experience be similarly examined in future research.

The thesis is written in three parts, each of which covers an evolutionary phase (the definition of which is stipulated in Chapter Twelve) in the 'career' of the research. The third phase, comprising the analysis and synthesis of the material gathered in the interviews, takes up the whole of Volume Two as well as the later chapters of Volume One. These demonstrate the raw material of the research, and the method of analysis, discuss the themes which emerge from it, comment upon the theory outlined in the literature reviews and note the implications for research, theory and counselling. The final chapter reflects upon the state of theory and proposes a way forward to a comprehensive theory of 'career'.

To indicate the sub-divisions of the thesis, the title pages and detailed contents pages prefacing each chapter and each phase are printed on magenta-coloured paper. The pink pages trace the 'career' of the research and, where relevant, explain the relationship between each phase and the experiences of my life. I hope that this reflexive approach and personal gloss, which is consistent with the philosophy according to which I have undertaken the research, will enrich the text with a counterpoint of insights; that it will be a window through which may be glimpsed some of the backroom activities in the researcher's ivory tower, the 'sculpted creativity' which Jaques (1965) marks as a characteristic of 'mid-life'.



PREFACE

THE 'CAREER' OF A PIECE OF RESEARCH AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE

'CAREER' OF THE RESEARCHER

Increasingly I recognise that a piece of research can be seen to have a 'career' and I should like to reflect upon the 'career' of this study throughout the thesis. Following customary procedure I shall, in the terminology used in the thesis, report upon its endogenous factors - the academic rationale for its particular design and execution - which have influenced it. Inevitably, various exogenous factors have interacted with these, the most significant of which have been in this study my own philosophy, 'career' and circumstances. Although it is not generally considered appropriate to refer to such personal matters I shall, nevertheless, do so, though decorously confining them to the pink pages.

With a degree in English and a diploma in Anthropology I went into personnel management in the late 1950s and later into applied social research in industry. After what is from the point-of-view of the conventional occupational 'career' a hiatus of eleven years at home with my children, I took a full-time job which proved to be less than satisfying. I thus saw in the Fellowships then offered by the Social Science Research Council to provide post-graduate, post-experience research training the opportunity to up-date myself, to extend myself and to broaden my job horizons. In applying I outlined the area of 'mid-career change' as my research subject. Not only was this topical in 1976 and likely to become a 'growth area' but, as a housewife entering the academic world as I then construed myself, it was of direct relevance to me.

During 1979, with the end of the Fellowship in sight (and the study still incomplete) I became very aware of the parallels between myself and those I had interviewed: in 'mid-life' and in the process of change, the outcome of which was largely unpredictable, though the outlook seemed, with every month, to be worsening. In January 1980 after three months of unemployment I took up the post of Polytechnic lecturer in Organisational Behaviour and Psychology. I was myself experiencing 'career change'.



From today's perspective I can trace a relationship between my life and my research and can see how the 'career' of the study has evolved in phases which have been partly shaped by experiences outside it. The first phase lasted from 1976 until mid-1978, about half way through the Fellowship. It started with the research plan I submitted in my application to the Social Science Research Council, continued with the literature reviews which flowed from that and ended with my gradual questioning of the approach adopted in the literature. The second phase evolved out of the first as I began to find positive reinforcement for my emerging views about research, though these led eventually to a radical revision. During this phase I carried out the fieldwork, transcribed the interviews and started trying to make sense of them; I also wrote the first drafts of part of the thesis. This phase ended with my period of unemployment in 1979 and the third, begun in January 1980, now finishes in April 1984 with the submission of the thesis. I shall trace the nature of the relationship between these intertwined 'careers' more fully in the later pink pages.



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FIRST PHASE OF THE RESEARCH

Initial approach to and exploration of the research area



## 'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER' AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
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FIRST PHASE  
of the 'career' of a piece of research

INITIAL APPROACH TO AND EXPLORATION OF THE RESEARCH AREA

The first phase of the 'career' of my study began with my decision in early 1976 to apply for a Social Science Research Council Fellowship, choosing 'mid-career change' as my topic of research. Some hasty, preliminary reading of the only easily accessible literature gave me sufficient material to fashion into the submission, which is included as Appendix One, to accompany my application. In this are clearly visible the partially-digested influences of the ideas of a psychologist I knew and of a friend's sociological thesis on social mobility I had recently read. I badly wanted to be offered a Fellowship and so I tried to frame a research design which would be considered impressive and 'respectable' (hence the use of the term 'instrument'). Although I expected to proceed along the lines I indicated I, nevertheless, recognised my own strengths and weaknesses and thus suggested that 'an anthropological rather than a quantitative study' might be appropriate.

The early months of the Fellowship which began in October 1976, promised a new beginning. This was a time of adjustment when I was again learning to study. As I regained competence in earlier skills in the critical evaluation of literature, however, I began to have doubts about the research task I had set myself. On closer investigation, much of the literature which I had expected to be basic and authoritative was often very unquestioning in its approach to concepts and to research. Before I could feel secure enough to embark on my own research I had to settle what seemed to me to be some ill-resolved issues and carry out some 'ground clearance' in the literature. Hence in the Spring of 1977 I tackled a particularly thorny patch, the literature on 'mid-life crisis' (Collin, 1977), and later in 1978 made my first of several attempts to do the same for the definitions of 'career.' The positive feedback I received from the former review (positive, I think, because it offered a British - and a comprehensive - treatment of the subject) injected me with the confidence to continue questioning rather than accepting the givens of the literature and the objectives of my study.

These were not my only doubts. As I again acquired the concentration



for study I started to read more widely than I had done for many years and found that I gained a deeper understanding from the novels of, say, Bellow than I did from many of the research studies. (I have since found that Merriam (1978) has used similar novels to confirm research findings and to generate new understandings of 'mid-life' experiences.) Reflecting upon this, I recognised that I wanted my research to have some of the qualities of the novel which would give insight rather than 'fact'. In a 'purple' piece in January 1977 I wrote that I wanted to see the experiences of those I would interview through their eyes and, more, that I did not want to be a detached observer but to engage with them in a creative enterprise so that we should both gain from it. At the time this seemed to me, as a relative novice to the academic discipline of the social sciences, to be an idiosyncratic - and academically disreputable - view of research. I had not yet encountered the concept of phenomenological or holistic research. I had made my own discovery and I clung to it, even though it threw my research plans into disarray.

While nursing my secret, I continued reading and reviewing the literature on 'middle age' and 'career' generally (Collin, 1978, 1979b) and preparing the material which I eventually used in the chapters in Phase One. Although the final versions of the chapters have been written from 1983 and thus formulated in the terms of Phase Three, they are, nevertheless, based upon the work carried out within Phase One against a background of growing doubt. Indeed, it was the material of which these chapters are composed that created and fed those doubts.

The earlier sense of fulfilment which I enjoyed in my new learning and exploration thus became tinged with doubt and discomfort which continued until about the middle of 1978, when I applied for a year's extension to the original two-year Fellowship. With this ended the first phase in the study's 'career'.



## INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS ONE TO NINE

Chapters One to Nine introduce this study of 'mid-career change' and through their reviews of the literature present the academic context in which it was carried out.

Chapter One outlines my original proposals for the research and Chapters Two and Three discuss definitions of the key concepts of 'middle age', 'career' and 'career change'. Chapter Four examines the objective and subjective aspects of time, a significant dimension of change. Chapters Five and Six look at the changes experienced in 'middle age', paying particular attention to 'mid-life crisis'. Chapters Seven and Eight then examine the research into 'career change' and the theories of 'career' development. The thesis to this point deals with the literature which influenced my decisions about the nature of my own research. Chapter Nine then presents some of the ideas on the individual's response to the environment to which I turned when analysing the interviews.

In each chapter there is an evaluation of the significance of the literature for the proposed content and method of my own study; as Chapters Ten and Eleven are to discuss more fully, it is partly from these reviews that the eventual modifications to the original proposals gradually evolved.

This is an exploratory study and, therefore, it presents extensive reviews of a wide range of literature. Although I have developed conceptual frameworks to encompass this range, in subsequent chapters I have taken up only some of the many issues therein. Thus there remains a wealth of material for future exploration.



CHAPTER ONE

Original objectives of the study and exploration of the literature



## CHAPTER ONE

### ORIGINAL OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND EXPLORATION OF THE LITERATURE

The original research proposal, entitled 'Career Satisfaction and Occupational Choice in Middle Age', is reproduced as Appendix One. At its core is the statement that

'... mid-career change operates at the point of balance between individual identity and experience and structural opportunity and mobility ... (the study) has two dimensions: mobility and motivation.'

The objectives of the study were to be the examination of

'... the factors which are perceived and/or operate when a career change is contemplated and (of) ... the possible determinants of the decision. From this it is hoped to draw conclusions about the perceived nature of careers, of career satisfaction and of opportunity for career change in middle life; and about the actual opportunities that exist and the processes and management of those possible changes.'

I intended to achieve these objectives by comparing the 'influences', 'preferences', 'constraints' and 'opportunities' of a sample of those seeking a 'career change' with those of a sample of others who were 'presumably satisfied with their career and not actively seeking a change.' I noted the difficulty of defining some of these concepts but left them to be examined later. Each sample would have been seen twice, 'at the time of the decision and some time later'; the time-scale of the study allowed an interval of about eight months.

I expected to include women in these samples, though as Appendix One explains, married women returning to employment in mid-life were to be excluded.

The original proposal refers to 'mid-life crisis': there was an implicit hypothesis that there could be an association between it and 'mid-career change'.

At the time of drafting these proposals I accepted the givens of the literature I had read: that 'career change' was a discrete and identifiable event and that the 'career change' could thus be identified, examined and assessed. Clopton's (1972, 1973) was the only 'career change' study I had read at that point; he had measured several personality factors. I was greatly influenced by this and planned to carry out my research by means of questionnaires, interviews and measures of self esteem and locus of control.

Some of the literature (for example, Clopton, 1973) suggested that 'mid-career change' was in some way particularly significant, that it was probably occurring more frequently than before and that the nature of the 'career changer' should, therefore, be studied. I hoped to do this within the British context in such a way that the findings would have a practical application:

'... to provide a groundwork for those called upon to advise or act in this sphere ... employers ... trades unions ... educationalists ... careers advisers ... government agencies ...'

I further hoped that my findings would be used to help those for whom 'career change' was not voluntary but enforced: the expected micro-technological revolution would, it seemed, make this increasingly the case.

Although these objectives were greatly influenced by previous studies, I also recognised that, in a fast moving environment, tomorrow's 'mid-life' experiences and 'career changes' could be different from today's. I, therefore, wanted to be aware of the context and general features of 'career change' as well as of its specific details. I also wanted to avoid adopting the narrow perspective of a particular discipline. One man's 'career change' is another man's social mobility statistic, yet it seemed to me that the phenomenon for the individual would be the same: I wanted to be aware of its many faces. I thus made the literature search both wide (psychological, sociological, clinical, 'careers', counselling, 'self-help' and management literature) and deep ('middle age' and 'career' rather than 'mid-career change').

The literature was both fascinating and frustrating and, for a



relatively uncharted region of the lifespan, profuse. The bulk of it was American and written in the 1970s. (My later searches have shown how academically fashionable 'middle age' has become; for example, whereas in 1970 there were 22 entries under the appropriate keywords in the Social Science Citation Index, by 1980 there were 267. The rate of increase is not as high as these figures at first suggest because of the method of entry in the Citation Index, but nevertheless considerable growth in interest in this area is confirmed by the increased numbers of theses written in the later 1970s and reported in Dissertations Abstracts International.)

There was a wealth of literature relevant to my proposed study, though it was of variable quality. Some of it, like the social mobility research, was academically formal and sophisticated, whereas much of the writing on 'mid-life crisis' was journalistic and colourful. Much of the literature on 'career' development and 'middle age' - relatively new areas of study academically - abounded in energy and ideas often not yet refined nor disciplined. I, therefore, found much to illuminate the topic of 'mid-career change'; and also much to question. The chapters which follow illustrate this.

To clarify my own thinking and finalise the objectives of the research I focussed upon some areas and critically reviewed what I read (Collin, 1977, 1978, 1979). I also scoured the literature for definitions of the crucial concepts of 'middle age', 'career' and 'career change' to help identify the potential populations to be studied. I found that these terms, so glibly used in everyday speech as vague generalisations and sometimes euphemisms, tended to resist the academics' attempts at definition. For 'middle age' loose approximations seemed to be condoned in the literature, whereas for 'career' a specific definition was often sought. There was rarely, however, agreement upon which specific definition. I, therefore, refer to them both in quotation marks to acknowledge their essential ambiguity.

These early explorations contribute to Chapters Two to Eight but, in preparing them for inclusion in the thesis, I have incorporated references to literature identified through searches made since the

fieldwork was carried out in 1979. The chapters indicate the various influences upon my approach to the content and method of my study and (particularly Chapter Nine) upon my analysis of the interviews.

This extensive reading and evaluation increasingly caused me to doubt the validity of the original research proposals. These doubts are also identified in the chapters which follow and their resolution is discussed in Chapter Ten.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Definitions of 'middle age' and 'mid-life'

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## CHAPTER TWO

### DEFINITIONS OF 'MIDDLE AGE' AND 'MID-LIFE'

#### Introduction

'There is ample evidence in our data that middle age is perceived as a distinctive period in the life cycle, one which is qualitatively different from other age periods'.

Although the people studied by Neugarten (in Neugarten, 1968, p.94) were able to 'delineate' their 'middle age' retrospectively and to locate it within their life cycle, this chapter will show that there is considerable difficulty in identifying, locating and calibrating the characteristics of 'middle age' within the life-span of the individual and in generalising to others. This difficulty places a stumbling-block upon the path towards a coherent and comprehensive definition of 'middle age' which, this chapter concludes, may thus be impossible to achieve. It, therefore, refers to the term in quotation marks to denote an ill-defined and perhaps essentially vague concept. (See Notman's (1980) useful discussions of the definitions of 'middle age', in which she questions their relevance to women's experiences.)

Before exploring these difficulties further, the possible distinction between 'middle age' and 'mid-life' must be discussed. The common use of 'mid-life' seems to be of recent origin: for example, it first appears as a separate keyword in the Social Science Citation Index in 1976. The two terms seem to be used synonymously in the literature surveyed for this thesis so that the definition of one would apply equally to the other. However, it may be that in everyday speech 'mid-life' is a more acceptable, less shameful and derisory version of 'middle age', just as 'lady' is in many contexts considered more appropriate than 'woman'. 'Mid-life' seems to locate the person in the middle phase of life without the overtones of evaluation, such as physical decline and social obsolescence, accorded to 'middle age'. This accords with the analysis of Featherstone and Hepworth (1983, pp. 87-8) of the images of 'middle age' in the popular media.



'This new orientation towards the middle years represents the endorsement of a new style of life, a "midlifestyle" which suggests the middle years (30-60) are replete with opportunities to achieve new goals, fulfilment and personal growth. In contrast to the negative connotations of the term "middle age" ...'

Nevertheless, the two terms will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

A definition of 'middle age' must derive from a knowledge of the life-span and the ability to distinguish within it a phase with identifiable characteristics. This knowledge is, indeed, growing: both of ageing and life-span development (see Edwards and Flynn, 1982) and of some of the characteristics of 'middle age' (see Chapters Five and Six). However, it is important to be aware of the quality of this knowledge and the basis upon which it was obtained. Before proceeding with the discussion of definitions this chapter will, therefore, briefly examine some of the methodological considerations of the study of ageing, development and change: this will serve the thesis as a whole for the problems to be mentioned here are inherent in much of the research to be discussed later.

Ideally, research on ageing should be longitudinal in design so that changes can be studied concurrently. However, for many reasons this has not been and will often not be possible. Many studies have, therefore, been cross-sectional in design; comparisons have been made at the same point in time between cohorts of various ages and the differences between them have often been understood to be the changes experienced in ageing. (See Allman, 1981; Bromley, 1974; Schaie, 1968, 1983, who discuss this.) Such an approach masks and distorts the nature of ageing. It is now recognised that this varies between individuals, sexes, generations, locations and cultures. Physiological ageing, for instance, is influenced by such factors as diet and occupational experiences, which differ between person, time and place. The social reference points of ageing also differ, with varying marriage and child-rearing practices, educational and retirement policies. (Laslett, 1965).

The few longitudinal studies (see Chapter Five), the subjects of which have now reached their forties and fifties, are thus in this respect

particularly valuable, though it must not be ignored that longitudinal research has methodological problems, too. It cannot be used for quick results nor (easily) with large numbers: it is difficult to plan and to budget. The later phases of such a study are likely to be different in several ways from its initial phases: there will be a turnover in staff, in research techniques (some will go out of fashion or will be discredited; others will be introduced), in the respondents themselves. Those that survive may become habituated to the research techniques.

Researchers have explored various ways of overcoming these basic problems: Allman (1981) and Osborn, Charnley and Withnall (1982) discuss and review some of their strategies. I have also had to grapple with some of these issues in the interpretation of the interviews I conducted, particularly in the attempt to describe the process of 'career' (see Chapter Twelve).

Because there can be no easy solution to these problems research in this area has to be interpreted with care so that it has to be recognised that our knowledge of life-span development is still rudimentary. With these provisos in mind, this chapter will now examine the life-span and 'middle age' within it.

### The identification of 'middle age' within the life-span

Changes through the life-span take place along several dimensions. Buhler (1935: see Chapter Five), for example, traces two 'curves' of life, the biological and the psychological, but for the purpose of this thesis the life-span will be conceived as having four dimensions: physiological, cognitive, psychological and social. Chapter Five discusses them in some detail. This chapter will now attempt to locate 'middle age' along each of these dimensions and so define it in their terms; it will then discuss the possibility of finding a correspondence between these dimensions in order to achieve a comprehensive definition of 'middle age'. (A definition of 'adolescence', 'old age' or some other phase of life would require the same approach.)

#### 1. 'Middle age' in terms of physiological changes through the life-span

Many physiological changes take place with age: for example, in the



heart, the endocrine system, the kidneys (see Chapter Five; Allman, 1981; Bromley, 1974). It is, however, difficult to identify and measure some of them, to establish when they take place in the individual and what correspondence there is between them. As Bromley (1974, p. 242) writes

'There are no reliable biological or behavioural markers for middle age, except perhaps the menopause; but this is not a satisfactory marker, because it is quite variable in terms of chronological age.'

Thus the possibility of defining 'middle age' in physiological terms seems remote.

Nevertheless, popular conceptions and stereotypes of 'middle age' often include reference to physiological changes and decrements: 'middle age spread', 'fortify the over-forties'. Many of these are considered shameful and to be evaded or hidden (to the benefit of the cosmetics and drugs industries); they may be feared and sometimes denied. Increasingly there are strong pressures to keep physical ageing at bay (the Health Education Council's campaigns; Featherstone and Hepworth, 1983; Hepworth and Featherstone, 1982).

Some of these physical changes, though apparent to the beholder, are not always sensed by the individual, who may be shocked into recognition of them by a glimpse of the ageing self in the mirror or by being treated as 'middle-aged' by younger people.

## 2. 'Middle age' in terms of changes in cognitive functioning through the life-span

In popular thinking, changes in cognitive functioning and particularly increasing decrement, are also often associated with 'middle age'. As with the physiological dimension, it is clear that changes take place throughout the life-span (Bromley, 1974) but it is equally difficult to establish the nature and timing of those changes (see Chapter Five; Allman, 1981; Osborn, Charnley and Withnall, 1982).

Cognitive development appears to be the subject of much recent research but, in the light of present knowledge, it is impossible to offer a

definition of 'middle age' in these terms.

### 3. 'Middle age' in terms of psychological changes through the life-span

Developmental psychology now recognises that identifiable changes, both numerous and complex, take place throughout adulthood and as Chapters Five and Six will show there is a growing body of knowledge about them.

Some of the influential writers in this area have located 'middle age' within the psychological dimension of the life-span: Jung (1960), Buhler (1935), Erikson (1950), Gould (1972), Levinson et al. (1978). However, it is difficult to translate the changes of which they write (see Chapters Five and Six) into the concrete attributes of the individual's life so that 'middle age' cannot be unequivocally defined in these terms.

### 4. 'Middle age' in terms of social changes through the life-span

The life-span can be charted in terms of the social statuses derived from family, work and community which are adopted or lost throughout life. Neugarten (1968, p. 146) recognises the significance of this as  
a

'... way of structuring the passage of time in the lifespan of the individual, providing a time clock that can be super-imposed over the biological clock ... The major punctuation marks in the adult life tend ... to be more often social than biological ...'

Because these social changes are discrete and observable events it might be thought that 'middle age' could be easily identified in their terms. There are, however, problems here, too. For example, which events mark its beginning and end? Lowenthal, Thurnher and Chiriboga (1975), for example, chose the so-called 'empty-nest' period, between the time the children leave home and their father's retirement, as their third, or 'middle-aged', sample. Another problem is that the individual may simultaneously hold statuses in several social sub-systems, such as family and work, which do not synchronise; a man may father a child in his second marriage as he approaches retirement.



What then is 'middle age' in these social terms? (The stressful experience of asynchronisation is noted in Chapters Five and Six.)

### 5. Correspondence between the four dimensions of the life-span

The discussion so far has indicated the difficulty - perhaps the impossibility - of identifying 'middle age' in terms of the four dimensions of the life-span. It is equally difficult (impossible?) to establish any close correspondence between the various changes along the four dimensions. How do changes in the kidneys, for example, relate to changes in the endocrine system? Do the physiological changes parallel cognitive or social changes? Because each dimension has its own values it cannot be calibrated with others without reference to some standard scale and without such calibration there can perhaps be no general and significant definition of 'middle age'.

### The definition of 'middle age' in terms of chronological age

Chronological age is often used as a medium of definition; it has been used to define 'middle age' in several of the studies which will be outlined in later chapters (for example, Havighurst, 1953; Levinson et al., 1978). It has certain attractions for the researcher. It is precise, generally verifiable and easily understood, a seductive instrument for comparison and generalisation. It is the scale by which the lifespan is measured in demographic data (though there are variations in the way it is used). It is also the basis for some proscriptive and prescriptive behaviour in many societies, through such concepts as 'under age', 'coming of age' and 'legal age' (Cain, 1964).

Chronological age is also valuable because it identifies the cohort or generation to which an individual belongs. Although there are also difficulties in defining 'generation' (Cain, 1964), it is to be noted that membership of a particular generation is likely to have exerted considerable influence upon our physiological, cognitive, psychological and social make-up of the individual. Soddy (1967), for example, elaborates upon the effect of generational differences on attitudes and the opportunity to assume high office. As Chapter Eleven will show, the membership of a particular generation is of some significance in understanding the experiences of the men I interviewed.

Does chronological age offer the means to calibrate the various changes in the life-span? Unfortunately, it cannot. First, although age norms exist in societies and constrain behaviour, as Neugarten, Moore and Lowe (1968) have shown, they are not clearly nor consistently perceived. In the Colchester study (Ritchie, 1980), for example, the age at which respondents considered 'middle age' was reached ranged between 'under 40' to 'the sixties', the first quartile score being 45 and the median 50. There was a tendency for the onset of 'middle age' to rise with the age of the respondent and for women to see it starting later than men.

Secondly, chronological age cannot take account of the variations between individuals. Although the ageing process may not vary sequentially, individuals age at different rates ('She doesn't look her age'), and hold asynchronous statuses ('Old enough to be her father').

Thirdly, 'middle' and any other age will also have an existential definition which cannot be represented by chronological age: time does not progress uniformly and 'you are as old as you feel'.

Chronological age must, therefore, be judged an insensitive scale which reveals little about the individual or group of individuals of the same age. Neugarten (1968<sup>b</sup>, p. 94) sees this as particularly so in the definition of 'middle age'

'Chronological age is no longer the positive marker that it was earlier in life ... (nor) that it becomes again in advanced old age ...'

The definition of 'middle age': conclusions and implications for this study of 'mid-career change'

'... the generalisation about older people that can be drawn most confidently from the research is that few other generalisations are warranted.'

Brousseau's (1981, p. 172) statement could sum up this discussion of the definition of 'middle age'. In the current state of knowledge it seems unlikely that a coherent and comprehensive definition will be



achieved; even with greater knowledge it remains unlikely because of the complexities of the matter. 'Middle age' is a vague generalisation, 'a convenient fiction' according to Bromley (1974, pp. 241-2), who continues

'It does not refer to any well-defined phase in the human life-cycle and it means different things to different people ... The mid-point ... is merely a statistical fact of no particular biological or behavioural significance'.

Bromley was writing (in his second edition in 1974) as interest in 'middle age' was starting to flourish. Uncontaminated by the academic energy and enthusiasm yet to be released in the American literature at the end of the 1970s, he was perhaps more detached in his evaluation of the significance of 'middle age' than later researchers can be. This chapter's examination of the problems concerning definition does, however, halt the unquestioning acceptance of the nature of this period of the life-span and prompt the recognition that perhaps the changes which take place during it have significance only in relation to their societal context. This is the thesis which Giele (1980) argues: that 'mid-life' has become an issue in Western industrial society because of the changing nature of that society rather than because of its inherent qualities. One of these changes is the increased expectation of life. (Perhaps this is being experienced not only as a lengthened period of 'old age' but also an expansion of the earlier periods of youth and adulthood, as a longer 'middle age'?) In other societies or other historical periods there was no cause to differentiate the stages of adulthood. I shall refer to the significance of the societal context again in later chapters, particularly Six, Seven, Eight and Fourteen.

Having arrived at ambiguity rather than clarity in this search for a definition to use in my own research I, therefore, had to establish an operational definition and arbitrarily (though in company with Havighurst, 1953 and Clopton, 1972) adopted the age range of 30 to 55 as one of the criteria by which I would choose people for interview. 'A common-sense definition is enough', writes Fogarty (1975); he defines 'middle age' as the years from 40 to 60.

As well as informing this decision, the explorations upon which this chapter is based influenced my study in other ways. These made me alert to the significance of the context in which the individual experiences his or her world, both the wider societal and the more immediate social context; a major consideration throughout the study was the influence of exogenous factors upon the individual.

These discussions have also highlighted the difficulties of studying the individual and in making comparisons between individuals. Each individual's clock is different: not all run a 24-hour day, some are fast and others slow. This is significant in a study of individual change: objective measures such as chronological age cannot standardise the individual's various timescales nor synchronise them with those of other people. Thus 'mid-career change' will take its significance from the individual's life and the factors contributing to the change have to be evaluated within this life rather than between lives. This recognition influenced the way in which I approached the fieldwork and my treatment of the material it generated.

These discussions have also illuminated the meaning if not the definition of 'middle age'. The very confusion and overlapping of experiences which make it difficult to define also make it very rich in meanings for the individual. The 'middle-aged' person can be both young and old: can look young and feel old, look old and feel young, feel young in some respects or at some times and not at others ..... At this stage of life both the future and the past are accessible. Indeed, there are many futures, many pasts. 'Middle age' offers an abundance of meanings. This is perhaps part of the explanation of the observation made at the beginning of the chapter, that 'middle-aged' is often an unacceptable label. Having achieved a degree of 'individuation' (Jung, 1946), a state of maturity in which many potentials can be realised, the individual jibs at being relegated to the confines of a category and one which is often used with negative connotations.

My recognition of the significance of individual meanings influenced the ways in which I interviewed (responding to and exploring the emphases which were expressed) and in which I analysed the material (paying close attention to the words used). It has also made me look at what 'career' and 'middle age' meant to those interviewed.



# CHAPTER THREE

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### CHAPTER THREE

#### DEFINITIONS OF 'CAREER', 'CAREER CHANGE' AND 'MID-CAREER CHANGE'

##### Introduction

My search through the literature to find a definition of 'career change' for use in the fieldwork uncovered a profusion and, at times, a confusion of definitions and usage: the word shimmers with meanings. Unlike 'middle age', it has attracted many attempts at precise clarification some of which, though they by no means represent the full range of meanings to be found, have become accepted reference points. Other writers either refer back to them or proceed without specifying their own definition. At times 'career', 'vocation' and 'occupation' are used almost interchangeably (Super, Hall, 1978).

Such apparent conceptual chaos prompted a closer examination. That there is still room to make such a review - at such a comparatively late stage in the 'career' of the concept 'career' - reflects, perhaps, the nature of the concept and of this field of study which is still expanding and changing rapidly. Academics have approached it from different angles and definitions have evolved to serve the specific purposes of their authors. There has scarcely yet been time to stand back and to take stock.

Before discussing the definition of 'career change', therefore, this chapter will examine the nature of the concept of 'career', explore some of the meanings accorded to it and attempt to analyse them. In Chapters Twelve and Eighteen some of the points to be raised here will be related to the experiences of the men interviewed.

##### Definitions of the concept of 'career'

Part of the Oxford English Dictionary's (1933) definition of 'career' runs

'A person's course or progress through life (or a distinct portion of life), esp. when publicly conspicuous, or abounding in remarkable incidents; similarly with reference to a nation, a



political party etc. b. In mod. language (after Fr. *carrière*)  
 freq. used for: A course of professional life or employment,  
 which affords opportunity for progress or advancement in the  
 world.'

Although 'career' is an everyday word in the English language where  
 its very ambiguity may serve a purpose, it has been attributed specific  
 meanings by many academics. Perhaps the three most quoted definitions  
 are

'a career consists, objectively, of a series of status and clearly  
 defined offices ... Subjectively, a career is the moving per-  
 spective in which the person sees his life as a whole and  
 interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions and the  
 things which happen to him.' (Hughes, 1937, pp. 409-10).

'One side (of the career) is linked to internal matters held  
 dearly and closely, such as image of self and felt identity;  
 the other side concerns official position, jural relations, and  
 style of life, and is part of a publicly accessible institutional  
 complex. The concept of career, then, allows one to move back  
 and forth between the self and its significant society, without  
 having overly to rely for data upon what the person says he  
 thinks he imagines himself to be.' (Goffman, 1959, p. 123)

'a succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige,  
 through which persons move in an ordered, predictable sequence.'  
 (Wilensky, 1960, p. 554)

There exist many other definitions, some of which are variations on the  
 three above. One which will be referred to later is that of Schein  
 (1976), who perceives two aspects of 'career'. The 'external career'  
 is 'the objective categories used by society and organisations to  
 describe the progression of steps through a given organisation' (p. 10),  
 whereas the 'internal career' is 'the set of steps or stages that make  
 up the individual's own concept of his own progression within an  
 occupation.' (p. 11)

A very different approach is adopted by Stewart, Prandy and Blackburn



(1980) in a British social mobility study. In examining the relationships between occupations and 'careers', they use the analogy of a railway system. The stations are occupations or specific jobs between which individuals journey according to their tickets (their various advantages). Each station thus represents a different point in each person's journey or 'career'.

Other definitions of more recent date indicate a widening range of meanings:

'... the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life.' (Hall, 1976, p. 4)

'I would like to define "career", as nothing narrower than certain significant relationships between the individual and work, and the individual, work and wider life over an extended period of time.' (Hearn, 1977, p. 275)

'Careers are not all work, just as leisure is not all play'. (Hearn, 1977, p. 285)

'... the concept of career is a "nomic instrumentality." ... Not only does "career" give meaning to total reality and social structures: it also gives identity to the individual. ... creates a "canopy of meaning" (Berger, 1967), a framework that gives sense to life.' (Roberts, 1980, pp. 163-4)

The emphasis so far has been upon the use of 'career' in its occupational sense, but its wider use must also be noted. Goffman's definition above is taken from 'The moral career of the mental patient' (1959, p. 123) and is a widely quoted example of this wider use. In this paper he writes

'The term (career) is coming to be used ... in a broadened sense to refer to any social strand of any person's course through life. The perspective of natural history is taken: unique outcomes are neglected in favour of such changes over time as are basic and common to the members of a social category, although occurring independently to each one of them.'



The concept has since been used to signify the development of deviancy (Becker, 1963), of illness (Roth, 1963) and of a personal relationship (McCall and Simmons, 1966). Roth (1963, pp. 94-5) extends its use to include:

'... movement through an institutional hierarchy (business executive careers, academic careers); through a series of contingencies moving in a given direction (the private practice physician getting a better clientele, better office location, better hospital appointments; the schoolteacher getting better school assignments or more desirable courses to teach); escape from an undesirable situation (the patient getting out of a hospital, the prisoner getting out of jail, the draftee getting out of the army); or development in a given direction (children developing toward independent adulthood)'.

The concept 'career' is gathering ever more and even wider meanings so that it is, indeed, in some danger of losing its specifically occupational significance. For example,

'The meaning of the word 'career' has been broadened to mean one's total life'. (Gysbers, 1974, p. 16)

Johnson (1976, p. 157), proposes that the concept be taken 'to its ultimate mortal extent, i.e. life careers' and uses the 'biographical career' as the basis of his study of old people.

'Career' is changing in response to the changing nature of work, the way it is valued and its relationship to life outside work. Work and leisure and possibly education are being fragmented and re-distributed throughout the lifespan. There are shifts too in the structure of employment with increasing unemployment, a decline in jobs in manufacturing industry, increased growth of employment in the service industries, increased part-time working and a greater participation of women in the work force. These new patterns of working for both men and women inevitably affect the concept of 'career': part-time jobs, increased domestic and child-rearing responsibilities for men, 'dual careers' (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971) as well as the variants of 'Careerlessness', 'Uncareer' and 'Non-Career' discussed by Hearn (1977).



Hall (1976, pp. 200-1) suggests that 'a new career ethic' is emerging. He calls this the 'protean career':

'The protean person's own personal career choices and search for self-fulfilment are the unifying or integrative elements in his or her life ... the protean career is shaped more by the individual than by the organisation and may be redirected from time to time to meet the needs of the person'.

### Examination of the definitions of 'career'

An examination of these definitions of 'career' indicates that the core meaning of the concept is of the movement of an individual (or some other body) through space and time. The movement with which this chapter is concerned is that of the individual through social space and within the occupational context. Hearn (1977, p. 274) suggests that the temporal dimension 'receives particular emphasis'. Johnson (1977, p. 76-7) notes that, like ageing and social change, the study of 'career' 'is dominated by reference to the passage of units of time'. Because time is construed as objective (see Chapter Four), 'linearity, chronicity and irreversibility' are features which 'reinforce our tendency to categorise series of events in stages.' This has been a characteristic of some of the studies of 'career' mentioned in Chapter Eight (and of 'middle age': see Chapter Five).

A simple distinction made in the literature is between the objective and the subjective 'career': some of the definitions above can be classified in this way. The objective 'career' (Goffman's 'official position'; Hughes's 'series of status') particularly stresses spatial movement, though this has its temporal aspect. This movement is through some kind of patterned sequence of steps. ('typicality', Pahl and Pahl, 1972) so that future progression is predictable. The direction is often regarded as upward and seen as desirable; access, patterning and timing are socially controlled in various ways. Cain (1964) writes that '"career" denotes the addition of the temporal dimension to the division of labour.'

For the subjective 'career' (Goffman's 'internal matters'; Hughes's 'moving perspective'), the temporal dimension in which past, present and



future experiences are linked is perhaps more significant. Dubin (1958) notes that 'career' orders the individual's future life and gives it a degree of predictability and direction. According to Pahl and Pahl (1972), it 'produces a longitudinal perspective on life.' They also note that long-term commitment is an ingredient of both the objective and the subjective 'career'. There is some sense that the 'career', particularly the subjective 'career', can only be identified retrospectively and that it affords a glimpse of a desirable future.

Although recognised that it is difficult to match objective and subjective 'careers' (Pahl and Pahl, 1972; Schein, 1976), this dichotomy is used by some writers. For example, Super and Hall (1978, p. 334), discussing the meaning of 'career' write

'Super ... would prefer to stress Hughes's objective career and Hall ... his subjective definition; but the former, the externally judged sequence of positions ... is ... the most widely accepted scientific use of the term in the literature.'

Others perceive greater complexity in the concept of 'career'. Some sub-divide the objective (or 'institutional', Watts, 1981) 'career' into its occupational or organisational varieties and others elaborate even further. Stebbins (1970, pp. 34-9), though particularly interested in the subjective 'career' writes of the 'career pattern' or 'career line'

'a consensually recognised course of movement through recognised stages with a beginning and an end.'

This is essentially Wilensky's 'career'. Stebbins also recognises the individual-objective 'career', which is

'the progress of an individual (or cohort of individuals) through a career line. It is an observer's view of the patterns of movement from stage to stage (either horizontal or vertical) as they are related to various criteria for movement, such as education, performance, ability and the like, and as they relate to a timetable for movement.'



Driver (1980) also writes of the individual's career which he relates to personality and decision-making styles. He notes several types. They are the steady state (an increase in skill but not in status; a concern for security); the linear (upward movement in a hierarchy and a need for achievement or power); the spiral (successive moves into related or new areas and a need for personal growth); and the transitory 'career concept' (no discernible pattern of movement but a need for independence or, perhaps, variety.)

Stebbins sees the subjective 'career' as overlapping these other aspects of 'career'. This is

'the actor's recognition and interpretation of past and future events associated with a particular identity ...'

Johnson (1977, p. 81) builds upon Stebbins's discussion and emphasises 'the interrelatedness of events and the interlocking of 'careers', such as marriage, family, work and health.

'They can be conceptualised as a collection of bodies operating dynamically within a limited social space and constantly interacting with each other. This constant reverberation we might call social kinetics ...'

Hearn (1977, p. 273 ff.) approaches his 'clarification of the concept of career' by noting its characteristics when used in a non-occupational sense; he identifies individualism, context (social and temporal) and the interplay, or 'duality', between them.

'This conceptual facility to encompass and relate the immediate and the distant, the individual and the social ...'

He then examines these characteristics in the work context and identifies four kinds of 'career' which, because they embrace subjective experiences, combine Stebbins's various 'careers'.

#### The 'Pure Career'

'is typically found in professional, executive and similar occupations, where the job offers both intrinsic interest and



a sense of accomplishment ... a series of relatively discrete occupations or jobs, each of a finite length, separated by decision points'.

The 'Careerless' worker approaches work instrumentally; 'the anticipation of the future so fundamental to the Pure Careerist is missing'. The 'Uncareerist', by contrast, finds 'work is active and expressive', but, perceiving the context to be chaotic or hostile, has to 'construct meaning within the particular job'. The 'Non-Career', finally, 'is characterised by a strong element of meaninglessness': significance is attached to the 'routine, ritual and drama in work.' It is thus 'an expression of individual consciousness'. Hearn suggests that this is the experience of working women.

In an extensive review of the literature on 'career' patterns, Watts (1981) illustrates the wide range of meanings attributed to the subjective 'career'. He identifies (p. 214) three categories of 'career': the institutional, whether in an organisation or an occupation, and the individual, which

'can be further sub-divided into the objective individual career, which is publicly observable and definable and the subjective individual career, which can only be understood in terms of the individual's own frame of reference ...'

He refers (p. 230 ff.) to Super's (1957) theory of self concept and life-span development as the 'most prominent model of the subjective individual career'. Chapter Eight, however, notes that this theory is often used as the observer's interpretation of the individual's subjective experience. The life stages do not emerge from the individual's experience but are imposed upon it by the observer according to a particular conceptual framework. This would appear to be true also of much of the research to which Watts refers in his section on the 'subjective individual career', which is perhaps about subjective experience rather than derived from it.

Watt's subjective 'career', therefore, perhaps differs from that of Stebbins (1970), Hughes (1937) and Goffman (1959) who focus on the



actor's experiences. This category of 'career' may, therefore, be far from homogeneous. While Stebbins, Hughes, Goffman and Roberts (1980) attribute depth of meaning, Hall (1976), writing of 'work-related experiences', extends its width.

### Analysis of the meanings of the word 'career'

This examination of the definitions of the concept of 'career' and the identification of considerable differences between them provide a starting-point for the exploration of the range of meanings of the word 'career' which they encompass. This chapter will, therefore, now offer a framework for the analysis of those meanings in both academic literature and everyday speech.

There seem to be at least two factors in the use of the word which influence its meaning. These are the perspective from which the 'career' is seen and the function the word is called upon to perform. Hearn (1977), too, recognises a 'duality' but it is essentially different from these two factors and refers to the substance of 'career' as the relationship between the individual and the social context; this can possibly be subsumed under one of the categories of analysis below. There may be more than the two factors identified below in the use of 'career' and they could probably be analysed in other ways to produce a different framework. These are, however, the offspring of the analysis of this chapter so far and meet the needs of this thesis. Moreover, the interplay between them seems to explain the word's characteristic richness and ambiguity satisfactorily.

### 1. The categories of analysis

#### a. The perspective from which 'career' is viewed

'Career' takes on a different meaning according to the perspective from which it is being viewed: this is clearly recognised in the literature where the distinction between the objective and the subjective 'career' is commonly made. Here those categories will be replaced by those of the observer's and the actor's constructs in order to eliminate any ambiguity in the use of the term 'subjective', which has, perhaps, sometimes been used to refer to the observer's view of the individual's experience.



### i) the observer's construct

This is the observer's view of the 'career', the perspective of someone outside the situation. The observer can view the occupational, the organisational or the individual's 'career', but can only have a partial view, limited by the particular viewpoint. There is possibly an emphasis upon the spatial dimension of movement.

This is pre-eminently the perspective of the scientific investigator: note the reference to the 'scientific use of the term' in the Super, Hall (1978) quotation above.

### ii) the actor's construct

This is the view of the actor within a given situation, of the individual within the 'career'. Not only does the individual have a different perspective from that of the observer (and when observing self will have a more intimate, close-up and perhaps limited view than any outsider) but this view will be experienced and expressed in the individual's own terms and concepts. The actor, experiencing the course of the 'career' from the past through to the present and the future, may focus upon the temporal dimension of movement.

Any understanding of the actor's view will be limited. It can only be undertaken in the individual's own terms; while some of these may be derived from social interchange and thus shared by and communicable to other people, others will be completely idiosyncratic, only partially perceived through empathy or inferred from language and behaviour.

### b. The functions served by the word 'career'

An examination of the definitions of Goffman (1959) and Hughes (1937) suggests that they use the word 'career' to perform two different functions: to describe ('official position', Goffman; 'a series of status', Hughes) and to interpret ('felt identity', Goffman; 'the moving perspective', Hughes). The customary use of the labels 'objective' and 'subjective' masks the different ways in which these writers are using the same word. Nevertheless each function is employed in the recognition of two aspects of reality, 'objective' and 'subjective': that which can be observed and causally explained and that which underlies and overlays the 'observable'; the symbolic, the meaning which it has for people.



### i) 'career' used as description

The word 'career' is used to describe or make a statement about the occupational, organisational or individual experience from either the observer's or the actor's viewpoints. Thus it is used to describe the 'succession of related jobs' (Wilensky, 1960), the 'consensually recognised course' (Stebbins, 1970), as well as 'the progress of an individual' (Stebbins, 1970). It is also used to describe the observer's view of the subjective experience of the actor and the actor's own construct of occupational experience, 'the individually perceived sequence of attitudes' (Hall, 1976).

The aim of such description is to understand, explain, perhaps ultimately predict. Conducted effectively by an observer, it demands accuracy, detail, comprehensiveness and validity and may involve the cross-referencing of various data sources and a concern with numbers large enough to eliminate the possibility of the bias of an individual case.

### ii) 'career' used as interpretation

The word 'career' is also used to make an interpretation of what can be described, to relate it to a wider frame of reference and so invest it with significance derived from that framework. Again, the application can be to occupational, organisational or individual experience and undertaken from both the observer's and the actor's viewpoints. Thus certain occupational experiences can be interpreted as significant within society and distinguished within that society as 'a career'. The individual can make sense of and see coherence in occupational experience by perceiving it as 'a career'.

The aim of this interpretation is to achieve understanding through the relation of specific issues to their wider context, the concrete to the abstract, the fact to the symbol. It calls for awareness and insight: of the values and tendency towards a normative approach in society, of the individual's values and ways of organising reality.

## 2. An analytical framework

Figure One presents a framework within which the meanings of 'career' can be analysed. As with all analyses, however, this imposition of



order upon the overlaying and overlapping meanings could distort or impoverish the word (it is more than the sum of its parts), though Hearn (1977, p. 273) suggests that

'... the classification of the concept of career ... will paradoxically lead us closer to the ambiguity of the career experience itself.'


	<u>the observer's construct of 'career'</u>	<u>the actor's construct of 'career'</u>
<u>'career' as descrip- tion</u>  	<u>the SUBSTANTIVE 'career'</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the 'career path' through               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an occupation</li> <li>- an organisation</li> </ul> </li> <li>- the individual's progress               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- along such 'paths' in                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an occupation</li> <li>- an organisation</li> </ul> </li> <li>- through occupational life in general</li> <li>- through life in general</li> </ul> </li> <li>- the individual's subjective experience of such progress</li> </ul>	<u>the PHENOMENAL 'career'</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the progress of self:-</li> <li>- along a 'career path' in               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an occupation</li> <li>- an organisation</li> </ul> </li> <li>- through occupational life in general</li> <li>- through life in general</li> </ul>
<u>'career' as interpre- tation</u>	<u>the SOCIALLY SYMBOLIC 'career'</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the social symbolism of               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'career paths' in                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an occupation</li> <li>- an organisation</li> </ul> </li> <li>- the individual's progress               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- along such 'paths' in                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an occupation</li> <li>- an organisation</li> </ul> </li> <li>- through occupational life in general</li> <li>- through life in general</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li></ul>	<u>the TRANSCENDENTAL 'career'</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the significance to self of progress:-</li> <li>- along a 'career path' in               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an occupation</li> <li>- an organisation</li> </ul> </li> <li>- through occupational life in general</li> <li>- through life in general</li> </ul>

Figure One

Framework for the Analysis of the Meanings of the Word 'Career'



Nevertheless, it has to be recognised that many references to or treatments of 'career', like the definitions of Goffman and Hughes already analysed, will not fall unequivocally into a single category. There may well be dual treatment of both the substantive and the phenomenal 'careers' (for example, Pahl and Pahl, 1972; Sofer, 1970) without acknowledgement or specific distinction. There may well also be some blurring of the boundary between description and interpretation so that the substantive 'career' may shade into the socially symbolic and the phenomenal into the transcendental. This is probably as much a result of the processes of thinking and the nature of the phenomena under consideration as any ambiguous treatment by a given writer and thus description and interpretation will be represented in Figure One as the extremes of a continuum.

It should also be noted that these categories of 'career' are analytical and not evaluative: no one 'career' is perceived here as superior to another though the significant differences between them will be referred to throughout the thesis.

#### a. The substantive 'career'

The observer's description of occupational, organisational or individual 'careers' constitutes the substantive 'career'. Its emphasis is upon roles and role-players rather than upon persons and it may have a tendency to seek norms in the events and experiences it describes.

Examples of the substantive 'career' are the descriptions of the 'consensually recognised movements' (Stebbins, 1970) and patterns of social roles over time (Schein's 'external career', 1976; Wilensky's (1960) 'succession of related jobs') that are to be found in the professions and other occupations. (Chapter Eight: 1 (c i) refers to 'careers' in ballet dancing and lorry-driving.)

The observable progress of the individual through such roles and a recognition of the individual's subjective experience of them also constitutes the substantive 'career'. Examples of such progress are to be found in Bailyn (1977), Bray, Campbell and Grant (1974), Glaser (1964), Guerrier and Philpot (1978), Pahl and Pahl (1972) and Sofer (1970), whereas Stewart, Prandy and Blackburn (1980) chart progress through occupational life in general.



### b. The phenomenal 'career'

The description individuals make of their own experience in an occupation, organisation or through life generally is what is here called the phenomenal 'career'. Although they may describe the roles they play, their description differs from that made by an observer, for they colour it with their thoughts and feelings. The phenomenal 'career' is, therefore, largely idiosyncratic.

This is the 'internal career' of Schein (1976); 'the individually perceived sequence' of Hall (1976); part of the 'careers' which Sofer (1970) examines.

### c. The socially symbolic 'career'

Sometimes, particularly in everyday speech, the word 'career' is used to denote some forms of occupational experiences which are seen to reflect the values of society: advancement, perhaps, or success or moral worth. This is the socially symbolic 'career'. It is an observer's construct of an occupation or organisation or of the individual's progress within them. It reflects an awareness of social values and the tendency to seek social norms. Sometimes - and to serve some specific social purpose - occupations which are generally perceived to lack desirable qualities are nevertheless, euphemistically, called a 'career'. The perceptible hollowness of this serves to underline the generally accepted value of 'career'.

To some extent, the socially symbolic 'career' can be seen to subsume Goffman's (1959) movement 'back and forth between the self and its significant society' and (based on Goffman) Hearn's (1977) 'duality', the relation of the individual's experience to the social context in which it takes place. However, they are concerned with self and society, whereas in this analysis society is represented in one cell and self in another.

### d. The transcendental 'career'

The transcendental 'career' is Goffman's 'image of self and felt identity', Hughes's 'moving perspective' and Stebbins's 'subjective career': the 'recognition and interpretation of past and future events'.



Individuals use it to provide a 'canopy of meaning' (Berger, 1967; Roberts, 1980) for various occupational, organisational or other experiences. It invests them with meaning: continuity, purpose, legitimacy. Through it the individual can discern a pattern in past experiences and have a basis for future action. Through this interpretation of reality the individual can transcend what is perceived by others.

Insight and empathy are needed to gain awareness of the transcendental 'career', for it may never be clearly nor consciously formulated. Access to it is likely to be through such indirect means as imagery and metaphor.

The definition of 'career': conclusions and implications for this study of 'mid-career change'

The word 'career' has many meanings but, as this chapter has proposed, they can be analysed into a few types. However, both in everyday language and academic writing where the meaning is not specified, the word often evokes several meanings simultaneously, one perhaps shading into another. This gives 'career' considerable richness and resonance and very little clarity. Its profusion of possible meanings makes it essentially and abundantly ambiguous.

This ambiguity, however, could be 'a major source of its power' (Watts, 1981, p. 214). To the frustration of the researcher seeking precise concepts, it precisely represents a multi-dimensional reality. For example, the movements of individuals through a company exist in several layers of reality and may thus be viewed in several ways: as part of their occupational pattern or their life as a whole, as part of the company's manpower needs or promotion practices, as a manifestation of social mobility. The word 'career' represents each of these fragments of reality.

Reality cannot be fully comprehended at one glance. It is approached from many different angles and each affords a unique view; the adoption of one viewpoint precludes the knowledge and understanding which only the others can give. Thus there will be as many 'careers' as there are viewpoints, all fragmented views of the same multi-dimensional reality.



It cannot be assumed that it will be possible to achieve a rounded picture by taking shots from all angles: the faces of reality are constantly shifting and evanescent ... It may never be possible to attain an objective and a corresponding subjective view; to find that the substantive, phenomenal and transcendental 'careers' actually coincide. Stebbins (1970, pp. 47-8) writes

'Phenomenally, the subjective career overlaps in scope ... Theoretically, it is exclusive of these other approaches ... is composed ... of meanings not represented in the objective stances ... modifies behaviour from what would be predicted on the basis of the objective approaches.'

The conclusion of this exploration of the definitions and meanings of 'career' can only be that there is no ready definition to act as the base-line for a definition of 'career change', which was the goal of the exploration. A choice has, therefore, to be made between the various viewpoints and versions noted or yet another definition has to be stipulated: 'career change' will then vary according to the nature of the 'career' under consideration. This will now be examined further.

### Definitions of 'mid-career change' and 'career change'

#### 1. Definition of 'mid-career change'

If the working life begins at the age of 16 and finishes at 65 (a still reasonable expectation when this study started in 1976) then 'mid-career' would be a period of time around the age of 40. The American studies into 'mid-career change' set the lowest age at 35 (Hiestand, 1971; LaBuda, 1974; Robbins, 1977) though Clopton dropped it to 30. The upper age was 55.

Given the ambiguity of 'middle age', which the last chapter discussed, this 'commonsense' definition of 'mid-career' seems acceptable and I, therefore, decided to interview men between the ages of 30 and 55. Of far greater significance and difficulty is the definition of 'career change'.



## 2. Definitions of 'career change'

The 'career change' studies, many of which are to be outlined in Chapter Seven, chose very similar criteria by which to identify people who experienced 'career change'. Whether the changes were enforced or voluntary, the researchers examined the following properties of the former and the new occupations.

### a. Length of time in previous occupation

(LaBuda, 1974: 3 years; Clopton, 1973: 5 years; Hiestand, 1971: 'significant work experience').

### b. Nature of the new occupation

Whether radically different from the old or a natural development from it or a straddling of old and new;

i) as seen by others (Robbins (1977) at the first stage of sampling)

ii) as perceived by the changers themselves (Robbins (1977) in her questionnaire; Open University's 1977 graduate survey)

iii) as objectively measurable in some way (LaBuda (1974): Hamburger's Occupational Scale for rating socio-economic status; Gottfredson (1977): Holland's typology of personality)

### c. Need for further education

(Hiestand (1971): one year full-time study at 'professional or graduate school'; Clopton (1973): enrolment in graduate school).

### d. Need for new skills

(Robbins (1977): just over half her sample combined old skills with new; just under half had to acquire completely new skills).

### e. Reversibility or irreversibility of the decision

(Open University 1977 graduate survey).



### 3. Discussion of these definitions

Many of these studies seem to have taken as their starting-point the acceptance of the existence of a phenomenon, 'career change', which is a discrete, identifiable event or of 'career changers', an identifiable class of people. Their definitions are largely apparent through the criteria noted above rather than through discussions of semantics. They thus seem to have been greatly influenced by the operational considerations of their study, the identification of aspects of 'career' which were identifiable, concrete and measurable.

In selecting such criteria it was inevitable that they studied 'careers' and 'career changes' which manifested such identifiable characteristics, namely the substantive and to some extent the phenomenal 'careers'. Some also recognised the socially symbolic 'career' and were thus able to distinguish between a 'job change' and 'career change'.

'Clearly career change also involves job change. Empirically, then, the difference between within-career job change and between-career job change must be carefully evaluated'. (Murray, Powers and Havighurst, 1971, p. 5)

This led them to adopt certain methods which were expected to distinguish between such changes.

'Holland's (1973) occupational classification is used to provide a structure for distinguishing major career shifts from minor shifts that do not constitute important career redirection'. (Gottfredson, 1977, p. 437)

It could be asked whether the distinction between 'major' and 'minor' shifts would exist without Holland's classification and, if so, in what form? Would the individuals perceive their experience in the same way as the researcher?

The proof of the embarkation upon a new 'career' and hence the completion of 'career change' rather than a mere 'job change' lay largely in the attributes of the new job, such as a need for education or training. This had important implications for their research. First,



most studies had to take place after the 'career change' so that there was a tendency to regard it as a past event which invited explanation rather than exploration; to ask 'Who? Why? How?' of the 'career change' rather than to see it within the context of the individual's 'career'. Secondly, the need for education as proof of change meant that the samples studied tended to favour middle-class graduates: yet many of the researchers themselves, as well as other career development writers, have recognised the need for more widely-based samples. (Gottfredson, 1977; LaBuda, 1974; Robbins, 1977 and Thoreson and Ewart, 1976).

The definition of 'mid-career change': conclusions and implications for this particular study

It must be concluded that these (largely American) studies have been concerned mainly with the substantive 'career', giving relatively little attention to the phenomenal or other 'careers'. They have seen 'career change' as an event to be explained and through their research methods have eliminated the possibility of access to the actors' construction of their experiences. Further, their operational definitions have greatly constrained their findings. Therefore, despite the promise of a handful of studies, a relatively narrow and superficial picture of occupational change in 'mid-life' was available. Employment trends in the late 1970s and the increased need for counselling that they foretold suggested that broader and deeper examination would eventually become necessary.

These conclusions contributed to the abandonment of my original research proposal and greatly influenced my new research strategy. As Chapter Ten will show, I now perceived the field of enquiry as almost uncharted territory which needed exploration rather than a focussed look at one particular spot. I, therefore, decided to interview men - including working-class men - aged between 30 and 55 who were 'in the process of change' and to explore the objective and subjective aspects of that process. In order not to structure their definition of their situation I decided to forsake the use of the term 'career change' altogether.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The nature and experience of time

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE NATURE AND EXPERIENCE OF TIME

#### Introduction

Time is a significant dimension of change: an awareness of its nature and the ways in which people experience it is, therefore, essential in a study of 'mid-career change'. This chapter will examine it and its implications for both the method and the content of the research.

The starting point will be a fascinating paper by Hendricks and Hendricks (1976) on concepts of time in ageing research. Their thesis is that this research has been carried out in terms of one kind of time, whereas ageing and the individual's perception of life is experienced in others. Researchers recognised that there was some inconsistency which they tried to explain in terms of individual perception; Hendricks and Hendricks, however, suggest that the explanation lies in the existence of many times. They draw attention to two approaches to the thinking on time. One is rooted in Aristotle, who considered it independent of human consciousness and thus ultimately objective because related to the inherent motion of the universe. Although measures of time may vary 'its ultimate quantifiability was seen as absolute.' (p. 16). Instants of time are measured by clock and calendar and organised in a spatial, linear model. The second view of time which can be traced to Augustine has received strong support from Einstein's theory of relativity and from acknowledgement by physicists 'that other times besides unidirectional time exist, but as yet they lack the tools to identify them.' (p. 47). Time is a 'multifaceted qualitative variable based on subjective perception.' (p. 16). This subjective, existential time 'has many qualities, separate and not reducible to each other. Time is the meaning it has for the people who keep it.' (p. 12).

Hendricks and Hendricks note that in ageing studies the subjective experience of time is thought to reflect objective linear time: 'man's mind is seen as a registering instrument, able to record the objective properties of time.' (p. 32). However, they suggest, the individual may use several time perspectives, appropriate to various arenas of life, atomic, physiological, psychological, social or cosmic and research should take account of them.



'As the individual ages he experiences transformations on each level (physiological, psychological, etc.) ... We might reasonably expect concomitant changes to occur in his temporal perspectives. The multiple qualities of time in the structure of experience would lead us to assume that a number of temporal orientations would be possible for the aged individual.

We find instead an implicit denial of this expectation in the literature. The emphasis on the linear, irreversible and uninterrupted flow of physical time supports the assumption that the normal human experiences a steady, even temporal flow and duration. A distorted time perspective is commonly identified only with mentally deranged, abnormal or suicidal individuals ... individuals are presumed to undergo similar temporal experiences.' (pp. 39-40)

They conclude with Sartre (1963) that the modification of temporal experience gives the possibility of creative action.

'Because the mind possesses time and remembers events out of their chronological contexts, temporal experience becomes a personal project.' (p. 42)

'The linear model of time denies that alternatives are potentially available to the actor ... It is ... through the construction of projects that man's time becomes his own.' (p. 45)

'When time is seen as a process, continually becoming, a man is free to attribute a variety of meanings to his temporal experience. The imposition of quantitative measures on temporal flow exerts a restrictive force on man's experience.' (p. 49)

#### The time dimension: implications for the method of study

This view of time as subjective and individually-constructed throws some light upon the definitions of 'middle age' discussed in Chapter Two. It also has significant implications for the method to be used in this study and for research in general.

One of the pitfalls against which researchers, and particularly those



engaged in qualitative research, are warned is that of subjectivity. However, the recognition of subjectivity in the perception of time must bring acknowledgement of the impossibility of objectivity on the part of the person under study. The most tightly-controlled objective measures in a study concerned with change and the passage of time will not yield 'the truth', for this is constructed and interpreted by the individual. Subjectivity of some kind and degree is, therefore, inevitable in research of this kind by people upon people. This will be discussed further in Chapter Ten.

The personal construction of time particularly contributes to the difficulties of using remembered experiences as research data. These start from selective and interpretative initial perceptions and are transformed by the subjective experience of time and other unconscious influences upon the memory eventually to emerge as 'remembrance of things past'. In recalling an earlier present the individual may modify it, use it out of context, re-create it or mould it to the needs of the current present. Answers to the researcher's questions are, therefore, far from objective records of events.

Perhaps the poet or the novelist can best capture or express this experience of time. Durrell's (1968, p. 370) quartet of novels woven around characters in shifting perspectives over time illustrates the re-working of the past through new perceptions in the present and 'across the transforming screens of memory'.

'To intercalate realities ... is the only way to be faithful to Time, for at every moment in Time the possibilities are endless in their multiplicity. Life consists in the act of choice'.

Proust's (1983) A la Recherche du Temps Perdu, in recreating the past, shows how strands from different periods of time become interwoven. Childhood impressions, he writes (p. 202)

'... by their persistence in those of my present-day impressions to which they can still be linked ... give those impressions a foundation, a depth, a dimension lacking from the rest. They invest them, too, with a charm, a significance which is for me alone.'



Vaillant (1977, p. 199) who has been involved in longitudinal research, is aware of the 'distorting effect of time upon our vision', which thwarts any attempt at complete objectivity in much social research. It leads to creative reminiscence (Butler, 1968) in the person studied and distorts the view of the observer. Furthermore, it draws the researcher out of detachment into involvement. In prompting someone to recall their past, in calling upon and colouring their memories with the needs and the situation of the present, the researcher becomes involved in the process and thus cannot assume a neutral rôle. The research method adopted must allow for this situation, which offers opportunities as well as limitations for the researcher. This will be discussed again in Chapter Ten.

#### The time dimension: implications for the content of this study

My recognition of the full significance of the time dimension has grown as the research has proceeded and I am now aware of an extensive body of literature in this area. Although there is evidently much therein which is relevant to the understanding of the process of change its investigation would be a research project in itself. I have, therefore, had to be very selective and selective from a partial knowledge of this rapidly growing area of study: there is, for example, a Research Centre for Motivation and Time Perspective at the University of Louvain, Belgium, an International Society for the Study of Time and Gioscia (1972) proposes founding 'a new cross-disciplinary science, which I would like to call "chronetics"'.

The remainder of this chapter presents a brief review of some of the literature on the time perspective and the structuring of time which seems of particular significance for understanding the process of change in general and the men I interviewed in particular.

#### Time Perspective

Hoornaert (1973) makes a comprehensive review of the literature on subjective or 'psychological' time. He distinguishes between time calculation (reckoning with instruments), time orientation (reckoning without instruments), time estimation (of the duration of time), and time perspective (or horizon, the viewpoint upon past, present and future



seen in reciprocal relationship: the past and future are referred to the present and to each other). Of particular relevance to this study is the research which showed that time perspective is dynamic and continually re-organised; that one direction, whether past, present or future, may be preferred; that there are degrees of extension or depth of time perspective, varying spans of time in people's conception of the past or future.

Despite the apparent clarity of Hoornaert's classification, there is less agreement and more confusion in the terminology used elsewhere. De Volder (1979), in another extensive review, notes that 'time perspective' has several aspects; of these, the involvement with one particular time zone (such as the future) he calls 'time orientation'. Rabin (1978) adopts different terms. For him, 'time orientation' is generally used in Hoornaert's sense of awareness of location in time, though he recognises (p. 295) its less frequent use in De Volder's sense of 'the preferential tendency ... with respect to the past, present or future.' 'Time perspective', which is closely related to 'orientation', is (p. 296) 'the timing and ordering of personalised events'.

These variations in terminology probably reflect the difficulty of distinguishing between these subtle concepts in individual experience. Certainly, this particular study is unable to do so and for the remainder of this chapter and part of Chapter Sixteen will present nebulous ideas, which would probably fall into the various categories of 'time perspective' and 'orientation' referred to above, without attempting to define them precisely. To avoid confusion with the term 'orientation to the environment', which will also be discussed in Chapter Sixteen, these ideas will be referred to here as 'time perspective'.

### 1. Time perspective and personality

Gorman and Wessman (1977) conclude from their own and others' research that there are significant relationships between time perspective and personality. Rabin (1978) notes that most research in this area relates to future time perspective; he finds a positive correlation between 'future orientation' and 'ego strength'.



a. The 'psychotypology of time'

Mann, Siegler and Osmond (1972, p. 142) propose that:

'... time is derived from one's personality temperament and type, each personality type perceiving its own cosmos, or Umwelt<sup>1</sup> and its own private perceptual set for time. Time, in this instance, rather than being a learned social perception, involves a wholly private perception.'

They apply this notion of Umwelt to Jung's (1946) typology of personality which postulates that there are eight different but normal ways of perceiving or experiencing the world: four functional types (thinking, feeling, sensation, intuition) each either predominantly extraverted or introverted. Based on their analysis of case studies from novels, films and history, Mann, Siegler and Osmond observe that each functional type has a different orientation to time and so they present a 'psychotypology of time'.

i) feeling type - relates to past

Time is continuous, circular; the present derives from the past. Individuals of this type are uncomfortable in new situations and postpone decisions; by the age of 35 their personal past has accumulated sufficiently to enable youthful daring to be replaced with conservatism. To them only memorable events are valuable and they, therefore, influence the present by intensifying emotions to make it memorable.

'After a certain point, although times change, these individuals cannot. They are trapped in remembrance of things past. Thus there are many people who are living in a way which is out of step with the realities of the current scene.' (p. 150).

This is very damaging in modern, fast-moving societies.

ii) thinking type - relates to linear time

Time is again continuous, but flowing from past into the future: the continuity of the process is crucial. Thinking individuals ignore

<sup>1</sup> 'Experiential world, space-time bubble.'



discrete, spontaneous happenings if not relevant to the total process. They are concerned with ideas, principles and planning; they respect time and time intervals.

iii) sensation type - relates to present

Time is discontinuous; there are weak links with the past and little sense of future. This type is concerned with the present, immediacy, concreteness; they respond immediately to environmental stimuli. Hence they are practical, manually skillful, efficient in crises and emergencies, not acting according to a pre-determined plan but 'because action is the only appropriate response to the strength of the stimuli which he is receiving' (p. 164). For them, waiting is denial and they constantly want to experience new sensations.

iv) intuitive type - relates to future

Time is discontinuous, for intuitives do not integrate the past into the present. Theirs is a pre-cognitive function which anticipates the future and experiences visions as reality.

'The actual direction of time's flow is, in their experiential world, backward. The intuitive first experiences the future and then is constrained to return to the present and wait until chronological time has caught up with his vision.' (p. 171)

Although they can see the future, they cannot plan for it; they can, however, inspire others with their view of the future.

If it were possible to categorise people into these four types, this 'psychotypology of time' would offer a valuable basis for organising and understanding the experiences of people undergoing change. It also has implications for guidance and counselling: are all four types able to muster or master the skills so frequently advocated for coping with an open-ended future? (Super, 1977 b; Walz and Benjamin, 1974).

b. Time perspective and locus of control

There have been attempts to correlate time perspective with Rotter's (1966) locus of control. (This and the possible weaknesses in its scoring are outlined in Chapter Nine.) While Platt and Eisenman (1968)



identified no significant difference in 'future orientation' between 'internals' and 'externals', Shybut (1968) found that those high in 'internal control' were more 'future orientated' than those low in 'internal control'. Rabin (1978) also found a positive relationship between 'future orientation' and a tendency towards 'internal control'. Thayer, Gorman, Wessman, Schmeidler and Manucci (1975) find support for their hypothesis that 'externals' are significantly more harrassed and pressured, discontinuous and undirected, procrastinating and inefficient, inconsistent and changeable than 'internals'. They note that it is impossible to say which comes first, the internal-external attitude or the time perspective but that each feeds the other.

'... the more an individual feels harrassed, disorganised and pressured by time, with poor scheduling and inefficient use of time, along with inconsistent and changeable goals, the more likely he is to create the very circumstances wherein his own efforts are less likely to result in a sense of personal control over his own life.' (pp. 278-79)

Argyris (1957), analysing organisational behaviour, notes that where individuals have little control over their working environment and over 'the clarity and stability of their future' (p. 233) they have a short time perspective. This makes the employee feel uncertain and insecure. On the other hand, Knibbs (1979) found that some managers whose present was unsatisfactory looked to the future for the satisfaction of their needs and ambitions.

## 2. Changes in time perspective

Several writers note the possibility of change in time perspective. Gorman and Wessman (1977, pp. 240-1) suggest that the relationship between it and personality, though stable, is not fixed: there are dynamic and changing aspects of time perspective. Rabin (1978, p. 295) points to the possibility of change as a result of psychotherapeutic intervention and of normal 'development and growth'.

### a. The function of time perspective

Gorman and Wessman (1977, pp. 244-5) also draw attention to the function that time perspective has for the individual.



'... time concepts permit the person to erect a meaningful and coherent framework for living and acting from the welter of happenings that impinge upon him and in which he participates.'

'Apparent differences in time concepts might be based on very similar motives, yet sometimes apparent identity in time concepts between groups of individuals might, in fact, be serving quite different motives and purposes.'

This highlights the possibility that the time perspective may vary with changing circumstances, a matter of relevance when trying to understand the process of change.

#### b. Time perspective and environmental change

The acceleration of change in the environment 'disturbs our inner equilibrium', writes Toffler (1971, p. 40). It

'shortens the duration of many situations. This not only drastically alters their "flavour", but hastens their passage through the experiential channel.'

The perception of the acceleration of external change is thus likely to influence the awareness of the speed of the passage of time as well as the time perspective: tomorrow arrives more rapidly than ever before so that there is a need to look more and further into the future.

The notion of social time is relevant here. Gioscia's (1972) model to explain social interactions and individual experiences has three parameters: metachronic - anachronic (ahead of or behind the times of social process); epichronic - catachronic (elated or depressed by time); hyperchronic - hypochronic (sensitive to the rate of change, whether patient or bored). Together they form synchrony, the disintegration of which is achrony. All the dimensions are dialectically inter-related so that change in one parameter cannot produce synchrony: the anachronic person who hurries does not become metachronic but anxious. People have a sense of the accustomed rate of time and if they feel that the rate of experience is gaining on hoped-for changes and goals, they strive towards them. If, on the other hand, visions recede at a



faster rate than progress, they are tempted to revolution or despair.

Gioscia writes (pp. 119-20) of the relationship between synchrony and achrony:

'When no generalisation, creativity, synthesis, transcendence, growth, development (call it what you will) is experienced, life disintegrates into the dimensions of achrony, i.e. too fast, too slow, too high, too low, too good, too dull. Synchronisation, then is the dialectical resolution of achrony; achrony is the disintegration of synchrony. When it 'goes well', paradox of paradoxes, we do not notice the time passing. The 'interval' between creative urge and creative act lies unmarked ... we have experienced 'times' in which we needed to note no duration, no passage and no motion.'

This will be referred to again in the section below dealing with disturbed experiences of time and later in Chapter Six.

### c. Ageing and changes in time perspective

A persistent interest in gerontology is the changing time perspective with age. Neugarten's (1968, p. 97) view of this in 'middle age' is often quoted.

'... the new difference in the way time is perceived. Life is re-structured in terms of life-left-to-live rather than life-since-birth. Not only the reversal in directionality but the awareness that time is finite ...'

Time is said to pass more swiftly for older people. This can be explained in purely quantitative terms (as in Toffler, 1971): a given period of time represents a much smaller proportion of the total life-span of the older person than of the younger so that its passage seems faster. Toffler also quotes (p. 45) the possibility that 'the gradual slowing down of metabolic processes' with age causes the world to appear to be moving faster. Wallach and Green (1968), on the other hand, explain the subjective speed of time in terms of its value, the scarcity value of time with age. Siegman (1962) suggests that the more future-orientated a person is the more rapidly time seems to pass.



Hendricks and Hendricks (1976, p. 37) report from ageing studies that 'the quality of filled time is an important determinant of temporal perspectives.' With personally or socially significant activity the individual can see an extended future. This is consistent with what has been noted above on time perspective and the locus of control.

I shall refer to a number of these issues again in Chapter Six.

### 3. Disturbance in time perspective

The possibility of disturbance in time perspective could be relevant to the understanding of the individual's negotiation of change and of 'mid-life crisis'. While a degree of disorientation is familiar and acceptable when drifting in and out of sleep, while dreaming or day-dreaming, it may also be experienced more generally during waking hours. There are several explanations for this but Hendricks and Hendricks (1976) question the validity of explaining it in terms of abnormality. The synchrony and achrony of Gioscia's (1972) social time are possibly relevant here.

#### a. In psychopathological conditions

A disturbed experience of time is commonly reported in a number of psychopathological conditions. Gorman and Wessman (1977, p. 246 ff.) note its incidence in schizophrenia, 'neurotic disorders', 'affective disorders', 'personality and character disorders' and 'organic brain syndromes and mental retardation.'

#### b. In induced states

Similar experiences of time are induced by drugs or hypnosis which, write Hendricks and Hendricks (1976, p. 41), can

'... allow the present to expand and the past and future to become distanced and insignificant.'

#### c. In conditions of stress and extreme anxiety

The disorientation in time perspective is one of the effects of severe



stress, though this is possibly associated with the experience of marginality referred to below.

d. In the marginality of status passage

Musgrove (1977) outlines some of the literature which treats marginality either as a position in society (Berger and Luckmann, 1971) or as a phase in status passage (Van Gennep, 1960), the indeterminate stage between separation from a former status and re-aggregation into it or incorporation into a new status. He writes (p. 7)

'The former normal position was anchored in time, like the 'proper' stage of life or career; but now temporality is disordered, or life is lived by a different timetable or clock.'

The jolt in timetable will be referred to again in the section below. Musgrove notes the 'transformation of consciousness' and derangement of time which may be experienced in the marginal state. Of his case histories he writes (p. 223)

'It seemed that in reconceptualising time one constructed a new self and in two dramatic instances... the collapse of self in a liminal (marginal) phase was inseparable from the dissolution and inversion of time.'

Similar distortions of time and reality have been noted elsewhere and in other status passages: in marital breakdown where 'time passes without his comprehension' (Hart, 1976) and in bereavement. It seems likely that it could also be experienced during such upheavals as redundancy.

Timetables and the structuring of time

The discussion of 'middle age' in Chapter Two referred to the social structuring of time and its influences upon the individual. This is clearly seen in Roth's (1963) study of the 'timetables' of hospital patients which shows how subtle and unstated schedules inculcate certain expectations and influence the behaviour of both patients and staff.



The stress engendered when such timetables are altered or ignored (Musgrove, 1977; Neugarten, 1968) has also been mentioned. This chapter will conclude by noting Seltzer's (1976) discussion of 'career change' in terms of asynchronisation, or 'time-disordered relationships'. She advocates that they be studied in order to predict and reduce the sources of strain and to recognise in them the potential seeds of social change. To do this she proposes using a modification of Merton's (1938) model which relates the nature of the individual's adaptation to the goals of culture and to the institutionalised means of attaining those goals. Seltzer suggests the use of the same categories of adaptation (conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion) but the substitution of 'career goals' for the goals of the culture and 'goal timing' for institutionalised means.

	<u>career goals</u>	<u>goal timing</u>	
conformity	+	+	
innovation	+	-	+ acceptance
ritualism	-	+	- rejection
retreatism	-	-	+ rejection and substitution of something else
rebellion	+	+	

Figure Two

Responses to Time-Disordered Relationships (from Seltzer, 1976; based on Merton, 1938)

She suggests that conformists do not seek 'time-disordered relationships' and, if they occurred, would be shaken by them. The innovators make their own timetables. The ritualists no longer expect to meet their goals but work as though they do. The retreatists' behaviour is rarely appropriate to their age-grade. The rebels 'march to the beat of a different time, as well as a different tune.' (p. 123). They have a high potential for engagement or re-engagement, but not for disengagement and may be active agents of change.

Although as Seltzer admits, this model is based on a linear concept of time, it is tempting to try to discern some relationship between it and Mann, Siegler and Osmond's 'psychotypology of time' outlined earlier.



This would, of course, be a very crude means of categorisation but one which might offer some insights into the ways in which people respond to change. The 'feeling' type is perhaps the equivalent to the 'conformist'; the 'thinking' type is an 'innovator'; the 'sensation' type a 'ritualist' and the 'intuitive' type a 'rebel'? The model could perhaps be expanded to incorporate the ideas of Maccoby (1978) and Rapoport (1970) on the adaptation of managers (see Collin, 1979 b).

#### The time dimension: reflections

This brief look at some of the literature on time has raised a number of issues of significance for research method and for the content of this particular study which is concerned with a time-dependent concept, 'career' and 'mid-career change'. As later chapters will show, I tried to acknowledge and take account of these issues in my research but, on looking back, must conclude that time, both as an experience and as a concept, is very elusive.



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## CHAPTER FIVE

### CHANGES THROUGH ADULTHOOD AND 'MIDDLE AGE'

#### Introduction

In exploring the context and content of 'mid-career change' I studied the literature to learn about the changes occurring during 'middle age' but found that, because of the difficulties of definition noted in Chapter Two, these were frequently embedded in the treatment of the whole sweep of adulthood. This chapter reviews this literature, focusing on the middle years wherever possible.

As the conclusions to that earlier chapter indicate, 'middle age' seems to have taken on a new significance during the last twenty years or so. For example, in 1953 Havighurst gave nine of the 332 pages of his Human Development and Education to 'the developmental tasks of middle age'. In 1973 he records that the first attempts to look beyond adolescence and to take a life-span view of the individual were made by psychologists during the period 1920 to 1960, and then only by a few pioneers (the 'classical' theorists, the Kansas City Study of Adult Life researchers and the early longitudinal studies). Their work remains of considerable significance and is to be referred to again later. Havighurst suggests (1973, p. 14) that this period of life remained ignored and lacking in concepts and theory despite the existence of empirical research possibly because 'there does not seem to be much change with age during the broad expanse of adulthood'.

This statement was published ten years ago: this chapter shows how much that state of affairs has changed since then. There is now a substantial body of literature on many aspects of adulthood and 'middle age' and concepts and theories have taken root. There are several possible reasons for this change: the academic 'bandwagon', the hitherto unsuspected fascination of adulthood uncovered by research, the existence of more 'middle-aged' people in the population (see Appendix Two) and of more pressing problems facing them, or other societal changes. However, despite its considerable interest, the explanation for this increased attention cannot be fully explored in this thesis: it will, however, be referred to throughout for it has implications for the understanding of 'mid-career change'.



This chapter will first examine some of the basic concepts used in the literature, then outline the major areas of change (physiological, cognitive, psychological and social), draw some conclusions about the nature of 'middle age' and note their implications for this study of 'mid-career change'. The following chapter will then focus upon 'mid-life crisis' as a possible representative or distillation of these changes or as an index of the changing nature of 'middle age' itself.

#### Concepts of change in the literature on adulthood

Before outlining the changes said to take place through adulthood, it is important to examine the concepts used to express and explain those changes and to identify the basic assumptions underlying them. Once again, as the previous chapters have noted of their own topics, there is yet little agreement or consistency in the use of terminology and the definition of concepts. Like 'career', adulthood has recently been the subject of considerable research and theory which have been self-perpetuating and often uncritical in many respects. This section will, therefore, note and briefly discuss the several concepts used. However, as with the changing significance of 'middle age', it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine these at any length.

There is considerable overlapping in the usage of the terms to be discussed, yet there are consistent and significant differences which point to the existence of several discrete concepts derived from different basic assumptions about the nature and perception of human experience. (For some discussion of the epistemology of the models and theories of development see Reese and Overton, 1970). There are differences in the degree to which change is attributed to 'nature' or 'nurture': adult change is innate ('maturation') or is determined by the environment ('adjustment'). This difference is reflected in the extent to which change is perceived as continuous or discontinuous and patterned in a sequential, predictable and normative manner. 'Maturation' and often 'development' convey such a pattern, whereas 'adaptation', 'adjustment' and 'transformation' do not. Finally, there are differences in the degree to which the end or some intervening state of change is evaluated as desirable. 'Maturation', 'development' and 'adaptation' may, in lessening degrees, incorporate the notion of 'maturity' or 'mental health', 'fully functioning' or 'self actualisation' as the goal and often the measure of change.



In a useful discussion Smelser (1980) raises similar issues, identifying the differences between certain major writers lying in their recognition of varying degrees of, first, orderliness in the socio-cultural environment, then, of stress upon internal or external factors and, finally, of orderliness within individual lives. These differences lead to the acceptance of different levels of determinacy in the individual's life.

### 1. Life-course; life-cycle; life-span

Levinson et al. (1978, p. 6) distinguish between these concepts in terms of the content of the period of time. 'Life-span' refers solely to the interval of time; 'life-course' indicates the flow of the individual's life over the period; and 'life-cycle', which they relate etymologically to 'development', conveys a sense of some basic sequence with particular characteristics. These definitions are not necessarily honoured by others, but this thesis will use 'life-span' as the least evaluative of the three terms.

### 2. Growth and maturation

The concepts of growth and maturation, even when applied to psychological changes, are strongly influenced by the notions of physiological changes through the life-span. They connote a genetically-programmed sequence of growth (expansion and the enlargement or addition of parts: Sanford, 1966) which is 'relatively independent of environmental events' (Hilgard et al., 1979, p. 65) and which may proceed through recognisable stages (see 3 (b) below). This unfolding continues gradually, given favourable circumstances, until completion or maturity is reached, beyond which no further growth is needed or possible. Implicit in these concepts is the inevitability of decay: the peak cannot be maintained indefinitely.

The acceptance of eventual decay was incorporated into the earlier theories concerning the physiological and cognitive changes of adulthood, but is now being seriously questioned (Allman, 1981). Maturity in psychological terms, too, may now often be construed in more open-ended terms: Sanford (1966, p. 32) notes 'the commonsense view, adopted by many psychologists' of maturity as 'the predominance of the efficient, the discriminating, the differentiated and realistic over the primitive,



the impulsive, the passionate.' Heath (1977) has developed a 'dimensional' rather than a stage model of maturity, of which he writes (pp. 2-4)

'Maturing results in personality traits that different civilised societies have historically valued as characteristic of their "ideal" or "good" person ... implies dimensional continuity ... not some preadapted or achievable end state that suddenly looms over the psychological horizon.'

The individual matures along the interdependent dimensions of symbolisation, allocentricism, integration, stability and autonomy in the following 'sectors of his personality': cognitive skills, self concept, values and personal relationships.

The process of growth is not necessarily even throughout the life-cycle, nor throughout all parts of an organism at a given time (as in adolescence). It is often not consciously experienced, but at times it can cause tension and stress (as in teething or the menopause). It calls for modification of self-image, values and behaviour. The adult cannot behave physically, emotionally or mentally as the toddler does. 'While children mark the passing years by their changing bodies, adults change their minds.' (Gould, 1975, p. 57)

### 3. Development

Reese and Overton (1970, p. 126) explain development as changes in the organisation or form of a structure with consequent changes in function. In developmental psychology, they say, it is implied that these changes are unidirectional, irreversible and directed towards certain end states or goals. Sanford (1966) perceives it as increasing complexity and Gutmann (1980, p. 38) as

'... a predictable addition, the emergence, in proper season, of hitherto unavailable potentials for executive capacities.'

For Hopson and Scally (1980, p. 183-4)

'... development ... means more than mere change ... a movement towards a greater realisation of personal potential ... Change may



not involve progression; development does ... It is not merely moving from one stage to another ...'

As well as increasing complexity, development involves (Osborn, Charnley and Withnall, 1982, p. 34)

'... the orderly and sequential changes in characteristics and attitudes that adults experience over time.'

This orderly sequence is sometimes regarded as hierarchical; it is also predictive, normative, evaluative. While development is assumed to be continuous overall, a question still debated (see Hilgard et al., 1979, p. 66) is whether the changes are smoothly continuous or discontinuous, in a series of steps. Reese and Overton (1970, p. 128) liken continuous development to the growth in height of a plant, which is measured in terms of time since planting, that is, against some external standard. Discontinuous development is exemplified by the embryo-larva-pupa-imago sequence, that is, by stages which may or may not correlate with standard measures of time. Much of the literature, as will be noted below, favours the view of discontinuity or stages in life-span development; Reese and Overton (p. 143) write that in theories which accept levels of organisation these will be translated into the concept of stages.

#### a. Phases; stages; ages

Some of the most influential theories of life-span development have been formulated in terms of stages: Erikson (1950) on psychosocial development; Kohlberg (1973) on moral development; Loevinger (1976) on ego development; Piaget (1972) on cognitive development. Much of the research upon the middle years of adulthood has also been concerned with the possibility of identifying the sequence and nature of the steps of development (variously called 'phases' or 'stages', as noted below). For example, Levinson et al. (1978, pp. 6-7) perceive

'... a series of periods or stages ... qualitatively different seasons ... Every season has its own time ... its necessary place...'

For Sheehy (1976) development proceeds through a series of 'steps' and



individuals have their own 'step-style' or characteristic way of negotiating them.

The acceptance of such an approach to development indicates the assumption of the possibility of normative development; and often of the universality of the nature of development, 'the life cycle of the species' (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 322). Some writers voice a belief that it is imperative for the individual to follow the given process of development (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 198: 'If not, they will pay the price ...')

The identification of these steps raises the kinds of problems for research which are discussed in Chapters Three, Four, Ten and Twelve. Is it possible to impose uniform, normative, objectively-perceived structures upon individual experience? (See also the discussion of the work of Levinson et al. in Appendix Three.)

However, not all those concerned with the study of adulthood share these assumptions. Fiske (1980, p. 243) writes

'The adoption of self-actualising, developmental, personality, or normative crisis theories may be premature.'

Her research findings (Lowenthal et al., 1975) do not 'fit comfortably into existing frameworks', 'couched in terms of continuities and growth' (1980, p. 244). Instead (p. 240)

'... the often dramatic shifts in their hierarchies of commitment ... suggest the possibility of recurring periods of identity diffusion ... Those who reordered their commitments ... were far more likely to be satisfied with their ways of life.'

Hopson and Scally (1980, p. 181) find the 'inevitability' of the stage approach 'too restrictive' and Notman (1980, p. 89), noting that the 'linear stages of adult development may not be so helpful for a meaningful concept of women's mid-life', is implicitly querying their significance for men, too. Vaillant (1977), while acknowledging 'patterns and rhythms in the life cycle' (p. 199), and 'a developmental hierarchy' in defence mechanisms (p. 340), asserts that (p. 201) 'adults change



dynamically in the process' so that (p. 29) there is no 'entirely predictable trajectory'.

The variations in the terminology used to express these steps in development will now be briefly examined.

### i) phases

Osborn, Charnley and Withnall (1982) note that 'phase' is used to denote an interval of time marked by reference to age, changing social expectations or some event in life. These lie outside the developmental process itself. Chapter Twelve, however, stipulates the meaning of 'phase' as an interval of time defined by changes within the process and uses 'period' to denote intervals created by reference to external standards.

### ii) stages

The stages of development may be arranged hierarchically from simple to more complex (Kohlberg, Loevinger, Piaget); or they may be just sequential (Levinson et al., 1978, pp. 319-20). They are generally perceived as easily identifiable and discrete, though there may be a confused transitional period between stages (as in Levinson et al.) There is sometimes particular interest in the length of each stage and a desire to link stages with ages (again, Levinson et al.)

All individuals are considered to pass through the sequence of stages. The nature of each stage is, according to Osborn, Charnley and Withnall (1982) 'based on objectives and values which seem to be generally believed to be desirable.' Thus there are strong normative and evaluative overtones to the concept of stages. For Levinson et al. (1978, pp. 53-4) evaluation is in terms of 'viable in society and suitable for the self.'

### iii) ages

The difficulties of definition in terms of chronological age are discussed in Chapter Two, but Levinson et al. (1978, p. 318) write 'For every period we can give a typical age of onset.' They dispose of the problems of definition by age by reference to their conceptual framework



'those who study development in terms of a single aspect, such as biological ageing, psychological maturity or occupational career, find considerable variability in the ages at which particular changes occur ... Only when we look at development in terms of the evolution of life structure do the periods follow an age-linked sequence.'

The validity of their 'life structure' is, therefore, of considerable significance for their claim: see Appendix Three.

#### b. Developmental tasks

Closely bound to the concept of sequential stages of development is the notion of the developmental task. Havighurst (1953, p. 2), who has been closely associated with the dissemination of the term, writes that

'A developmental task ... arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness, disapproval by the society, and difficulty with later tasks.'

At a later stage (1973, p. 11) the notion of task is elaborated to incorporate Erikson's (1950) psychosocial crises as well as biological changes and social expectations.

As theorists committed to the concept of stage development, Levinson et al. (1978, pp. 53-4) are also concerned with developmental tasks and it is these, rather than 'marker events' such as marriage, which define their stages, the 'periods' of the life structure. They identify (pp. 330-6) these tasks as building and modifying the life structure, working upon its 'components' and 'becoming more individuated'.

#### c. Developmental crises and transitions

Also closely related to the concept of sequential stages are the notions of developmental crises and transitions. 'Critical periods' are acknowledged in biological science; during them development is



more than usually sensitive to environmental factors or change. Without such periods further development would not take place; during them the environment is influential in directing further development into one particular channel. (Kretchmer and Walcher, 1970).

In life-span psychology Erikson's (1950) psychosocial crises have been immeasurably influential. Newman and Newman (1975, pp. 18-19) explain his use of 'crisis'

'The word "crisis" in this context refers to a normal set of stresses and strains rather than to an extraordinary set of events ... at each stage ... society ... makes certain psychic demands upon the individual ... The demands are experienced by the individual as mild but persistent guidelines and expectations for his behaviour. As (he) nears the end of a particular stage ... he is forced to make some type of resolution, adjusting himself to the demands ... while simultaneously translating the social demands into personal terms.

This process produces a ... state of tension ... which must be reduced in order ... to proceed to the next stage. It is this tension which is called the psychosocial crisis.'

Nevertheless, the sense of 'crisis' seems to have been heightened in the literature. Several writers refer to the Chinese characters for the word which represent a turning-point at which both danger and opportunity exist. Some emphasise the positive aspects of this, but many the negative. The inevitable, indispensable but desirable nature of crisis, however painful, is re-iterated: its apotheosis, 'mid-life crisis', forms the subject of the next chapter.

Levinson et al. (1978, p. 49) write that the life structure 'consists of a series of alternating stable ... and transitional periods.' These transitional periods question and re-appraise the existing life structure, explore possibilities for change and lay down the basis of a new stable period. For the majority of men, they assert (p. 199), 'Mid-life Transition is a time of moderate or severe crisis ... emotional turmoil ... despair'. They see these as developmental transitions, normative, universal and essential for further development; they also refer to



them as 'developmental crises' (pp. 198-9). It seems that Levinson et al. and Sheehy (1976, who chose to use the term 'passages' rather than 'crises' but nevertheless linked the two terms in the title of her best-seller) have tried to impose their own mark upon the literature by changing the terminology though not the meaning.

#### d. The influence of the environment upon development

The chapter so far has examined uses of 'development' which seem to focus upon the internal basis (almost 'maturational') for change; it will now note other instances in which writers clearly acknowledge the effect of the environment upon the individual's development. Clausen (1972) and White (1975), for example, recognise the environment as a major variable. Levinson et al. (1978, pp. 46-8), who adopted a multi-disciplinary approach to their study, write (p. xii) 'Our view of adult development is social-psychological ...'

In some areas, as Allman (1981) discusses, the earlier 'maturational model' is being challenged by the 'discontinuity hypothesis' of Birren et al. (1963) which emphasises interaction with the external world and Labouvie-Vief's (1977) 'plasticity model' which, because of such interaction, regards development as characterised by irregularity rather than unidirectional progress. This echoes Fiske's (1980) position referred to above.

Assumptions about the nature of the environment may also influence assumptions about development. If it assumed to be both stable and structured, then the effect may be to impart some degree of structure to the individual's life (Levinson et al., 1978; Sheehy, 1976); if it is changing and fragmented, then the individual's life will be less likely to be perceived as displaying order and structure (Fiske, 1980).

The more theorists admit to the influence of the environment upon the individual the less, it would seem, can they sustain the view of development as a predictable sequence of changes and the nearer, therefore, 'development' approaches the concept of 'adaptation'. This raises further questions about the validity of the concepts and theory used by Levinson et al. (See next section and Appendix Three).



#### 4. Adaptation

This section discusses the use of this term in psychological literature, where it is often contrasted with 'adjustment' (see below). It is also used by organisational sociologists - see Chapter Eight: 1 (c ii) - who perhaps place more emphasis upon the interaction with the environment than upon the individual who experiences it.

The discussion in the last section indicates that there are differences in the use of 'development', ranging from perception of a predictable sequence of changes (Levinson et al., 1978; Sheehy, 1976) to that of more open-ended progress (Fiske, 1980; Labouvie-Vief, 1977). Thus 'development' merges into the concept of adaptation which denotes changes in the individual in response to both individual characteristics and to environmental influences.

Adaptation is the response to interaction with the environment which results in both individual and environmental changes (which in turn call for yet further adaptation). It is, therefore, a dynamic process, the perception of which is not confined by the static framework through which the individual moves in some of the theories of development. Because environmental changes are often unscheduled and outside the individual's control, the process of adaptation cannot be continuous, unidirectional nor sequentially patterned. Individuals, however, may establish characteristic modes of response which could mask irregularities and give an apparent uniformity within each life.

However, some writers, apparently, do not exclude some degree of evaluation of the present state of the individual (in terms of 'development', this would be an intermediate state, but 'adaptation' recognises no ultimate destination). Sanford (1966), for example, uses the notion of 'health' which he explains as the restoration of equilibrium through homeostasis.

'... organisms are irritable and open to disequilibrating inputs, to manage some of which they have no alternative but to expand.'  
(p. 37)

'The person changes, as he must in order to adapt, but he does not change altogether, or even, as a rule, in large areas



of himself; the changes made are consistent with what he was before. The healthy person is upset by strains but not too much; and the equilibrium that he gains is not the same as that which he enjoyed before; it is on a higher level, but this higher level of functioning is no more different from the earlier one than it needs to be in order to incorporate adaptations to the new strain.' (pp. 30-1)

For Vaillant (1977, p. 13), 'health is adaptation'. The individual's response to life's discontinuities (p. 29) is influenced by both inner maturation and environmental circumstance; the adaptive mechanisms are themselves arranged in a 'developmental hierarchy' (p. 340). He asserts (p. 373) that 'mental health exists.'

In his recognition of the influence of and response to the environment White (1975) appears to use the term 'natural growth' (p. 329 ff.) in the sense of adaptation discussed above. Growth, he says (p. 330), 'implies both a process of change and a direction of change'. This direction is 'maturity' (p. 332): towards 'stabilising ego identity', 'freeing of personal relationships', 'deepening of interests', 'humanising of values' and the 'expansion of caring'.

The recognition that open-endedness is an essential attribute of adaptation is reinforced by Levinson's (1980, pp. 273-6) treatment of it in his discussion of the four perspectives upon adult life: 'personality development', 'adult socialisation', 'adaptation' and his own 'life-course perspective'. This he sees (p. 267) as an attempt to combine the first three 'within a single framework'.

'The adaptation perspective deals with single events in their own right. It does not require us to place the single events within the framework of the adult life course as a whole, and it does not deal with the problem of order and sequence in adult life. ... To adopt(his) perspective, however, we must have at least a preliminary theory of the adult life course.'

Levinson's perspective differs from that of adaptation in another significant way. Although he and his team (1978, pp. 46-9) write of the 'interpenetration of self and world', their focus is, nevertheless,



upon the individual's life. By contrast, the 'stress and coping paradigm' of Lazarus (1980) demonstrates the essential characteristics of adaptation. His notion of 'transaction' (pp. 36-8; see also Chapter Nine) emphasises the 'mutuality of influence' between individual and environment in adaptation, 'the fusion of person and environment into a unit, a relationship, a system.' It also recognises (p. 66) the 'role played by environmental influences in adaptation and maladaptation' while the concept of 'coping' acknowledges the dynamic nature of adaptation and the cognitive strategies it calls for. (There are similarities with Sanford's (1966) 'higher level' of equilibrium and the synthesis proposed by Riegel (1973), who adopts a dialectical approach to development.)

### 5. Adjustment

Whereas adaptation is a response to the environment which can expand or enrich the individual, adjustment, on the assumption of the existence of a powerful society bearing down upon the individual and exacting conformity, is a reactive and hence constraining response. In particular, it does not find favour with the humanistic psychologists so that Vaillant (1977, p. 360) has to assert that it is of adaptation and not adjustment that he writes. It is not a concept which is commonly used in the literature on adult change except, perhaps, as a synonym for adaptation.

### 6. Transformation

Transformation is another uncommon term in this field, where it is used in two very different ways.

In the study of adulthood, writes Gould (1980, p. 213), who is a psychoanalyst,

'... it is time to try to create a language that corresponds to the subject ... to capture the sense of movement, direction and struggle ... during adulthood.'

'The basic concept is transformation. Growth is defined as transformation ... an expansion of self-definition.'

He continues (p. 224)



'... these central, ongoing processes whereby each of us is driven by maturational necessity to be more whole, to include within us disenfranchised parts, and to be as internally free as we are capable of being. We do this in steps throughout our life and rarely reach a steady state ... All this is done in equilibrium with our family ... within a culture and a sub-culture.'

This is so reminiscent of Gutmann's (1980) explanation of development which was noted earlier that Gould's 'transformation' is probably best classified as another instance of the concept of open-ended development/adaptation.

Musgrove (1977) and Strauss (1969) bring the symbolic interactionist approach of sociology (see Berger and Luckmann, 1971; Goffman, 1971) to an examination of development. From this viewpoint, writes Musgrove (1977, p. 3),

'... all is openness and flux: adult identity is provisional and tentative, open to far-reaching "transformation" and redefinition. Identity is produced, sustained and transformed by the fleeting patterns of human interaction.'

Transformation, therefore, is similar to adaptation in its recognition of the effect of interaction with the environment and of the possibility of multi-directional change. The significant difference between them lies in their interpretation of the nature of the 'reality' of both self and social environment. Whereas adaptation assumes their objective existence, transformation, interactionists hold, can take place because 'reality' is socially constructed. The environment does not perpetually exist to impose pressure and personality does not remain unchanging over time. Musgrove (1977, p. 4) explains this as follows

'Personal identity is a conspiracy, the individual defines himself and his situation with the provisional agreement of others who are prepared to suspend disbelief while he gives his "performance".'

This has certain implications for the conceptualisation of change during adult life, which Strauss (1969, p. 91) describes as



'... the open-ended, tentative, exploratory, hypothetical, problematical, devious, changeable and only partly-unified character of human courses of action.'

Musgrove writes (1977, p. 5)

'Unlike "development", transformation does not imply sequence or change in any particular direction, towards some defined state of maturity, completeness or fulfilment ...'

Strauss (1969, p. 92), writing of a particular transformation, explains further that

'... the individual's earlier concepts are systematically superseded by increasingly complex ones ... old ones become revised or qualified, or even drop out entirely from memory. The changes in conceptual level involve, of course, changes in behaviour ... Shifts in concept connote shifts in perceiving, remembering and valuing - in short, radical changes of action and person.'

Musgrove's exploration of the possibility of transformations during adult life will be referred to again later during this chapter.

## 7. Social changes

Adult change can also be examined in terms of the social changes experienced. Psychologists and sociologists use different terminology to represent these: to negotiate their differences, this thesis will use the term 'role' to denote both status (or position in the social structure) and 'role' (the behaviour which acts out the expectations attributed to that position).

The individual holds several roles at any one time and many throughout life. Some of these are geared to particular periods of the life-span (the age-status system: see Cain, 1964) so that there are appropriate roles for people of different ages. The norms of this social 'time clock' form a 'prescriptive timetable' and create expectations and constrain behaviour (Neugarten, 1968, p. 146). The individual may experience stress if roles are asynchronous, (see Chapter Four).



A change of role involves the relinquishing or loss of one role and the acquisition of another (sometimes perceived as inferior). This change from one stable social state to another is of significance to both the social organisation and the individual: the degree of instability caused, even if short-lived, has to be cushioned by society and is not without cost to the individual. Although a social phenomenon, role change calls for significant psychological changes which could influence the individual's sense of self, social identity and social standing. Previous behavioural patterns and attitudes have to be abandoned or modified and behaviours appropriate to the new role learned and adopted. As well as enlarging the behavioural repertoire it can create stress for the individual.

The timing of role change may be significant. There may be, according to Scott (1951, pp. 180-2) 'critical periods' in the life-span, related to abrupt role changes, when there is a 'change in the capacity for associative learning' and when disturbances which may have serious consequences for later adjustment are more likely to occur. Kuhlen (1968, p. 118) relates Scott's hypothesis to the changes in 'middle age'.

'... becoming a parent or grandparent, or loss of spouse or job would influence in important ways the motivational pattern of the individual.'

Because of their psychological concomitants, role changes are cited as explanations for or influences upon adult change. As noted above, if social life is perceived as ordered and stable then, it is sometimes argued, it will create order in the individual's life and prompt a predictable sequence of changes. If it is not so perceived or if the individual is attributed with greater autonomy in interaction with the environment, then no such sequence will be expected.

Two aspects of role change will now be noted.

#### a. Status passage

Certain role changes are of such significance in the social structure that they disturb or in some way threaten the social order. Social means are, therefore, found to contain the disturbance by preparing the role player(s) and ensuring satisfactory incorporation into the new role.



Such changes are referred to as 'status passages' and their negotiation is often accomplished through ritual activities (rites de passage, Van Gennep, 1960). Musgrove (1977; see discussion in Chapter Four) writes of the individual's experience of marginality, the ritual separation from the old role and preparation for the new.

#### b. Transition

The term 'transition' is used in some areas of the literature to denote a role or other major change in life. According to Hopson and Adams (1976, p. 24) it is

'a discontinuity in a person's life space of which he is aware and which requires new behavioural responses ... involve(s) stress which can produce ... strain ...'

An elaboration upon this is the psychosocial transition (Parkes, 1971; see Chapters Nine and Thirteen), so extensive and significant that it changes the individual's perception of the world.

Grief is a frequently quoted response to a transition which involves role loss. This is discussed further in Chapter Nine.

#### 8. Concepts of change: conclusions

This review has identified several significantly different concepts used to express change in adulthood. Their differences cannot be explained merely as confusions in terminology, the differing viewpoints of psychology and sociology or as reflections of the personal interest of particular writers, though these factors are to some degree relevant. The analysis Smelser (1980, pp. 21-2) makes of differences between some of the leading theorists points to 'conceptual' and 'methodological' 'confusion': in the semantics of the language used and the method and scope of research. There are, however, this chapter suggests (supported by Reese and Overton, 1970), more fundamental reasons: the concepts derive from different views of reality (Pepper, 1942) which lead to different philosophies of research. Some of these admit to the validity of observable or objective data only; others recognise subjective experience or call for a hermeneutical approach. Thus the



study of 'middle age' raises again some of the issues discussed in Chapter Four.

It is also apparent that, regardless of philosophy, the phenomena of change pose such problems for research that they may be poorly resolved and 'conceptual confusion' result. How can changes in the individual be perceived? By what criteria will they be identified? Will such criteria derive from pre-conceptions brought to and imposed upon the individual's experience? If not, what can be generalised from the experience of one individual? How can objective and subjective aspects of change be distinguished and to what cause can they be attributed? Some of these questions have already arisen in earlier chapters and Chapter Twelve will have to grapple with them again. There are no ready answers, though Smelser (1980, p. 23) suggests that, in terms of content, there are several desiderata in a theory of 'the development of the life course': information about the challenges over time, the individual's resources and adaptive responses and a description of how the individual has dealt with them in the past.

The remainder of this chapter will examine some of the theory and research upon adulthood, organised into sections on physiological and cognitive changes, psychological changes and social changes and focusing where possible upon 'middle age'. The nature of the concepts of change which are used therein will not again be queried: the theories will be looked at in their own terms. Nevertheless, the apparent abundance of literature to be quoted must not mislead. As Reese and Overton (1970, p. 129) write

'If two theorists adopt different basic models, there can be no fruitful debate between them; their views will be irreconcilable.'

There are many theories, but it must be suspected that there may yet be little 'fruitful debate' between many of them. This chapter will thus continue to employ the non-evaluative term 'change'.



## Physiological and cognitive changes in adulthood and 'middle age'

### 1. Introduction

Although physiological and cognitive changes feature in certain myths and stereotypes of 'middle age' referred to in both Chapters Two and Seventeen, the focus of this thesis does not require a detailed investigation of them. There are several reviews of the literature which can be used to indicate both the content and the methods of research in these fields. (Physiological changes: Allman, 1981; Bromley, 1974; Kelleher and Quirk, 1973. Cognitive changes: Allman, 1981; Osborn, Charnley and Withnall, 1982; Papalia and Bielby, 1974. Employment of 'middle-aged' people: various papers in Cooper and Torrington, 1981; Meier and Kerr, 1976; Welford, 1976).

There are several common issues about research method raised by many of the studies reported; these will be briefly recorded here. The limitations of the cross-sectional approach have already been noted in Chapter Two; Allman (1981) discusses them further. That chapter has also related the problems of identifying age-related changes. The use of an operational definition, such as that of 'intelligence', limits the applicability of findings, but the problem of comparing individuals prompts the formulation of concepts such as 'functional age' or 'efficiency quotient' (Bromley, 1974; Laufer and Fowler, 1971). There is a need to distinguish 'normal' from 'pathological' ageing (Allman, 1981); many earlier studies were based on 'pathological' populations which distorted the view of 'normal' age changes. Finally, there is the question, already mentioned in the last section, of identifying the influence of the environment upon the individual (Allman, 1981).

The overall current (Allman, 1981; Osborn, Charnley and Withnall, 1982) assessment of physiological and cognitive changes during adulthood appears to suggest that individuals change at different rates and that their environment and particular past and present circumstances are influential in these changes.

### 2. Physiological changes

Bromley (1974) describes the ageing process in some detail, covering such topics as the structure of the body (skeleton, skin and fatty tissues,



voluntary and involuntary muscles, connective tissues); the vegetative functions (digestion, waste removal, metabolism, cell renewal, respiration, blood circulation, homeostasis, sleep); the organisation of behaviour (nervous system, the senses, vocalisation, endocrine glands, sex). His brief discussion of 'middle age', however, is in terms of physical health, rather than of specific physiological changes.

He shows that there is a wide variation in the rate of decrement between these physiological functions and an equally wide variation in the rate of ageing between individuals, increasing with age. This makes comparisons between them impossible in terms of chronological age and has led to the concept of functional age. Performance is measured and compared with the norms derived from representative samples (as in the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, referred to in the next section). Functional age does not match chronological age for it takes into account behavioural, social and other variables beside the physiological and psychological, all of which affect total function (Kelleher and Quirk, 1973; Laufer and Fowler, 1971).

### 3. Cognitive changes and capacity to learn

Theories of the development of cognitive functioning are dominated by Piaget (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958) who identifies four qualitatively different stages of development, the last one emerging at about the age of 11 years. Papalia and Bielby (1974) note, however, that there is evidence that cognitive development continues beyond this age through adulthood and that it declines at the end of the life-span. Much of the work they quote, however, compares 'middle-aged' with old-aged subjects or young subjects with old-aged subjects making it impossible to judge exactly what changes take place in 'middle age'.

They examine moral judgement (Kohlberg, 1973), its relationship with ego development (Podd, 1972) and the significance of ego centricism in adult cognitive functioning. They conclude that there is considerable variability in such areas as moral development and formal operational ability.

Riegel (1973) also notes this considerable variability and finds Piaget's theory insufficient to explain what happens in adulthood. He



thus modifies and extends it to include a final stage of 'dialectic operations', which allows for both variations between individuals and within the individual's repertoire.

Bromley (1974) discusses at length the effects of ageing upon adult intelligence and uses the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale to show the variation in various aspects of intelligence with chronological age. Some (such as block design and speeded test of 'non-verbal' intelligence) decline quite steeply over the life-span, while others deteriorate little during the middle years and, indeed, the working life-span (vocabulary, information, comprehension, digit span forwards, unspeeded 'verbal' intelligence). Osborn, Charnley and Withnall (1982) review more recent research which reinforces the picture of variation between individuals.

There is ample evidence of the capacity to learn new methods, skills and attitudes in 'middle age': the effects of ageing are shown to be less than those of experience and of learning methods. The salient points are made by Belbin and Belbin (1972) and Osborn, Charnley and Withnall (1982). They include

- recognition of the learner's anxiety and need to build up confidence (Belbin and Belbin, 1972; Fogarty, 1975). Mullan and Gorman (1972) give examples of how this may be achieved. Busse (1965) recommends training in a familiar context.
- choice of appropriate training material, which is simple, relevant to the learner's needs and makes use of past experience (Busse, 1965; Mullan and Gorman, 1972).
- adoption of the discovery method of learning and active learning schemes (Mullan and Gorman, 1972).
- support of the peer group (Belbin and Belbin, 1972; Mullan and Gorman, 1972).
- adoption of an easy pace of learning: 'relaxed' (Clay, 1960); 'their own pace' (Belbin and Belbin, 1972; Mullan and Gorman, 1972); 'with no time limit' (Busse, 1965).



- need for feedback (Belbin and Belbin, 1972; Mullan and Gorman, 1972).

#### 4. Job performance in 'middle age'

The literature identifies several areas in which declining performance is seen (see also Welford, 1976).

- speed (Clay, 1960; Welford, 1958).
- reaction time and voluntary responses (Laufer and Fowler, 1971; Pierson and Montoye, 1958 ; Welford, 1958).
- sensory perception (Busse, 1965; Clay, 1960; Welford, 1958).
- short term memory (Clay, 1960; Osborn, Charnley and Withnall, 1982; Welford, 1958).

Welford points out that deterioration increases disproportionately as the complexity of the task rises. Even where some skills (for example, sensori-motor skills) may be more difficult to acquire when learning is not obligatory, Soddy (1967) suggests that enforced change creates different learning patterns. Environmental conditions (Brouha, 1960) and physical fitness (Brouha, 1960; Shephard, 1969) can affect the working capacity of the older worker.

Belbin (1972) paints an optimistic picture of the older worker's performance which suggests the importance of careful employee selection. However, the overall picture of the relationship of job performance to age is relatively cloudy, though the apparent contradictions can probably be explained in terms of research focus and method.

#### 5. Physiological and cognitive changes: summing-up

This brief review of physiological and cognitive changes during adulthood and 'middle age' underlines the variations between and within individuals and so undermines the myth of universally failing abilities in 'middle age'. Although there are a few areas in which a few people could be at some disadvantage when starting new jobs, for the majority 'mid-career change' should present no objective problems of this kind.



Their difficulties will lie in their own perceptions and those of their potential employers.

## Psychological changes in adulthood and 'middle age'

### 1. Introduction

This examination of the literature on the psychological changes of adult life focusses wherever possible upon 'middle age'. It picks out the most significant work in the field, the most relevant to the subject of this study, and structures it under the major headings of the '"classical" writings', 'further exploration' and 'longitudinal studies'.

The 'classical' literature is so called here not only because it was the earliest in the field and was thus pioneering work, but also because it established the major reference points for most subsequent studies. It generated seminal ideas the power of which is still felt in recent work. Whereas the 'classical' work was largely European in origin, most of the 'further exploration' has been carried out in the United States. Though some of it was also pioneering, it was of a later date. It continues to the present. The start of the longitudinal studies pre-dates most of the literature (Erikson had at one time worked on an early stage of the Berkeley Guidance Study) but its subjects did not reach middle adulthood until the 1960s and 1970s so that reports upon this are of recent date.

### 2. 'Classical' writings

#### a. Jung

Jung is often viewed as the starting-point for the understanding of adult development. He conceives of life in four 'stages': childhood; youth (puberty until middle life, about 35 or 40); after age 40 and old age. He also perceives that life has a 'morning' and an 'afternoon': what is appropriate for the one is not suitable for the other. As Cain (1964, p. 283) comments

'The first half of life is properly devoted to individual development, entrenchment in the outer world, reproduction and care of children.'



In the 'afternoon' the healthy process of individuation ('the process of forming and specialising the individual nature ... a process of differentiation ...' Jung, 1946, p. 561) continues but with a new need, writes Fordham (1966, p. 79).

'to find new meaning and purpose in living, and this, perhaps strangely enough, is best found in the neglected, inferior, and undeveloped side of the personality.'

She continues that the possible prize is the wholeness and integrity of the person but that this is not achieved without difficulties and dangers.

'... must first meet his shadow, and learn to live with this formidable and often terrifying aspect of himself: there is no wholeness without a recognition of the opposites.'

There will be encounters with the 'shadow' and the 'anima'. The 'shadow', explains Fordham (1966, p. 50)

'is the personal unconscious; it is all those uncivilised desires and emotions that are incompatible with social standards and our ideal personality ...'

The 'anima' is the 'complementary feminine element' in men, often projected onto women (Fordham, 1966, p. 59)

'A man ... by accepting and learning to know his anima, may become more receptive, or he may develop his intuition or his feeling ...'

Jung, therefore, has set the scene for the view of the second half of life as offering the possibility of hitherto inconceivable growth and fulfilment of potential provided individuals negotiate the difficult passage and use their own hidden resources. As Fordham writes (p. 79)

'Many people, however, cannot face such a possibility, and prefer to cling to the values of youth ...'



Jung's work has been greatly influential: echoes of it have already been noted in Gould (1980) and Gutmann (1980). Neumann (1964, pp. 410-14) traces the development of the balance between the conscious ego and the unconscious throughout the life-span. From an original unity they separate early in life but are resynthesized in 'mid-life' in response to the workings of 'centroversion', the innate tendency of a whole to create unity within its parts

'...the middle period is characterised by a decisive change of personality. Centroversion becomes conscious. The ego is exposed to a somewhat painful process which, starting in the unconscious, permeates the entire personality ... a new wholeness may be constellated between the hitherto diametrically opposed systems of conscious and unconscious ... a total constellation of personality has been reached, in which the creativeness of the psyche and the positiveness of the conscious mind ... have achieved a synthesis.'

All later major writers on 'mid-life' have referred to Jung's basic framework and elaborated upon it, adding to the psychological the dimensions of biological and social changes and noting the interactions between them.

#### b. Bühler; Frenkel-Brunswik

Bühler's work, begun in Vienna in the 1930's, opens the interest in this interaction. From biographies (Bühler, 1935), she identifies two curves of life, the biological and the psychological, which in the early years run parallel. The biological curve has five phases based on growth and reproductive capacity; the five phases of the psychological curve are based on the number of activities engaged in. She hypothesises that there are five basic tendencies in life, each tending to dominate a particular phase, though all are active throughout life. The tendency to creative expansion (in job, marriage and family) dominated the third phase (ages 25/30 to 45/50) while the tendency to the establishment of inner order (via critical self-assessment) dominated the fourth (45/50 to 65/70).

Frenkel-Brunswik, the colleague who continued her work, writes that the move into the fourth phase of the psychological curve of life at



age 40/50 is marked by 'psychological crises', just as in biological development crises also appear at this time. She mentions (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1968, pp. 80-81) 'the tendency to change, discontent and complete negation', 'renewal of unrest ... intensified wanderlust ... frequent change of residence', 'transitory inclination towards day dreaming and loneliness' and 'a high point in the destruction of one's own creative work'.

This early and influential work gave impetus to the process of detailing the phases of life in biological, psychological and social terms.

### c. Erikson

The third major influence upon the development of the understanding of the life-span and of adulthood within it is that of Erikson. Based on clinical, anthropological and historical observations, he (1950) propounds a psychosocial theory of life-span development which comprehends the development of the ego through eight stages from infancy to old age and the effects of maturation, experience and social institutions on the individual. Empirical studies (for example, by Gruen, 1964) have partially borne out Erikson's stages.

Each stage presents a choice or crisis to the expanding ego, the resolution of which influences the future development of the personality, the degree of adaptation to both inner and outer world demands and the individual's evaluation of self.

Erikson expresses the psychosocial crisis of middle adulthood through the polarity of 'generativity' (expansion of ego interests, investment in others and a sense of having contributed to the future) versus 'stagnation'.

This influential work reinforces that of Jung and Bühler and establishes what is to become the framework for the study of 'middle age': the interweaving of physiological, psychological and social strands with the development of tensions between them - crises - which have to be resolved for future healthy development.



d. Jaques

Although a much later work and an isolated paper rather than a body of theory, Jaques's (1965) 'Death and the mid-life crisis' is, nevertheless, a 'classical' work. It sets the seal on the concept of 'mid-life crisis' (and perhaps even coined the term) and highlights what has become a major theme in the study of 'mid-life': the awareness of mortality.

'... the reality and inevitability of one's own eventual personal death ... is the central and crucial feature of the mid-life phase.' (p. 506)

Jaques explains (pp. 511-12) the individual's reaction to this in terms of Klein's concept of the way the baby worked through the 'infantile depressive position'. A poor or incomplete resolution of this results in depressive anxiety which may be obscured by strong manic defences until the 'mid-life' awareness of death brought it into the open as a 'depressive crisis'.

'... experienced as a period of psychological disturbance and depressive breakdown. Or breakdown may be avoided by means of a strengthening of manic defences ... with an accumulation of persecutory anxiety to be faced when the inevitability of ageing and death eventually demands recognition.'

Where the infant had successfully resolved the depressive position the 'mid-life' awareness of mortality will be met 'with a sense of grief appropriate to it'

'Revived are the deep unconscious memories ... the torment of grief and loss, of guilt and persecution ...'

With mourning there is acceptance and this leads to a new kind of creativity, 'sculpted creativity', in which a piece can be worked and re-worked and its shortcomings accepted.

e. 'Classical' writings: summing up

The 'classical' works have established two major strands in the subsequent



study of adult life. One is the life-span approach and an interest in the changes which result from an interaction between internal and external forces over time. This is carried on in various forms in many later works, such as that of Levinson et al. (1978), Vaillant (1977) and White (1975). This is a possible approach to the study of 'mid-career change'.

The other strand is woven from the early identification of crisis and turmoil during the middle years of life leading to possible growth or stagnation. These 'classical' ideas of death and depression, grief and loss have reverberated through the later literature and coalesced into ideas of developmental crisis (Levinson et al. again). Seen within such a context, major life changes like 'career change' would be expected to be significant, interacting with or in some way disturbing the more deep-seated changes which are taking place.

### 3. Further exploration

#### a. Neugarten and the Kansas City Study of Adult Life

The Kansas City Study of Adult Life, carried out by the Committee of Human Development at the University of Chicago from the mid-1950's to the mid-1960's, has generated a wealth of material on the development of adult personality. Across social class and generational boundaries, it studied the personality, 'career', age-norms and age-appropriate behaviour, attitudes and values of two thousand 'normal' people in a metropolitan community. It offered evidence that some adult changes are to be interpreted as developmental, but others result from situational influences (Havighurst, 1973, p. 11).

Co-ordinator of the research team was Bernice Neugarten, one of the most influential figures in the studies of 'middle age': her work is referred to throughout this thesis. Havighurst was also associated with the study.

One of the research team, Gutmann, is particularly noted here because of his cross-cultural work which, he suggests indicates the universality of certain changes in adulthood. With Neugarten he studied changes in sex roles and personality between 'middle' and old age, using



the projective Thematic Apperception Test. The developments so identified Gutmann then examined cross-culturally and found (1980, p. 41)

'Mid-life changes appear to be developmental in nature, can result in personal growth, and occur in predictable sequence across widely disparate cultures.'

These changes are concerned with the nature of engagement in the world (competitive in youth, centred in the community in older men), with aggression and with sexual 'bi-modality'. Gutmann explains (pp. 42-4) them as responses to the needs of parenthood

'... each sex becomes something of what the other used to be ... both sexes reveal, in later life, the potentials that were blunted in the service of production, procreation, and parenthood ... a return to the condition of pre-parental bi-modality ...'

Not all individuals negotiate these changes successfully; some suffer 'a mid-life crisis of egocentricity'. (p. 46).

Gutmann's work (which is concerned with both men and women) upholds the view that there are developmental changes in adulthood and some have a deep-seated nature. His cross-cultural approach suggests that these changes are both universal and internally-promoted in response to parenthood.

#### b. Levinson with Darrow, Klein, Levinson, McKee

Many of the issues raised in this chapter come together in the research of Levinson and his multidisciplinary team. This is, therefore, of great interest and, in the light of the discussion upon the definitions of 'middle age', their objectives (1976, p. 21) are especially so.

'... we are interested in generating and working with hypotheses concerning relatively universal, genotypic, age-linked, adult developmental periods within which variations occur. As we conceive these periods, their origins lie both in the nature of the individual as a biosocial and biopsychological organism and



in the nature of society as an enduring multi-generational form of collective life'.

Having in 1969 selected their sample of 40 men then aged between 35 and 45 drawn from four occupational groups (industrial workers, business executives, university biologists and novelists), they interviewed them extensively, using a biographical approach, with later follow-up interviews. They write (1978, p. x)

'Our emphasis at first was on the "mid-life decade" from age 35 to 45; it was then extended to cover the span from the late teens to the late forties.'

From this material they have constructed a view of life-span development which stretches from adolescence to late adulthood, as is shown in Figure Three. There are four overlapping eras of about 25 year's duration within which fall developmental periods.

In the stable periods, lasting six to eight years, a man builds and enriches the structure of his life. During the transitional periods of four to five years, he re-appraises that structure, explores new possibilities and sets the scene for adapting or changing it. The developmental sequence cannot, in their view, be explained in purely biological, psychological or social terms; 'its origin must be found in the interaction of all these influences.' (p. 322) and is, thus, likely to be found throughout the human race.

Each period has its own developmental tasks: these elaborate upon some of the themes which emerge from the 'classical' writings: the 'Dream'; the 'legacy' left for future generations; mentoring; and the tasks of individuation which involve the polarities of Young and Old and Masculine and Feminine.

There are very few extensive empirical studies of adulthood. The potential contribution of this study to the understanding of this period of life is, therefore, great. The book based upon it (1978) has been warmly received and is exerting considerable influence. Sheehy's Passages (1976), for example, draws heavily upon it and, as a best-seller, is extending these theories into popular thinking. It is,



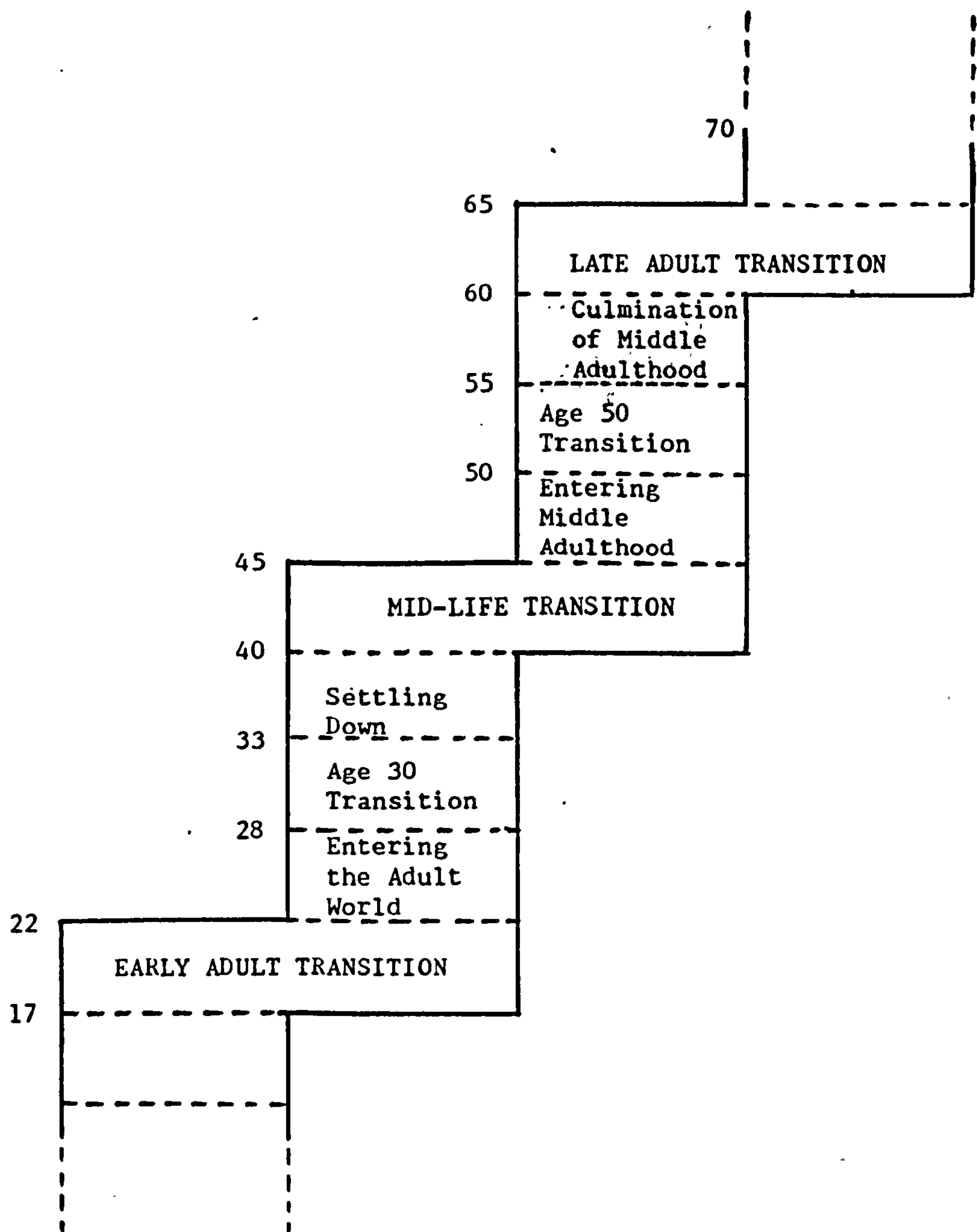


Figure Three: Developmental Periods in Early and Middle Adulthood  
 (from Levinson et al., 1978, p. 57)



therefore, particularly important to evaluate these findings and the theory inductively constructed - and expressed as though normative - from them.

In order not to interrupt the flow of this chapter this evaluation appears as Appendix Three. While doubting the prudence of building a normative theory of adult development upon the material and methods used, it concludes that the framework proposed is interesting and likely to stimulate further research. It will be this, perhaps, rather than the details Levinson et al. build around it, that will become their legacy.

### c. Gould

In his (cross-sectional) study of 524 men and women outpatients in group therapy, Gould (1975) notes the varying relevance of such themes as family relationships, personality, job and time through their life-span.

'Answers rose and fell in rank like the tide on the beach, providing a sensitive measure of the times of transition and tribulation.' (p. 55)

From these answers he identifies seven phases within the life-span from ages 16 to 60. There are two phases in middle life: from ages 37 to 43 and from 44 to 50. Between ages 40 to 43 he traces (1972) a series of temporary excursions from well-established life-long 'base-lines' on statements dealing with personal comfort, 'indicating an acute unstable period with a great deal of personal discomfort.' There is a return to 'base-line' at age 43 and during the subsequent period, from age 44 to 50, he finds 'a reconciliation of what is with what might have been' and a general settling down.

Many of these ideas Gould extends in his work on 'transformations' (1978). He sees 'a constant maturational push throughout adulthood' (1980, pp. 236-7) towards liberation from the myths of childhood which give the individual an 'illusion of absolute safety'. The painful encounters with these 'false ideas' bring 'growth' 'away from stagnation and claustrophobic suffocation toward vitality and an expanded sense of



inner freedom.' (pp. 213-4). The process of liberation is achieved through transformation, the expansion of self-definition. In dealing with 'false ideas' it calls for 'a shift in the defensive system', which allows the individual to move outside the safety of present self-definition in order to achieve a redefinition. If unsuccessful, the individual suffers 'an enfeeblement of passion' (p. 223).

Gould places some stress on the 'mid-life' years of 35 to 45 when the false assumptions which confront the individual are concerned with the illusions of immortality, of safety and the all-embracing nature of the family, of complete innocence and (for women) of the need for male protection. If, in the 'striving for authenticity and generativity' (p. 230) the questioning of the early 30s has not led to changes, then 'suppressed growth develops into a major break'.

'... renewed repressions ... psychological and physiological symptoms ... These are the potential mid-life crises which may or may not end in mid-career shifts.'

#### d. Studies of response to social changes

##### i) Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and their associates; Fiske

In an ongoing longitudinal study Lowenthal et al. (1975) have studied 216 'average' (Fiske, 1980, p. 251) men and women facing four major transitions: leaving school, the arrival of the first baby, the 'empty nest' and retirement.

The object of their work has been to find concepts of use in the study of transitions. They have so far identified (p. ix)

'certain sociopsychological characteristics conducive to successful coping at some life stages but not at others.'

The differences between the sexes, they find, are far greater than those between the life-stages of each sex and the variation in assessment of self-concept between the stages almost equalled the sex differences. Another significant finding (p. xv) has been the

'criss-crossing trajectories of men and women at successive stages, which may eventually ... prove to reflect differing types of developmental change as well as different scheduling.'



Fiske (previously Lowenthal) writes (1980, p. 244) that their hypothesis that the maintenance of congruity between behaviour and values would be important in adaptation was not supported by the research. They found 'dramatic shifts' (p. 240) in the 'commitment hierarchies' (comprising interpersonal, altruistic, competence/mastery and self-protective characteristics), with variability (p. 251) in the individual's hierarchy over time and between people undergoing the same transition.

She attributes these findings to the rate of social change which demands the continuous renewal of commitments in order to achieve 'self discovery' (p. 260) in a changing world. Thus she sees the need for a 'flexible paradigm' (p. 244) to replace earlier theories of adult change.

#### ii) Musgrove

The goal of Musgrove's study (1977) was to examine adult change 'not as the outcome of maturation, but of socialisation' (p. 4) and as transformation of identity (referred to earlier in this chapter). To do this he made ethnographic studies of people in seven 'marginal' positions 'in British society: those who had become blind in adult life, those who had contracted incurable physical disabilities and entered a Cheshire Home, self-employed artists, late entrants to the Anglican ministry, a Sufi commune, Hare Krishna devotees and adult homosexuals. Although it had seemed likely that these cases would produce evidence of major transformations of identity, they did not (p. 13).

'The evidence of these studies suggests that adults are capable of more fundamental change than many psychologists will admit; but that 'consciousness', 'identity' and 'the self' are far more resilient and resistant to change ... We are not, in fact, chameleons.'

While it must be said that Musgrove appears not to have taken much account of the abundant literature from psychologists on adult change (as reviewed in this chapter) his work is, nonetheless, significant. He describes cases which suggest that new roles do not create new selves; that



'... "real selves" often remained latent though undimmed and available for recall ... saved up and carefully maintained for forty years awaiting retirement ... when "real selves" are dis-interred after fifty years of camouflage.' (p. 14)

Thus the self 'has a rock-like endurance' (p. 220) and not the fragility the interactionist writers suggest. Nevertheless, 'adults are capable of fundamental change' (p. 220), though this change was 'a moral quest for one's real and authentic self.' (p. 224) He suggests that marginality (in its status passage sense: see Chapter Four) could be important as a prelude to change, but that while a change back towards the centre of society's values and institutions would happen at any age (as with the members of Alcoholics Anonymous), a change away from the centre (as with the Hare Krishna commune) was likely to be age-based and to take place in the 20s and 30s.

#### e. Other work on roles and role changes in 'middle age'

##### i) role loss

When role loss occurs in the early part of life there are generally new roles available to compensate the individual. In 'middle age', however, this is less likely.

Although Greenleigh (1974) suggests that some people extend their roles to include 'infralives' in which secret aspects of themselves, such as hobbies or love affairs can be expressed, others such as Lowenthal et al. (1975) remark upon these 'decremental' role changes. Frenkel-Brunswik (1968, p. 79) locates these losses from 'around the fiftieth year', while

'The period in the middle of life ... includes the largest and most complete number of dimensions ... we find stability also, since losses are replaced by new acquisitions.'

When the transition is role loss the adjustment will be particularly painful, as Parent (1975) notes.

'... the loss of functional roles has a devastating effect on the personality for identity has been intimately bound to these roles



from youth. The multiple losses during middle age subject the individual to repeated severe stress reactions which can lead to premature ageing, depletion and exhaustion.'

The increased degree of contemplation, reflection and self-evaluation which Neugarten (1968, p. 140) says is characteristic of 'middle age' may also derive in part from these role losses. As people lose their 'significant others' they are repeatedly turned back to themselves. They need to use emotional flexibility 'to shift emotional investments from one person to another', to cope with these losses. At the same time 'they have the greatest range of cathexis - objects' (Peck, 1968, p. 89). Maturity gives the possibility of relationships with people of all ages so that their social network may be wider though their significant roles are fewer. Erikson's (1950) crisis of 'middle age', ('generativity versus stagnation', when the task is 'to shift one's life interests and concerns to the developments and achievements of the younger generation,') echoes this (Brim, 1976, p. 5).

The shedding of roles is likely to increase the values of the roles retained: work roles and the post-parental period of marriage (Brim, 1976, p. 6) are highly rated. Furthermore, it becomes important for self-esteem that society gives its affirmation, in the form of symbolic success, to the roles most valued, as in a new job or promotion (Levinson et al., 1976, p. 24).

## ii) family roles

The nature and significance of family roles is frequently mentioned in the literature. Gutmann (1980) and Linden and Courtney (1953) emphasise the effects of parenthood and the nature of post-parenthood. Levinson et al. (1978, p. 21) recognised that the origins of adult developmental periods derive in part from the multi-generational form of society. Soddy (1967, Chapter 12) points out that there could be simultaneous changes in roles within three generations and that 'middle-aged' people thus find themselves involved in the changes of both their seniors and their juniors.

Hall (1976) and Schein (1978) analyse the life stages of the family. There may be role conflict and attendant stress if the roles derived from this family life cycle are asynchronous or incompatible with



occupational roles or with the individual's phase of development.

'Dual career' families (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971) make the situation even more complex.

Through the 'Life-Career Rainbow', Super (1980,1981) identifies nine major roles throughout the life-span (Child, Student, 'Leisureite', Citizen, Worker, Spouse, Homemaker, Parent and Pensioner) which are enacted in four 'theatres' (Home, Community, School/University, Workplace). He notes the relationships between them, the expectations of them, their typical sequence, the possibility of conflict, the degree of emotional investment and the various decision points concerning them and relates them to life style.

There are changes within, as well as between, family relationships. The behaviour appropriate to a 'father' of teenage children is different from that appropriate to the 'father' of younger children: new skills have to be developed to effect a satisfactory modification. Other changes have to be negotiated in the marriage relationship. Gutmann (1980, p. 42) finds that with age each sex concedes some of its earlier characteristics to the other 'and through these various gender changes, the normal androgyny of later life is ushered in.'

These changes can often be perplexing and disturbing. Brim (1976, p.3) comments that the trajectory of a woman's life is

'... away from dependency on the husband, away from providing nurturance and support to him, so this source of his recognition, affection and sense of value ... threatens to disappear.'

During 'middle age', therefore, the family presents several losses of significant roles as well as the possibility of considerable role conflict and stress.

### iii) work roles

Work roles may thus be felt to be very important during 'middle age' for status, sense of identity, interest and satisfaction. This may partly explain why 60 per cent of the male 'middle-aged' group in Lowenthal et al.'s (1975, p. 202 ff.) sample considered retirement their next 'principal transition', even though the departure of their



children, their wife's 'principal transition', intervened. Furthermore, 20 per cent of those in the older group about to retire were planning a 'second career', either part-time work or self-employment.

For Jackson's (1974) sample of elderly men 'middle age' was later than it was for the elderly women (up to 55 compared with up to 35). The women emphasised their loss of functional capacity with ageing, but it was harder for the men to adjust to old age and they referred to the loss of status involved. This again emphasises the importance of work roles.

Work, however, presents its own problems in 'middle age'. Pearse and Pelzer (1975) discuss the changing social and technological scene, the 'disruption of old certainties' breaking up former 'career' paths and leaving the future in question; the arrival at a promotion plateau where, because opportunities are scarcer and the potential for further development limited, the individual may become boxed in; and the competition and threat from younger people. They advocate a positive approach, involving realistic self-appraisal and development, to deal with these problems. Hall (1976, pp. 80-86) adds to this that 'middle-aged' people are concerned with job security. The 'middle-aged' male sample of Lowenthal et al. (1975, p. 170) would seem to confirm this: work was the prime area of stress for them and job security featured in it.

The nature of the relationship between work-life and other roles is closely examined by Evans and Bartolomé (1980: see Chapter Nine) and by Pahl and Pahl (1972).

#### iv) other roles

The literature does not explore leisure and community roles in 'middle age', but it seems likely that these would be 'incremental' and, perhaps, used to compensate for the losses of other significant roles or to offset the strains in other 'theatres' (Super, 1980, 1981).

#### f. Further exploration: summing-up

The literature reviewed above spotlights the period of 'middle age' in its exploration of some of the areas first outlined by the 'classical'



writers: the emergence of deep-seated changes in the individual, the eruption of crises and the interaction of internal and external factors in the process of change. It also examines the effects of social changes. These studies appear to confirm (or at least do not yet disconfirm) that major changes take place during 'middle age'. However, the major conceptual differences between the various researchers should be recalled: their evidence cannot, thus, be aggregated. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that there is yet unequivocal evidence for the source of or the stimulus for these changes; nor is the nature of the interaction between them yet clearly understood.

#### 4. Longitudinal studies

The limitations of cross-sectional methods of studying changes over time have been discussed in Chapter Two and referred to elsewhere: the longitudinal approach is more appropriate. However, as Chapter Two also indicates, it is not without its own problems, and it is not surprising that there are relatively few longitudinal studies on adult development. They are, therefore, particularly valuable in this field of study.

##### a. White

A relatively modest but regularly updated and satisfying study of adult life is that by White (1975). He presents the 'lives in progress' of three people chosen from the many he studied and traces changes from their late teens to their 50s by means of tests and interviews. He uses 'a combined social, biological and developmental approach' (p. 330) to perceive and account for their 'growth', which he analyses in terms of the process and direction of changes (towards the stabilising of ego identity, the freeing of personal relationships, the deepening of interests, the humanising of values and the expansion of caring.) He expresses his awareness of the significance of particular circumstances and the individual's response to them in the process of change. The conclusions he draws are about 'natural growth during young adulthood' (p. 329) but his final statements clearly reveal his belief in change through adaptation through the life-span.

##### b. The Berkeley Institute of Human Development studies

The Institute of Human Development's two long-term studies also illustrate



the nature of change through the life-span to (so far) 'middle age'. It has followed two cohorts since the early 1930s: the subjects of the Oakland Growth Study were born between 1920-22 and joined the study about ten years later while those of the Berkeley Guidance Study were born in 1928-29 and studied from childhood onwards. There have been many reports upon aspects of these studies, but two which are particularly relevant are noted below.

#### i) Block with Haan

Block (1971) used this material to examine the nature of personality change and consistency over time (until the subjects were in their thirties) and to establish a typology of personality development, identifying five types for both men and women.

He found an increase in the clarity and consistency of personality over time, a stabilisation of self and identity and a gain in coping capacity. However, these gains were not without cost, for the men had traded off personal expressiveness and playfulness for greater competence in dealing with wider responsibilities and the women had increased their anxieties and guilt.

#### ii) Clausen

Clausen's examination (1976, p. 106) of the occupational and family histories obtained from a recent follow-up of those remaining in these studies also leaves an impression of continuity and of stability.

'Few give any indication of a mid-life crisis or crisis of middle age, though their lives are certainly not free of tension and uncertainty.'

Tracing their occupational mobility, he suggests that it has been substantially influenced by personality attributes that could be assessed in adolescence (p. 104). However, a sociologist, he emphasises, (1972) - like White - the external sources of opportunity or obstacle and the individual's response to them.

#### c. Vaillant

Because it is based upon material from the longitudinal Grant Study in



which 268 men have participated from the early 1940s (until at least the 1970s), Vaillant's work is valuable for the different perspective it offers upon the experiences which are treated by Gould (1978) and Levinson et al. (1978) and whose books entered the literature on 'middle age' at about the same time.

Vaillant, too, reports significant change over the life-span but in a very different way. He describes his method of data collection and evaluation, he appends a glossary of terms, the interview schedule and rating scales, with information about the blind raters; he uses ample details from 38 men to illustrate the process of adaptation over time.

Although he does not make comparisons across lives to construct a normative theory of adaptation, nor attempt to calibrate this process with either chronological age or social role changes, he does, however, draw some general conclusions from his research. First, a single traumatic event rarely ruins a life: the quality of the whole seems to depend upon the choice of adaptive mechanisms and the sustained relationships with other people. Secondly, most so-called mental illness is evidence of the adaptive process, the struggle to adapt to life. Defence mechanisms (p. 7)

'... are analogous to the means by which an oyster, confronted with a grain of sand, creates a pearl. Humans, too, when confronted with conflict, engage in unconscious but often creative behaviour.'

Thirdly, the hierarchy of defence mechanisms which he constructed can predict adult growth. Fourthly, adults change over time. (p. 372)

'We can discover developmental discontinuities in adults that are as great as the difference in personality between a nine-year-old and what he becomes at fifteen.'

Lastly, he asserts the existence of mental health: there is a high correlation between inner happiness, external interests, objective occupational success, mature inner defence and a good marriage.

From his long-term view Vaillant comments upon some of the issues raised earlier in this chapter. He suggests (pp. 220-22) that Jaques's (1965)



diagnosis of 'mid-life crisis', the awareness of mortality, is wrong.

'....if men are depressed, it is because they are confronted by instinctual re-awakening and because they are more honestly able to acknowledge their own pain.'

He is also critical of the popular notion of 'mid-life crisis', the 'high drama' of Sheehy (1976) and the 'arbitrary' nature of Levinson et al's (1978) age-specific definitions. They do not accord with his findings (p. 223)

'Progression in the life cycle necessitates growth and change; but crisis is the exception, not the rule.'

#### d. Longitudinal studies: summing-up

These studies also point to considerable change through adulthood and into 'middle age'. However, while recognising the deep-seated nature of some of the changes, they tend to even out the crises within the flow of change and in some cases suggest a movement towards stability in the personality.

#### Changes in 'middle age': conclusions and implications for this study of 'mid-career change'

This chapter has reviewed a wide range of literature. It has looked at specific studies of 'middle age' as well as others which touch upon it within their overall survey of the life-span. It has encompassed work from several academic disciplines and cultures: predominantly American, but also European and cross-cultural. Nevertheless, it detects a large measure of agreement among these various sources and to some extent - even though 'middle age' has only recently come under close academic scrutiny - a perhaps premature hardening of concepts and theory. There seems to be agreement that changes take place in middle adulthood because of the interweaving of the physiological, psychological and social strands of the individual's life. Some writers then focus upon discontinuities, the disturbances or crises encountered, particularly those created by the arousal of repressed parts of self; and others upon continuity, the strengthening of the individual's sense of identity.



However, both this chapter and Chapter Two have outlined some of the difficulties of studying the phenomena of change and the consequent limitations of some of the published research. It has also been noted that many of these studies have been carried out within very different epistemological paradigms, so that the 'agreement' between them may be more apparent than real. The field of study of 'middle age', it can thus be concluded, is still open for exploration.

One undeniable aspect of 'middle age' today is that it is experienced within a changing environment and one which has changed considerably over the last half-century. Therefore, whether the experiences of 'mid-life' are prompted by maturational or developmental tendencies in the individual, they inevitably include some degree of adaptation to changing circumstances. It could be interpreted that this is the major source of change in 'middle age'; some argue (Giele, 1980; see discussion in Chapters Two, Six and Seventeen) that this is the sole explanation for the changes researchers have labelled 'developmental'.

This interpretation of the significance of adaptation seems consistent with the material to be presented in Chapters Twelve to Seventeen. It suggests that social life demands change of individuals, causing loss and pain. At the same time it makes restitution by providing the opportunities for further growth towards wholeness of the self. Individuals have to mobilise their strengths and draw upon their deepest resources to cope with their grief and with the new situations which await them. This presents the opportunity to extend the repertoire of behaviours and so modify the identity, to grow and become more 'themselves' or to hold themselves rigidly in their current stance or regress to earlier but more comfortable behaviours. Chapter Six will examine some of the reported upheavals during the course of 'mid-life' adaptation, and Chapter Thirteen the experience and Chapter Sixteen the negotiation of change.

Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose, but in human development people do not merely remain the same: by changing they become more 'themselves'.

This is the conclusion to which Nydegger (1976, p. 140) also comes after reviewing some papers on the Berkeley research and that of Fiske



(Lowenthal et al.). She echoes Musgrove (1977) in her recognition that the internal changes appear to be unlocked by external changes.

'... altered demands freeing previously suppressed or latent aspects of the self.'

'... none (of the studies) suggests unlimited plasticity or simple situational determinism ... apparently stable clusters of personality attributes which, in their turn, interact significantly with demands.'

Nydegger concludes (p. 141) with the notion of 'the self as an equilibrating system' to accommodate the complex transactions between the self and its environment, and the relationship between stability and change. Homeostasis is an effective concept to use in understanding 'mid-life' development and I shall return to it again in Chapter Nine and Chapter Eighteen.

There are several implications for this study of 'mid-career change' of this particular interpretation of the changes of 'middle age'. 'Mid-career change' embodies both the changes in the occupational environment (and thus represents the external influences upon the individual) and the individual's response to them (moulded or influenced by whatever internal or external factors). An understanding of it, therefore, calls for an examination of the external influences, their interaction with the internal influences and of the individual's responses. The literature's treatment of them will form the topics of Chapters Seven to Nine while the chapters of Phase Three will look at the experiences of the men interviewed in these terms.

This interpretation of the changes during 'middle age' also suggests that the view of 'mid-career change' as a single event which can be classified according to whether, for instance, it is voluntary or enforced, anticipated or unexpected, is largely of arid, academic interest and unlikely to generate many insights which could be used to help the individual negotiate occupational change. Such understanding will depend upon viewing 'mid-career change' in the individual's terms, within the context of the total life and as a process over time. This means that analysis will have to be made within rather than between lives and reinforces the conclusions to Chapter Two and Three.



## CHAPTER SIX

'Mid-life crisis': the epitome of change in 'middle age' or an index of the changing nature of 'middle age'?

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CHAPTER SIX'MID-LIFE CRISIS': THE EPITOME OF CHANGE IN 'MIDDLE AGE'OR AN INDEX OF THE CHANGING NATURE OF 'MIDDLE AGE'?Introduction

Since Jaques's influential article was published in 1965 the notion of 'mid-life crisis' has taken root in academic literature and research and, through the green fingers of journalism and the media, in everyday usage. Having already extensively reviewed this literature (Collin 1977, 1979a), I shall sketch only the outlines of the area in this chapter, adding or expanding a few significant points.

It should be noted that the term refers primarily to men, though it is sometimes generalised to women, just as women's experiences are generalised in the 'male menopause'.

The references to and discussions of 'mid-life crisis' are to be found in a wide variety of literature: clinical studies, professional literature, doctoral theses, self-help literature and journalism of all shades. (I shall refer to these throughout the chapter as 'the literature on "mid-life crisis"', or 'the literature'.) Latan (1980) argues that the experiences recorded there are by no means new and cites myths, folklore and fairy-tales.

Without detective work it is difficult to know how incestuous this literature is but, as with 'middle age', the large measure of agreement on symptoms and causes can by no means be interpreted as established knowledge. However, the same themes do recur in the reports of clinical cases, in research on 'middle age' as well as in more general writings and journalism. They are also mentioned in work on 'mid-life' carried out before the term 'mid-life crisis' became current (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1968; Wallis, 1962).

Perhaps the one characteristic these works have in common and share with many of the other writers on 'middle age' is a weakness of analysis or definition, the tendency to pick up the notion and to use it again



without further questioning as a given. This is as true of some of the academics (Robbins, 1977) as of those who highlight certain sensational aspects (Mayer) even within a serious treatment of the topic (Mayer, 1978; McMorrow, 1974). While there is a growing body of literature proclaiming the existence, almost the desirability of 'mid-life crisis', there are now also, however, some insistent voices which question or disclaim it and I, therefore, clothe the term with inverted commas to register my doubts about its integrity.

### Descriptions of 'mid-life crisis' in the literature

#### 1. A developmental stage or turning-point

The literature strongly conveys that 'mid-life crisis' is an inevitable and crucial developmental stage in middle age through which all have to pass (see discussion of concepts in Chapter Five). Although to some degree painful ('Mid-Life Transition is a time of moderate or severe crisis', Levinson et al., 1978, p. 60) it is to be welcomed for the unprecedented opportunity it offers for growth and fulfilment.

'... it is probably the most crucial developmental event between adolescence and death.' (Templeton, 1971, p. 14)

'The mid-life crisis is a time of metamorphosis. It is a time when the American male crosses the boundary line that separates the boy/man from the man.' (Mayer, 1978, p. 236)

'We need developmental transitions in adulthood partly because no life structure can permit the living out of all aspects of the self ... A man's life structure, we have found, necessarily changes in certain crucial respects during the course of his Mid-Life Transition.' (Levinson et al., 1978, pp. 60-1)

(Some writers indicate that this period has developmental tasks and Levinson et al. (1978, pp. 61-2) spell out the consequences of not completing them ('They face a middle adulthood of constriction and decline') or of completing them but partially ('their lives are lacking in inner excitement and meaning'). Successful completion, however, will ensure that 'middle adulthood is often the fullest and most creative season in the life cycle.'



'Mid-life crisis' is also seen in less normative terms as a turning-point which, nevertheless, can have either positive or negative outcomes. There are some references in the literature to its favourable outcomes. (Brim, 1976; Jaques, 1965; Levinson et al., 1978; Mayer, 1978). The title of Le Shan's (1973) book is The Wonderful Crisis of Middle Age. A positive approach to the 'crisis', self-awareness and some kind of 'mid-life' stock-taking seem to contribute to growth (Greenleigh, 1974; Mayer, 1978). Its possible tragic outcomes are also mentioned. (Jaques, 1965; Levinson et al., 1978; Neumann, 1964).

## 2. Onset and duration

There is general agreement on the age at which the 'crisis' is said to occur: between the ages of 35 and the early 50s and most likely in the early 40s. (Gould, 1975; Hall, 1976; Levinson et al., 1976; Schanche, 1973). However, Klemme (1970) and Rogers (1974) have identified it in the 20s; a psychotherapist working with young terminal patients finds it a useful concept to explain his clients' experiences (Goldie, 1979).

Some writers suggest that it lasts for years, thereby, it would seem, undermining its critical nature. (Brim, 1976; Jaques, 1965; Templeton, 1971).

## 3. Experience of 'crisis'

Certain experiences are diagnosed as symptomatic of 'mid-life crisis' when they appear in constellation with others. Some are objective, observable events or states, like hypochondria, accidents, illness, marital problems, alcoholism, drug addiction and suicide. Others are subjective, very general and in the minor key: hollowness and lack of genuine enjoyment, emptiness and uncertainty, a mixture of strain and boredom, floating unfocussed melancholy and depression. (Frenkel-Brunswick, 1968; Fried, 1976; Gould, 1980; Hepworth and Featherstone, 1982; Higgin, 1973; Jaques, 1965; Klemme, 1970; Lear, 1973; Mayer, 1978; Molander, 1976; Schanche, 1973; Schultz, 1974; Templeton, 1971; Wallis, 1962).

There are references to more devastating experiences of personal and



social disorientation. Higgin (1973, pp. 102-3) writing of Neumann's (1964) 'centroversion crisis', says

'There is the feeling that the ego, "yourself", is out of control and falling to pieces. In place of the easy flow of predictable feelings ... the strangest moods ... This is a pretty devastating experience for the ego. It loses its self-confidence and partially disintegrates as the emotions, vague understandings, strange images and fantasies flood consciousness.'

#### Factors said to precipitate 'mid-life crisis'

The following physiological, psychological and social factors are repeatedly mentioned as precipitating 'crisis'. Because these are very similar to those discussed in Chapter Five as the nodal points of change in 'middle age', 'mid-life crisis' at times appears to epitomise those changes.

##### 1. Physical ageing

The literature recognises the shock and pain which can be felt on realising that physical prime is past. (Levinson et al., 1976; Mayer, 1978; Schanche, 1973; Soddy, 1967). The physical changes of 'middle age' demand a changed body- and self-image and this is not always easily negotiated. (Nichols, 1977; Prosen, Martin and Prosen, 1972; Soddy, 1967). The positive aspects of such changes, while noted by some (Peck, 1968; Templeton, 1971), receive less attention.

There are frequent references to the effects of ageing upon male sexuality. (Davidson, 1976; Jaques, 1965; Mayer, 1978). Fears about potency are offered as explanations for the relationships with younger women and for other marital problems. (Jaques, 1965; Mayer, 1978; McMorrow, 1974; Prosen, Martin and Prosen, 1972; Schultz, 1974).

While the term 'male menopause' (and less frequently, 'male climacteric') has crept into popular usage as a means of accounting for certain sexual aspects of ageing and their supposed emotional and behavioural concomitants there is no evidence yet for a meaningful parallel to the female menopause (Nieschlag, 1979). Nevertheless, the 'male manopause'



has developed a literature of its own. (Bowskill and Lineacre, 1976; Hepworth and Featherstone, 1982; Norcross, 1976; Ruebsaat and Hull, 1975).

## 2. Psychological changes

Chapter Five notes the psychological changes said to take place during the middle years. Levinson et al. (1978, p. 199) maintain that 80 per cent of their subjects experienced crisis during the period they refer to as the Mid-life Transition and they see this as the inevitable price to be paid for the development of a new life structure.

'A profound re-appraisal of this kind cannot be a cool, intellectual process. It must involve emotional turmoil, despair, the sense of not knowing where to turn or of being stagnant and unable to move at all.'

The 'mid-life crisis' literature focusses upon certain issues of change and disturbance: a resurgence of previously repressed instincts, the developmental tasks of both 'mid-life' and of earlier periods, the awareness of mortality, a changed perception of time, the aspiration-achievement gap, a haunting by the dreams of youth, the search for new goals and creativity.

### a. Resurgence of previously repressed instincts

As quoted in Chapter Five, many theorists and researchers have recognised the resurgence of previously repressed instincts in 'mid-life' and the psychological upheaval this can cause. (Gould, 1975; Gutmann, 1980; Jung, in Fordham, 1966; Levinson et al., 1978; Linden and Courtney, 1953; Neumann, 1964; Vaillant, 1977). In the 'mid-life crisis' literature this is often related to male sexuality (Davidson, 1976; Jaques, 1965) and to its changing nature (Gutmann's 'bi-modality', 1980). It seems likely that it is also closely related to other issues such as the awareness of mortality, the perception of time, the 'Dream' and creativity, though the relationship is by no means clear.

### b. Developmental tasks

The concept of the developmental task was noted in the previous chapter.



The degree of success in completing the task influences the completion of the tasks of a future developmental period. Inadequate resolution may carry forward to a later period and may then demand a re-working and thus precipitate a crisis (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 198); they identify several tasks which were also noted in Chapter Five. Gould (1980, p. 230) notes of this age group that 'suppressed growth develops into a major break ...' and he lists some of the symptoms of 'mid-life crisis'. Erikson's (1950) crisis (or developmental task) of 'generativity' versus 'stagnation' is highlighted in this literature and the outcome of 'mid-life crisis' often referred to as either growth and generativity or stagnation and decline.

#### i) regression to earlier stages and re-working of earlier tasks

There are suggestions that during 'mid-life crisis' there is a regression to earlier developmental stages, perhaps to avoid tackling the developmental tasks of the present (Davidson, 1976; Klemme, 1970) and a re-working of earlier unfinished or ill-resolved tasks. (Jaques, 1965: the re-working of infantile depression; Prosen, Martin and Prosen, 1972: the re-working of adolescent tasks; Wallis, 1962: the search for the goddess). Benedik (1959) suggests that parents use their experiences with their children to re-work some of the memories of their own childhood.

#### ii) analogies with adolescence

Because of the turmoil said to be experienced in the 'mid-life crisis' it is often compared with an earlier developmental period, though it should be noted that adolescence, too, is a questioned concept. (Fried, 1976; Le Shan, 1973: 'middlescence'; Linden and Courtney, 1953: a return to 'instinct supremacy' as at puberty; McMorrow, 1974: 'midolence'; Soddy, 1967: a mid-life latency period followed by crisis; Wallis, 1962: 'second puberty'). Armstrong and Taylor (1972) see parallels between adolescence and 'middlescence' in the search for identity and note (p. 106) the

'changing cultural conditions which yield inadequately defined and confusing role requirements.'

#### c. Awareness of mortality

Many writers share Jaques's (1965) view of the centrality of the



awareness of personal mortality to 'mid-life crisis'. (Brim, 1976; Gould, 1975; Levinson et al., 1976; Marmor, 1968). Vaillant (1977, p. 220-22), as noted in Chapter Five, disputes this and diagnoses instead problems caused by 'instinctual re-awakening.'

Lifton's work, though outside the field of the literature on 'middle age', offers some insights into this particular issue. He writes (1973, p. 9) that 'death anxiety', felt throughout the life cycle, is salient in the middle years even though it is recognised that death is inevitable. /This anxiety is concerned with disintegration, stasis and separation.

'... one "disintegrates" as one's inner forms and images become inadequate representations of the self-world relationship and inadequate bases for action.'

'... the meaning of movement takes on symbolic qualities having to do with development, progress and change ... The absence of movement becomes a form of stasis, a death-like experience closely related to psychic numbing.'

'Where this striving for connection fails ... there is the alternative image of separation, of being cut off ... one precursor for the idea of death.'

Lifton's descriptions, particularly of disintegration and stasis, are very similar to the descriptions of the symptoms of 'mid-life crisis', particularly to that of Higgin (1973) quoted at the start of this chapter.

Lifton further writes of 'psychic numbing' (pp. 11-12), a process which he sees as central to mental illness.

'... shrinking of the ego and diminished capacity for experience ... impaired mourning, impaired symbolisation ... Where a known loss triggers the process ... the depressed person acts very like a survivor and psychic numbing becomes very prominent ... This numbing may involve moral sensitivity or interpersonal capacities. However the numbing is expressed there is a situation of meaninglessness and unfulfilled life in which the defensive psychological



structures built up to ward off death anxiety also ward off autonomy and self-understanding.'

Lifton's concepts of 'death anxiety' and 'psychic numbing' from the attempt to ward off that anxiety offer a possible interpretation of some of the described disturbances of 'mid-life'. The process could be triggered off by the awareness of personal mortality or by a 'known loss', whether, perhaps, of role or of person: there are often, as already noted, several role losses in 'middle age'.

The awareness of mortality casts a shadow over the rest of life, changing the individual's perception of time and appraisal of the goals pursued.

#### d. Perception of time

The realisation that death is inevitable changes the individual's perception of time. It is now recognised as finite (Hall, 1976; Jaques, 1965; Prosen, Martin and Prosen, 1972), which increases its value (Greenleigh, 1964; Neugarten, 1968) and hence its apparent speed (Wallach and Green, 1968). It also influences the individual's time perspective: the crest has been reached and from henceforth time is measured in terms of time-left-to-live rather than time-since-birth (Neugarten, 1968; Schanche, 1973).

Derangement of the individual's time perspective was discussed in Chapter Four. Writing of 'mid-life crisis' Fried (1976) notes the sense of foreshortened future and, in the early phases, of time as 'deranged'. There is a preoccupation with the past and the future and time is also experienced as diffused, leading to the boredom of depression. She likens this (p. 95) to the Mediaeval sin of acedia, a 'paralysing mixture of despair and apathy in whose presence the future disappears.' This is reminiscent of Gioscia's (1972, pp. 119-20) 'achrony', referred to in Chapter Four (which, in turn, recalls Lifton's (1973) 'death anxiety').

'When no generalisation, creativity, synthesis, transcendence, growth, development is experienced, life disintegrates into the dimensions of achrony, i.e. too fast, too slow, too high, too low, too good, too dull.'



I am not aware of any other references in the 'mid-life crisis' literature to 'deranged' time, though it certainly accords with Higgin's (1973) description. It would suggest that these experiences of 'crisis' could be interpreted as responses to stagnation and the absence of growth; they could also be examined in terms of the marginality of status passage, noted in Chapters Four and Five, in which time perspective is again recorded as disturbed.

#### e. Aspiration-achievement gap

The knowledge of the finiteness of life prompts the often painful awareness that early aspirations have not been fulfilled and perhaps never will be. There are many references in the 'mid-life crisis' literature to the recollection of the dreams and ambitions of childhood and youth, the re-appraisal of present goals and the search for new ones. (Davidson, 1976; Tizard and Guntrip, 1959; Jaques, 1965; Orth, 1974; Schanche, 1973).

#### i) haunted by early dreams

At this time of life it is asserted that there surface into consciousness the dreams and ambitions of early life which have, over the years, been forgotten, repressed or put to one side. Levinson et al. (1978, pp. 245-51) call this haunting the 'Dream'. These dreams may have been compromised, even betrayed; they may never now be realised. (Brim, 1976; Levinson et al., 1978; Le Shan, 1973; Marmor, 1968; Mayer, 1978; Wallis, 1962).

#### ii) mourning their loss

Brim (1976, p. 5) writes

'There is a pervading sense of sadness in these mid-life men of unfulfilled dreams ...'

With the conscious acknowledgement of this gap between aspiration and achievement there begins the process of mourning for the youthful self (Mayer, 1978; Nichols, 1977).

#### iii) achievement and frustration

There are suggestions of a change in the prepotency of needs (Maslow,



1954) during adulthood (Hall and Mansfield, 1975). Kuhlen (1968) considers that the needs for 'growth-expansion' - for achievement, power and self-actualisation - decline with age, having been frustrated by various aspects of ageing, while anxiety and threat increase. Coupled with the loss of youthful dreams this process of adjustment may be particularly painful for the achievement-orientated (Tizard and Guntrip, 1959). Orth (1974, p. 11) says

'... nearly every achievement-motivated, career-oriented individual faces a mid-career crisis ...'

Writing of 'middlescence' Horrocks and Mussman (1970) refer to the effects of frustration when goals are not satisfied: the aggression, regression, fixation which result (p. 126) accord with the 'mid-life crisis' symptoms described by others.

'Sources of anger, anxiety and confusion may be successfully denied or distorted to the degree that only a vague unrest or a feeling of general dissatisfaction remains.'

Cavanagh (1976), Pearse and Pelzer (1975) and Soddy (1967) also refer to the problems of goal achievement or frustration during this period of life.

#### iv) search for new goals

Schultz points out (1974, p. 10) that

'without goals and dreams and hopes there is no longer a sense of future, nothing to work towards, to struggle for.'

Having mourned for the old self and its dreams the individual can relinquish them and make room for new goals, values and meanings (Hall, 1976). These can be more realistic (Pearse and Pelzer, 1975) and accommodate the previously undervalued, rejected or repressed parts of self (Levinson et al., 1976; Neumann, 1964). The search for new goals may involve taking stock of life; Greenleigh (1974, p. 66) recommends a 'mid-life inventory'.

'... the individual must audit his losses and see how restitution might be made in his life pattern.'



### f) creativity

The relationship between creativity and 'mid-life crisis' is remarked upon several times in the literature (Anshin, 1976; Davidson, 1976). Soddy (1967, p. 139) explains it as the outcome of 'productive disintegration', when the patterns of life break down and the individual mobilizes the capacity for change and adaptation.

The nature of creativity was the starting-point of Jaques's paper (1965). He sees (p. 513) that a satisfactory resolution of the 'mid-life crisis' will lead to 'sculpted creativity', when individuals accept their limitations, work and re-work their creation and arrive at 'serenity which transcends imperfection by accepting it.'

### 3. Social changes

Some of the social changes noted in Chapter Five are cited as contributors to 'mid-life crisis'. 'Mid-life' brings the loss of several significant roles and this calls for adjustment and mourning; it may also incur 'psychic numbing' (Lifton, 1973). The timing of the role change may be significant and the individual may suffer from asynchronous roles.

#### a. Family roles

Some of the individual's most significant roles are within the family and their loss may be particularly upsetting (Tizard and Guntrip, 1959; Le Shan, 1973). Lowenthal et al. (1975, pp. 86-7) found that their 'empty nest' sample of 'middle-aged' women had, after the teenagers, the lowest Life Satisfaction Index.

In addition, some of the discussions of 'mid-life crisis' point to the difficulties of coping with adolescent children and the strains of belonging to the intermediate generation and being torn between parents and children. (Fried, 1976; Mayer, 1978; Soddy, 1967; Wallis, 1962).

#### b. Work roles

Because other significant roles are being shed the work role may be held as particularly valuable but, as the 'mid-life crisis' literature



points out, this, too, may pose problems. For all employees the effects of economic and technological change threaten obsolescence and the loss of jobs, whether through redundancy or early retirement. Managers and other workers concerned with advancement in their jobs face other problems. In 'mid-career' the demands that work makes in terms of time, energy and commitment may be very great and thus stressful (Evans and Bartolomé, 1980). Many American managers are portrayed as 'workaholics' (Pearse and Pelzer, 1975). Other difficulties may be competition and threat from younger, more appropriately qualified men and the sense of being 'boxed-in' or on a promotion plateau (the effects of the Peter Principle: Peter and Hull, 1969). Difficulties at work, therefore, may compound the individual's other problems and so contribute to 'mid-life crisis'. (Hall, 1976; Levinson, 1969; Mayer, 1978; Pearse and Pelzer, 1975).

#### Empirical evidence for 'mid-life crisis'

A comparison of this chapter with the last would suggest that 'mid-life crisis' is a microcosm of 'middle age' and the epitome of its several changes. However, its literature is more colourful and dogmatic, and, to some degree, incestuous. The validity and coherence of the concept must, therefore, be questioned. What empirical evidence is there for 'mid-life crisis'? Apart from the fiction (Merriam, 1978; Rosenberg and Farrell, 1976) which notes the existence and disturbing powers of the various factors above, what support is there for the supposed syndrome of concurrent experiences or for a universally experienced developmental stage?

There have been a few American studies which have taken the existence of the 'crisis' as given. The research of Robbins (1977) will be discussed in the next chapter. Although she, too, uses quotation marks around the words 'mid-life crisis', having discussed Jung, Jaques, Gould and Levinson et al., she appears to accept it as conceptually valid. In her study of 'career change in males in middle adulthood' she hypothesised that she would find a relationship between chronological age and the incidence of 'career change' which would have been the result of 'mid-life crisis': she found no significant relationship. The reasons for this are probably to be found as much in her definition of 'career change' and in her research methods as in the hypothesis itself,



but it is also possible that the 'crisis' she assumed to exist was conceptually incoherent. The same is also probably true for Dragani (1976). Having developed a scale to measure 'mid-life crisis' he used it to test his hypotheses of the relationships between it and the characteristics of autonomy and inner-directedness so that 'mid-life crisis' could be viewed as a quantifiable phenomenon found in varying degrees in different individuals. Although his Mid-Life Crisis Scale proved capable of distinguishing between experimental groups he was unable to substantiate his hypotheses.

Other studies have aimed to demonstrate the existence of 'mid-life crisis'. Larsen (1976) established the experience of Mid-Life Transition, which he equates with 'mid-life crisis', in a nationwide sample of professional men. It manifested itself, however, in the very general terms of significant dissatisfaction with life and a disparity between value and achievement; he was unable to demonstrate a statistically significant expression of 'death anxiety', though this is generally said to be a crucial feature of 'mid-life crisis'. Murphy (1976), on the other hand, concludes from his study of academics that the decade of the forties is a time for transition rather than 'mid-life crisis'.

Although Rosenberg and Farrell (1976, to be discussed shortly) quote other research, primarily of psychosomatic illness, which indicates significant psychological distress in 'middle age', these studies specifically of 'mid-life crisis' give little evidence for the existence of a syndrome. Some of the longitudinal research already described in Chapter Five casts further doubt upon it. Clausen (1976) notes its absence in the samples and Vaillant (1977, pp. 222-3) is almost scathing in his rebuttal.

'As with adolescent turmoil, midlife crises are much rarer in community samples than in clinical samples ... crisis is the exception, not the rule.'

The literature about and the studies of 'mid-life crisis' are largely American and tend to be based upon affluent middle-class populations; there is so far little British work to compare with it. Hildebrand's (1981) psychotherapeutic work with older patients at the Tavistock Clinic cannot be generalised to a wider population. Although most



respondents in the Teeside study in 1977 (Stainthorp, unpublished) were aware of the notion of 'mid-life crisis' very few of them interpreted their own experience in its terms. In the Colchester study (Nicholson, 1980, p. 189) found 'little sign of a Mid-life Crisis' and concludes that it 'remains something of a mystery'. In a study of European managers Evans and Bartolomé (1980, pp. 179-80) found no evidence of 'crisis': 'and thus the cliché of the 'mid-life crisis' strikes us as extreme.' There is clearly a need for further British and American research to explore this area further.

On the basis of this empirical evidence it must, therefore, be concluded that the validity of the concept of 'mid-life crisis' is in doubt, so that to see 'mid-life crisis' as the epitome of the changes of 'middle age' is to distort the nature of that period of the lifespan.

Possible explanations for the discrepancy between this research and the literature on 'mid-life crisis'

There are several possible explanations for this discrepancy between the conclusions of the research just reported and the overwhelming agreement among the writers whose work was noted earlier. Although not written about 'mid-life crisis', Vaillant's (1977, p. 373) comments suggest the first explanation: the identification of 'mid-life crisis' is a matter of perspective. The changes of 'middle age', seen from afar, pale into insignificance; the frissons they may once have caused are lost over time.

'To view lives in cross-section is like to trying to understand traffic by standing in the middle of Times Square. The confusion is bewildering, and external events seem critical. The time of day, the traffic lights, rain, and adventitious accidents seem all-important. But if each car is viewed in the perspective of time, suddenly each one acquires a defined, if not fully predictable, trajectory, and seen from afar, this trajectory is governed far more by the driver of the vehicle than by the complex outer social forces that affect Times Square.'

A second explanation is that only a few experience crisis during their middle years: those, as the clinical studies suggest, who are particularly vulnerable or unfortunate in the way in which their changes in 'mid-life' have occurred. Perhaps most people will experience intermittently the 'growing pains' of adulthood, the grief and mourning for lost youth



and roles relinquished, but to construe these experiences as 'crisis' is to label healthy adaptation as illness (Vaillant, 1977, pp. 369-70).

A third explanation is that 'mid-life' disturbances would not be encountered in an examination of a population wider than that of privileged, educated, high-achieving, middle-class Americans. As Featherstone (1979, p. 365) suggests

'Normal development as Levinson formulates it may be statistically abnormal.'

Rosenberg and Farrell (1976, pp. 153-4) offer a valuable fourth explanation for 'the seemingly contradictory data' generated by clinical cases and popular culture on the one hand and research which establishes 'no evidence in support of the construct' on the other. First (p. 156) they indicate research (not examined in this chapter, though mentioned briefly above) which gives 'inferential support' to the conclusion that 'middle age' is particularly stressful. Then they question findings which deny such stress.

'To what extent can it (the surface calm reported in research) represent a veneer overlaying interpersonal difficulties or inner turmoil which he cannot face?'

They also report (p. 155) that Lowenthal and Chiriboga (see Lowenthal et al., 1975) 'are themselves suspicious of the high expressed satisfaction of their middle aged male respondents.' On this point, however, Rubin's (1980, p. 310) comments are possibly revealing - of Lowenthal on the 'empty nest' but also of Rosenberg and Farrell on 'mid-life crisis'.

'As recently as 1974 Neugarten noted that regardless of what the stereotype (the 'empty nest') indicates, in reality we do not hear women mourning the loss of their role as mother, or their reproductive capacity. Yet, so pervasive are notions about the empty nest depression that researchers continue to express doubt about their own findings when their data contradicts the preconception ... And Lowenthal, Thurnher and Chiriboga (1975) heard the women they interviewed say they were looking forward to the children's departure, and concluded that their anxiety and despair about the empty nest was too deep to be tapped by their interviews.'

One possible explanation for this discrepancy, Rosenberg and Farrell suggest (p. 161), is that the cultural manifestations of 'mid-life crisis' are a 'convenient myth' transmitted and consumed by the young.



'It is a way of expressing one's own doubts and alienation by attributing them to others ... youth itself gets resurrected as an ideal.'

However, their major conclusion (p. 164) is that the literature reflects the range of possible responses to the experiences of 'middle age'; in particular, the changes in roles and the locus of power within the family.

'Several major precipitants converge at around the age of forty which predispose the man in contemporary culture to redefine his self; his life undergoes a qualitative shift. The simultaneous encroachment of these major changes creates a condition of vulnerability.'

However, the 'middle-aged' man (p. 165) is

'... less free to express vulnerability ... unlike the adolescent he is not granted an institutionalised moratorium for exploring identities.'

Some men, therefore, do not openly confront these issues, but deny them (pp. 168-9).

'The strength and consistency of the denial operate to make the reaction to the crisis even more extreme and personally damaging ...'

Rosenberg and Farrell, therefore, devise a typology which encompasses the range of responses and so explains the 'contradictory data' of the research studies, some of which have apparently dealt with individuals confronting the 'crisis', and others with those denying it. This range is displayed in Figure Four.

Rosenberg and Farrell suggest that social class influences the mode of response: the affluent and middle class tend to confront the issues, the working class to deny them. Denial is socially reinforced (p. 168).

'To denounce the meaningfulness of the normative structure in which he has gained ... some measure of power, prestige, and



respectability would be to admit ... the meaninglessness of their own existence.'

	<u>open confrontation</u> <u>with crisis</u>	<u>denial</u> <u>of crisis</u>
<u>satisfied</u>	'transcendent- generative' :  few symptoms of distress	'repressed- depressive' :  anxieties about potency, death. Discontent ex- pressed in relig- ion, alcoholism, hypochondriasis, psychosomatic ills
<u>dissatisfied</u>	'struggling anti-hero' :  'active identity struggle'; overtly dissat- isfied with life; sense of alienation	'punative- disenchanted' :  authoritarian, punitive; turns anger and self- hatred against out-groups. Ex- pression of dis- content affirms society's values

Figure Four

Typology of Responses to Changes in 'Middle Age', based on Rosenberg and Farrell (1976)

Rosenberg and Farrell's approach is in sympathy with the philosophy of this thesis: they recognise (p. 169) the shortcomings of research in 'middle age' and its neglect of the actor's viewpoint upon the experience of change which

'... can best be interpreted as experiential rather than literal impingements on the self ... the endowment of meaning on these changes by the individual and his culture.'

Nevertheless, their explanation of the discrepancy between literature and research, though attractive, is not completely convincing. Their typology is weakened by the absence of adequate definitions of 'satisfied' and 'dissatisfied' (with 'life', 'work' and 'self') and by their



assumption (p. 162) that 'the problems of confronting middle age must be ubiquitous'. Although a valuable starting point for future investigations, their model may not, therefore, have the 'heuristic value' they hope it has (p. 153).

Another explanation presents itself when a distinction is drawn between the description of the experience of 'mid-life crisis' and the application of the concept. The descriptions of actual experiences (as in the clinical cases or Higgin, 1973), though relatively few, are forceful and convey a convincing picture of 'middle-aged' people undergoing crisis. Although such distinctions may be tenuous, the remainder of the literature, where the greatest ambiguity and confusion seem to lie, seems to be engaged in the discussion and application of the concept of 'mid-life crisis' to individuals' experience rather than the careful analysis of that experience. This appears to explain the discrepancy between some of the research findings and the bulk of the literature, in which a hypothetical notion has been applied and the data interpreted in its terms. Because theory in this case has not been grounded in the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) fact and artefact have been confounded and this discrepancy generated. Indeed, because this concept appears to originate outside any general empirical experience, it may have little or no explanatory or diagnostic capacity so that interpretations of clinical cases would be better made in terms of crisis in general rather than of 'mid-life crisis'.

Despite its recent origin and apparent lack (or weakness) of empirical validity, the notion of 'mid-life crisis' is now, nevertheless, frequently, ubiquitously and often enthusiastically used. It must, therefore, be taken seriously. If it does not derive from empirical evidence there must be some other powerful reason for its emergence and vigorous existence.

An explanation of the emergence of the concept of 'mid-life crisis': as the index of the changing nature of 'middle age'

The key to the understanding of the emergence of this concept could lie in the examination of its functions rather than its nature or content. One function that it no doubt serves is to lend colour to journalistic approaches to 'middle age'. It is less easy to be sure of



its other functions, but I should like to speculate upon these in the remainder of this chapter.

I suggest that the emergence of the concept of 'mid-life crisis' can best be explained by reference to its societal context rather than to individual experience. This accords with Giele's (1980) thesis on 'middle age' (see Chapter Two). Whereas explanations like that of Rosenberg and Farrell (1976) interpret it as the individual's response to life changes experienced during 'middle age', some of which have been brought about because of the changing nature of the world, I see it rather as a response to the changing nature of the world as reflected in the changing expectations - or model - of 'middle age'. The experiences of 'middle age' are not as they used to be nor as they were expected to be. It is thus difficult to know how to behave and this uncertainty is captured in the notion of 'mid-life crisis'. Having emerged, it has taken on a life (and a literature) of its own so that it is now being used to explain individual experiences.

I shall now briefly outline some of the indications of this changing model of 'middle age', occasionally referring back to some of the ideas mooted in Chapters Two and Five.

### 1. The changing nature of 'middle age'

#### a. Increased expectation of life and other demographic changes

The increased expectation of life and the changing age distribution of the population, which are illustrated in Appendix Two, may be interpreted as contributing to a change in the nature of 'middle age'. For example, with current marriage and child-rearing patterns, many people can now look forward to as long a period of marriage after the children have left home as before. With retirement in the 60s (though this may well be changing), men could have 20 years or so of employment ahead of them after they have passed their peak of financial responsibilities and full-time mothers would have a similar period for a return to full-time employment. In a way that was not possible before this century, life now stretches ahead for the 'middle-aged'.



### b. Changing economic conditions and social values

The Western industrial nations have witnessed major changes in their economic bases, with a shift in emphasis from manufacturing to service industry, the gradual decline of some traditional industries, pressures upon energy and resources, the emergence of Third World competition and the birth of micro-technology and information technology. While these changes accelerated during the period of this study, they were well under way in the 1970s when 'middle age' started to claim attention.

These trends have resulted in large-scale unemployment and a need for the rapid development of new skills. They have terminated traditional occupational 'careers', created early obsolescence and forced people to make considerable and sometimes several changes of direction; for the 'middle-aged' this has come at a time when many would have expected to progress or, at least, to consolidate their positions. Much of the complacency and sense of achievement apparently enjoyed by earlier generations in 'mid-life' have been swept away.

There have also been massive changes in values, reflecting perhaps a change from subsistence levels of existence to aspirations towards self-actualisation. Many people are now prepared to consider their own needs to be as legitimate as those of family or community.

### c. Conflicting and confused stereotypes of 'middle age'

Accompanying or resulting from these changes there are now conflicting stereotypes of 'middle age': both the flabby, complacent image of the seaside postcard and the healthy, vital picture projected by the Health Education Council's propaganda. People are unsure of what 'middle age' is, even what age-group it refers to (Chapter Two notes the wide range recorded in the Colchester study: Ritchie, 1980) and their experiences do not seem to tally with others' expectations of it.

Thus while researchers and academics are writing more and more about it - and despite the fact that each generation witnesses the 'middle age' of earlier generations - it has still remained an unknown quantity. This, too, suggests that the nature of 'middle age' today perhaps differs from that of previous generations so that people are unsure of what to expect from it.



d. Increased academic interest in and development of new ideas about 'middle age'

Chapters One and Five note the increase in academic interest in this period of life. Allowing for the existence of an academic 'bandwagon', this could be explained by a need to up-date knowledge which is no longer appropriate to today's experiences.

Even though some writers propose the universality of the nature of 'middle age' (Gutmann, 1980), of its 'problems' (Datan, 1980) and of its developmental phases (Levinson et al., 1978) academics now seem to be uncovering new aspects of it. For example, in the field of vocational development in the 1950s, major changes in direction among adults were labelled 'floundering'. They are now seen in a different light and theorists like Ginzberg (1972) have had to modify their theories. Some of the new views conflict with the old. For example, the recently formulated but now widely accepted notion of the 'empty nest', with its implications of loss and mourning for the woman's prime role as child-bearer, is being challenged. Rubin (1980, p. 310: "see quotation above.") While the 'classical' theorists seemed content with simple divisions of the life-span, now there seems a need to differentiate various phases within the period of 'middle age' (as Levinson et al., 1978 have done). The tendency towards refinement again suggests that the earlier framework, while sufficient for the needs of the time, was inadequate to illustrate or explain the complexities of the present.

e. 'Middle age' today: a time of opportunity and uncertainty

It would seem reasonable, therefore, to conjecture that the nature of 'middle age' is changing. It now appears to offer continuing physical vigour, considerable opportunities and choices of behaviour and lifestyles and an open-ended future. 'Middle-aged' people today can become mature students, 'glamorous grandmothers', pillars of the community; can divorce and start a second family. Tomorrow they can become 'Grey Panthers', globe-trotting, Saga Holiday-ing pensioners, or Elder Hostel students. With increased life expectancy, the improved health derived from higher standards of living and greater affluence in both working and retired life, many of the limitations of an earlier generation's 'middle age' no longer exist for many people.



At the same time, the changing economic scene is forcing people to abandon established occupational patterns and to face a changing life-style: unemployment, new job directions or early retirement. For many 'middle-aged' people the world is not secure and may well be turned upside-down. For those who enter new jobs or retire early with an adequate pension into a more relaxed or rewarding way of life, this upheaval may grant undreamed of liberation and fulfilment. However, many fear that they will not benefit from these changes.

## 2. The functions of 'mid-life crisis'

The functions of the concept 'mid-life crisis', I suggest, are to help the individual negotiate this unprecedented change and thus to help stabilise a new model of 'middle age'. First, it offers a named focal point in an otherwise uncharted region; it gives some structure to the increasingly long period of adulthood, just as the menopause does for women. It offers, as it were, the emotional and behavioural concomitants of a non-existent rite de passage of 'middle age'. (Fogarty, 1976, p. 52, 'the dog that did not bark in the night'.)

The current generation of the 'middle-aged' is not finding this period of life to be what they had expected, nor to be what their parents had apparently experienced. This accounts for the second function of 'mid-life crisis'. Their unease and disquiet at having to grapple with unexpected problems, with no role models to follow, has gravitated towards and coalesced around this notion. Packaged and displayed by the media, it gives an explanation for their otherwise inexplicable feelings, fears and anxieties and, when necessary, provides a justification for their behaviour.

'Middle age' is not what it used to be. We are seeing, I suggest, the death throes of a failing paradigm, of a model of 'middle age' which was generated in a more stable environment than that of today, in a time of a growth economy, when social customs and individual expectations were very different. With this demise, which has been taking place over the last decade, we are also witnessing the emergence of a new paradigm, appropriate to a turbulent environment and to the more fluid personal relationships and 'career' patterns of contemporary life. When this new model is firmly established, the notion of 'mid-life crisis', having served its purpose, will perhaps disappear.



Implications of this study of 'mid-career change'

Robbins (1977) had hypothesised a relationship between 'mid-life crisis' and 'mid-career change' and I, too, had at the outset assumed that there might be some connection. This was the reason for examining 'mid-life crisis' in the first place. However, having concluded that it can have little diagnostic capacity for the individual, there is no reason for trying to relate it to the equally hazy concept of 'mid-career change'; it is not possible to seek a cause and effect relationship between them. It is perhaps more meaningful to see both as symptoms of the individual's responses to major societal changes.



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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### STUDIES OF 'CAREER CHANGE'

#### Introduction

Chapter Three explores the definitions and meanings of 'career' in occupational and other fields and offers an analytical framework which contains them and explains the relationships between them. That chapter concludes with an examination of some of the operational definitions of 'career change' used in research and notes how they tend to relate to the substantive 'career' of middle-class samples. I shall now continue this exploration, using the wide-angled approach adopted in the last two chapters, which first examine the changes of 'middle age' before noting their significance for a study of 'mid-career change'. In this chapter I shall describe several 'career change' studies and discuss the various ways of classifying 'career change' which they propose and in Chapter Eight shall examine the major 'career' development theories before looking at 'career change' within that context.

In order to denote the multiplicity of meanings of the word 'career' I shall continue to use quotation marks even when employing standard phrases like 'career' development or when referring to the writings of others (except when directly quoting them). I shall use 'career change' and 'mid-career change' interchangeably.

#### Studies of 'career change'

There have been a number of studies of 'career change' since the late 1960s, almost all of them American. My choice of those mentioned and the degree of attention I have paid them have been influenced by their place within the history of 'career' development theory and their significance for either the method of my research or the interpretation of the material I collected.

I shall briefly outline them, reserving any comments to the final section of this chapter and to Chapter Eight, which discusses several of the issues they raise. They are, therefore, presented alphabetically for easy reference. These outlines serve two purposes. First, they



illustrate the background against which I undertook my own fieldwork and thus the reasons, to be discussed in Chapter Ten, for the objectives and methods of research I finally adopted. Secondly, they provide a rudimentary compendium of research in this field to date.

### 1. Bingham (1966)

In this study of the congruence between self and occupational concepts, Bingham assessed the self concepts of 82 school teachers at the start of their year-long course for school counsellors and five months after training and compared them with those who were still teaching. The trainees' self concept was more congruent with the concept of counsellor than that of teacher; this did not alter over the five months. The control group of teachers had self concepts more congruent with that of teacher than of counsellor.

### 2. Clopton (1972, 1973)

Carried out at a time when 'career' theories still tended to label 'mid-career change' as 'floundering', Clopton's research has contributed to their re-appraisal. He wanted to identify the personality traits and individual circumstances associated with such a change and thus compared two matched groups of 20 male graduates, aged between 30 and 55: the 'Shifters' who were moving into a 'substantively different' area and the 'Persisters'. He explored biographical details through interviews and personality traits through various tests.

He hypothesised that 'Shifters' would have more childhood experiences of change and separation and would be less successful in their first 'career' than 'Persisters': this proved otherwise. However, some of his hypotheses about adult life were supported, for more 'Shifters' than 'Persisters' had received counselling or therapy, had had marital problems and financial resources to support them during their 'career change'.

He found some differences in personality between the two groups. The 'Shifters' had a greater sense of self-esteem and had thought more seriously about their mortality than the 'Persisters'. However, despite Clopton's expectation, they were not more impulsive and flexible; they



did not have a greater need for achievement; their vocational interests were not less focussed; they were not more internally controlled. While both groups were well adjusted, the 'Shifters' were slightly more stable, a significant finding in view of prevailing 'career' theories.

Clopton proposes a tentative classification of 'mid-career change'. Type A follows a precipitating event which causes a re-formulation of 'the meaning of his life and personal goals'. Type B derives from disenchantment with the first 'career' and Type C begins as a hobby which develops into a full-time commitment offering as much as or more satisfaction than the first 'career'.

### 3. Gottfredson (1977)

The 1970 US Census collected age-specific information on both the current occupation and that of five years earlier for one in 1000 men and women in the population. Gottfredson re-coded these according to Holland's classification (see Chapter Eight: 2 (b iv)). He regards as stable those whose occupation fell in the same category at both times. On this basis he concludes that 'career' stability increased with age, that people initially employed in 'consistent' occupations were more stable than those initially employed in 'inconsistent' occupations and that many job changes were made within the same Holland category. There were, however, shifts between categories, made by 10% to 14%. Of the 41 to 55 year old men who had so changed, 25% moved from the 'realistic' to the 'enterprising' category, which is a major change in Holland's terms.

### 4. Haug and Sussman (1970)

In their discussion of what they recognise as a growing phenomenon, the 'career switch', Haug and Sussman identify the 'push' and 'pull' factors which operate to bring it about. Among the former they include the individual's inability to continue along the present path, because it has reached a natural ending, is leading nowhere or is broken up by such changes as automation. The individual may be looking for change, for more excitement or for a socially useful job or may be dissatisfied with present prestige, pay or security: these may, indeed, be the 'pull' factors of the second 'career'.



They were able to test some of their ideas by comparing those entering a 'career' for the first time with those embarking on their second 'career' among the 326 students graduating in rehabilitation counseling. A third of them were starting their second 'career' and they differed from the others in terms of age (with a mean age of 37 they were older), sex (many more were women) and financial position (they were better off). There was some indication that they came from lower social class origins. They had more concern for a worthwhile 'career'. One third of them were either disabled or had experience of disability in the family.

Haug and Sussman conclude that the move into second 'careers' is common among married women, younger people wanting upward mobility and those who have already achieved middle-class status; they presume the first two classes to be at little risk (pp. 130-1).

'It is apparent that the element of risk is one variable to be considered in studying the second career phenomenon.'

##### 5. Hiestand (1971)

With Clopton's, Hiestand's work has been very influential in the literature on 'mid-career' development. Through the admissions data of professional and graduate schools and a questionnaire to 70 men and women aged between 35 and 58 enrolled for full-time study he explored their reasons for returning to education. Despite the current stereotype of the 'floundering' 'mid-career changer', he found these students not 'unstable' and their reasons, given in an open-ended question, 'overwhelmingly positive' and concerned with their development. Their interests or ambitions had changed, they wanted to improve themselves intrinsically or funds had become available to finance a change.

He identifies four kinds of shifts that they were making. Fifteen of them were entering a new profession; 20 were advancing in their profession; 18 were making a 45 degree turn, moving into a closely related field or within the same broad field; and the remaining 17 were making a major change, a 90 degree turn.



Hiestand examined the ways in which they made these changes. He notes that ten of the 70 had taken less than a month to decide to return to college; 19 had taken over a month but less than a year and 19 up to five years. The four who had taken over five years to decide tended to be precipitated by events. Half of his respondents had made some significant preparations and five out of the 70 had sought guidance from others. Half of them had no-one financially dependent upon them and the attitudes of spouses was, generally, favourable. Almost all said they would do it again.

#### 6. LaBuda (1974)

From a population of 128 male undergraduates aged over 35, from whom questionnaires gathered data on occupations, work values, situational factors and personal resources, LaBuda drew a sample of 30 who were changing their occupation according to both his objective standards and their own perceptions. He interviewed this sample, 14 of them black, and thus generated case histories to add to the quantifiable material.

He found that between the current and earlier job decisions a change had occurred in the importance of work values, the influence of circumstances and the development of personal resources and that this was responsible for the occupational change. Whereas extrinsic work values, situational restraints and inadequately developed personal resources had influenced earlier decisions, in the present occupational change intrinsic work values, situational opportunities and adequately developed resources were influential.

He writes (p. 200) that the

'... dominating motivating force for middle age occupational change is the search for more intrinsic outcomes from the individual's work and a lessening of the pursuit of purely physical and material needs ... The awakening of new found priorities is related to the resolution of material needs and the discovery of new alternatives which earlier fortuities would not allow'.

He concludes that vocational development is uneven and sporadic. Early life is dominated by situational restraints and the emergence of crises; much of the earlier 'floundering' and vulnerability to external pressures



is related to a retarded development of essential personal resources, among which he classes occupational information and a self image of 'competence'. His respondents were now able to use planning and exploration strategies and take advantage of the opportunities created by technology. He notes the implications of this for the educational system and for vocational guidance, the theories of which tend to be based on samples of privileged people with abundant resources and high expectations.

#### 7. Murray, Powers and Havighurst (1971)

Murray, Powers and Havighurst note that, to achieve 'personal growth and fullness' (p. 4), the individual needs flexibility in the overall 'life pattern' of family, work, leisure and community. This calls for 'career' flexibility and hence 'career change' and job change.

They recognise two conceptually independent dimensions to the pressures for job or 'career' change: the self and the environment. Their strength varies independently and can be positive or negative; the combination of these forces disposes the individual to change or not to change jobs. However, the individual will not act upon these 'push' factors, in Haug and Sussman's terms, in the absence of suitable 'pull' factors. Equally, available alternatives will not prompt action without this disposition to change. They suggest that (p. 5)

'... it is possible to characterise individuals' work careers according to the inferred nature of the work-motivations which prevailed over their work histories.'

Their model is shown in Figure Five.

The 'routine-career' (low-low) 'represents an absence of career change and an uneventful series of job changes.' (p. 6) They suggest that this is the 'modal type' in the contemporary United States. The 'self-determined career' (low-high) is characterised by 'career change' or major advances within the 'career', instigated by the individual 'because of personal desires for new experiences in work, leisure, or simply economic gain.' (p. 6) In the 'situationally-determined career' (high-low)



'Individual motivation and direction appears to be totally absent, with job changes being completely determined by the environment ... new jobs taken through a route of least-resistance or effort. In fact, there appears to be no career in many job histories.'

They see this exemplified by women, unskilled workers and disadvantaged groups. Finally, the 'self-directed accommodation career' (high-high) 'represents the individual's shaping of his job history in the face of environmental pressure to change jobs.' Such a 'career' has order, for the individual attempts to realise objectives and in so doing adjusts to environmental pressures.

		<u>Pressure from the self</u>	
		low	high
<u>Pressure from the environment</u>	low	routine career	self-determined career
	high	situationally-determined career	self-directed accommodation career

Figure Five

Murray et al.'s (1971) Typology of Work-history Motivational Patterns

They find the model of use when interpreting the detailed life histories of three samples of people aged over 45: early retirees, City blacks and women.

#### 8. Neapolitan (1980)

This study was conducted according to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory and thus aimed to generate rather than to test hypotheses.



The operational definition of 'career change' led to a sample of 25 men and women, aged 30 to 49, who had made voluntary, radical 'mid-career change' from 'upper stratum occupations' (p. 213). Neapolitan matched them with those still in jobs equivalent to those they had left and he interviewed them all, using an intensive semi-structured interview.

Grounded theory requires that the analytical concepts emerge from the data. The factors important to radical, voluntary, 'mid-career change' which emerged in this study were associated with the first occupation, the new occupation, intervening obstacles and personal characteristics. (Neapolitan recognises a similarity to the factors which are noted by Lee (1966) as important in the decision to emigrate.)

All changers had been dissatisfied with their first occupation, but so had nine non-changers. The source of the dissatisfaction lay in the lack of congruence between the individual's orientation to work (wants and expectations from work) and the rewards from the job, mainly in the lack of intrinsic rewards. The extent of choice and of occupational information influenced the likelihood of entry into a congruent occupation: most of the changers and the dissatisfied non-changers had drifted into their first job in response to external opportunities or in some cases to parental coercion. The lack of congruence did not grate until 'mid-career' because it had been offset by initial challenge or excitement; or change had been delayed because of obstacles or the lack of suitable alternatives.

The second occupation was perceived as congruent by the changers. Neapolitan, echoing Murray et al. (1971), points out that both attraction to the new and dissatisfaction with the old are necessary to effect change: some of the dissatisfied non-changers could not perceive an attractive alternative. Many changers become attracted to their second occupations having enjoyed them as hobbies; some had been attracted even before entering their first job. Occupational dissatisfaction and attraction both stem from the degree of congruence between work orientation and occupation.

Neapolitan identifies the major obstacle to 'mid-career change' as finance. All changers had experienced a temporary or permanent loss



of income; some had delayed their change until they had discharged their financial responsibilities to their families. However, the difference between those changers who had suffered hardship through their change and the non-changers deterred by obstacles lay in personal factors. The changers were not deterred by obstacles because they believed they would be overcome, whereas the dissatisfied non-changers perceived obstacles as insurmountable and believed that forces beyond their control would make their attempt to change end in failure.

#### 9. Robbins (1977)

In her doctoral thesis Robbins reports a study of 91 male, middle-class graduates who had left professional and managerial jobs between the ages of 33 and 54. (Thomas, 1980, apparently uses the same data, though he writes of a sample of 73). To identify their reasons for change, which she hypothesised would be associated with 'mid-life crisis' and the desire to move into a more congruent job (in Holland's terms), she used questionnaires, the Strong-Campbell Vocational Interest Inventory and a semi-structured interview with 67 of them. She found no statistically significant support for either hypothesis; 'career change' was not significantly more frequent in the 40s and thus symptomatic of 'mid-life crisis'.

Robbins found that the respondents cited the desire for meaningful work, a better fit between their work and their values and the opportunity for greater achievement as their prime motivation for changing 'career'. She notes that economic realities had influenced the choice of initial 'career'. Most of those who had been in large profit-making organisations moved into education or the helping professions or into their own business; many into less traditionally masculine jobs. There was no apparent correlation with marital breakdown. The majority took a high financial risk in making this change; many had a family and many reduced their income. However, they started from a financially secure position and some had a working wife.

For many it was a lengthy process from the first thought of change to leaving their jobs: 39 took over a year. Compared with those who had felt some pressure to change, the voluntary changers took longer to decide, tended to return for further education and were happier with



the result of their move. Almost a half took educational courses to accomplish the change and most of the respondents were satisfied with it.

#### 10. Roberts (1975)

In this exploration of middle-aged 'career' drop-outs, Roberts interviewed and observed 40 people, college-educated, mainly men and aged between 30 and 55, with an average age of 42. Having chosen to drop out of a successful 'career', they were now healthier, happier and secure, living in both rural and urban areas, supporting themselves in various ways and some moving towards self-sufficiency: they were determined to remain 'out'. Using the conceptual framework of deviance, Roberts examined the frustrations which led to dropping-out, the pre-conditions or precipitating events, the access to alternatives to remaining in the 'career', the commission of the act and the sustaining of the new status.

#### 11. Roe and Baruch (1967)

In this early study of 'mid-career change' Roe and Baruch interviewed 30 men and women between the ages of 30 and 50 who had made or were making changes in occupation of various degrees. They were interested in the reason for and the nature of the change and distinguished two categories into which the factors leading to it fell: those which were beyond the control of the individual, such as organisational factors or disability and personal factors, such as dissatisfaction with the job, unfulfilled personal needs or the availability of an attractive alternative job. The researchers were impressed by how few had considered alternatives but had stressed the contingencies and imperatives of external factors.

#### 12. Schlossberg et al. (1967); Schlossberg (1975)

In another early study of 322 men aged over 35 enrolled as undergraduates and changing their 'careers', Schlossberg et al. found that economic, social and personal factors had converged to bring about the transition. They had embarked upon it because of 'emerging interests and needs, not solely out of fear and desperation'; because of



dissatisfaction with the earlier job, newly-perceived options and self-questioning.

In a later article (1975) Schlossberg, drawing upon this and others' research, suggests that it is more realistic to think in terms of degrees of change rather than an abrupt and radical change for adults. She notes (p. 40) that initial choices are often made through lack of self-knowledge or information about jobs, that subsequent experiences may make an initial choice incongruent and that interests may change.

'The process of exploration, involvement, and orientation are recurrent and continuous throughout life.'

### 13. Sheppard (1971)

In an article written at the time when it was 'normal' to have a single, lifelong 'career', Sheppard recognises the need for second 'careers'. He identifies (p. 91) 'the characteristics of potential candidates for flexible careers'. In interviews with 210 white male workers he found 49 who were aged over 40 who were such 'candidates'. Although there was little difference in terms of wages, family income and level of education, they could be distinguished from 'non-candidates' of the same age by their higher achievement values, lower job satisfaction, their perceptions of lower chances of mobility and lower autonomy in their jobs. Sheppard sees this as evidence of the 'blue collar blues' which require attention through counselling and education.

This study contributed to the growing lobby during the early 1970s for the recognition of the legitimacy of 'career change', its particular significance lying in its concern for working-class experiences.

### 14. Thomas (1977, 1980)

It has already been noted that Thomas (1980) apparently works on the same data as Robbins. He reports how the researchers developed the Murray et al. (1971) typology, to include the data from this sample of men who had already changed. They asked the respondents to indicate the amount of external pressure upon them to leave their former job and the strength of their personal desire to change.



		<u>Pressure from self to change</u>	
		low	high
<u>Pressure from environment to change</u>	low	Drift-outs	Opt-outs
	high	Force-outs	Bow-outs

Figure SixThomas's (1980) Typology of Career Changers

Figure Six represents their classification of 'career changers'. Those in the low-low quadrant they called 'Drift-outs', indicating the discretionary nature of their change. The 'Opt-outs' (low-high) were highly motivated to change. They named the other two quadrants 'Force-out' and 'Bow-outs'. These four classes differed significantly on a number of variables: the degree of 'career change' and satisfaction with it; amount of previous and additional education; the need for greater achievement and the harmonising of work and other values; the time taken to effect the change. Thomas suggests (p. 179) that the 'Force-outs', the most distinct of these four classes, present a picture of 'relative "losers"', who are more like their blue-collar job-change counterparts' than the others in the sample. He concludes that it is impossible to treat 'mid-life career changers' as a uniform group for they have important motivational differences.

In the earlier paper (1977), which refers to successful 'middle-aged' men who had left management and professional jobs to become self-employed, he discusses the difficulties which had arisen in distinguishing between voluntary and enforced 'mid-career change' and the different perceptions of the individual's decision to leave. Referring to a particular case Thomas writes (p. 321-2)



'Even when we had access to external information about his work situation it was not easy to decide if his career change was really chosen by him, or imposed on him. In considering his case we were forced to examine changes in his values and life-style, as well as his work-related behaviour.'

The researchers found that some people change their life structure as well as their 'career', while the life structure of others changed although they remained in the same 'career'. (The concept of life structure derives from Levinson et al., 1974). They thus constructed the typology shown in Figure Seven.

While the 'Changers' have changed both 'career' and life structure, the 'Pseudo-changers' follow the same goals, maintain the same life-style and social life in their new 'career'. Thomas illustrates the remaining two categories with anecdotal material, for the research had been into 'career change'. 'Crypto-changers' remain in the same job while their goals, values, life-styles and social lives change. The 'Persisters' change not at all and Thomas queries (p. 326) whether this may not build up later difficulties for them.

		<u>Career change</u>	
		Yes	No
<u>Life structure change</u>	yes	Changers	Crypto-changers
	no	Pseudo-changers	Persisters

Figure Seven

Thomas's (1977) Typology of Career and Life Structure Change



'It could be that preparation for retirement must begin with the successful handling of issues raised at the time of the mid-life transition.'

Having thus brought the consideration of 'career change' into the context of the total life, Thomas draws a parallel with divorce and the possibility of remaining in the 'empty shell' of marriage or 'career'. Just as the marriage counsellor may recognise the value of ending marriage, so people in 'mid-career' have need of educational and counselling services to change 'career'.

#### 15. Vaitenas and Wiener (1977); Wiener and Vaitenas (1977)

These researchers report two studies of 'mid-career change'. In the first, Vaitenas and Wiener examined the 'developmental, emotional and interest correlates of mid-career change'. They wanted to investigate the implications of vocational choice theories and adult development theories for 'career change'. Their hypotheses were that, compared with matched stable controls, a younger (under 35) group of 38 changers would be characterised by incongruity, emotional difficulty and lack of differentiation and consistency, whereas an older group of 27 changers (aged 36 to 50 and similarly matched) would be characterised by problems of generativity, fear of failure and doubts about life-style.

All the subjects were men. The changers were attending a 'career' counselling course and making a voluntary change. The controls were on a different course (to assess for promotion) at the same centre. The research made use of the interview records and tests from the courses to give direct measures of some of the characteristics. For others, such as generativity and life-style doubts, they used 'indirect measures', inferring certain characteristics from sections of the other tests.

Vaitenas and Wiener found that there were no significant differences with age, but changers were characterised by high incongruity, emotional maladjustment, fear of failure and low consistency of interest. Contrary to expectation, the older changers did not display the greatest degree of interest of all groups in social service (and, hence,



generativity): the controls in both age groups had a higher interest. They conclude that this research supports vocational choice theories but not adult development theories. They note the difficulties in interpreting some of their findings and the need for longitudinal research.

In the second study Wiener and Vaitenas drew their samples from the same courses: it is not clear from their reports whether these two studies are different analyses of the data from the same subjects. They compared 45 men attending a 'career' counselling course who wanted to leave their jobs in management and sales (Holland's 'enterprising' type; see Chapter Eight: 2 (b iv) with 66 controls in the same occupation on a different course. The mean age for all was 35. There were no situational factors, such as redundancy, to account for the desire to change. Various personality tests showed that the changers differed significantly from the controls in their lower scores for dominance, ascendancy, responsibility, endurance and order. Wiener and Vaitenas see this finding as support for Holland's theory, for the lower level of those traits is inconsistent with the 'enterprising' type. The changers had, thus, a personality which was not congruent with the needs of their former jobs and were thus seeking a change.

#### 16. Other studies of 'mid-career change'

The studies outlined above include the most influential 'career change' research to date. Much of the other American research deals with specific occupations or with 'career change' as only one of its interests. (Biderman and Sharp, 1967: military 'careers'; Garber, 1971: military 'careers'; Gilbride, 1973: the resignation of Catholic priests and Holland's theory; Haerle, 1975: athletes; Lavery, 1976: three groups including the recently disabled; Sadowsky, 1977: dentists; Sutherland, 1976: ballet dancers.)

Several British studies analyse occupational experiences which could be construed as 'career change'; some, indeed, specifically deal with this. (Guerrier and Philpot, 1978: a survey of the 'careers' and mobility of over a thousand members of the British Institute of Management; Johnson, in press: medical 'careers'; Lewis, 1981 and work-in-progress: 148 1970 graduates who had changed 'career' by 1977; the Manpower



Services Commission has relevant statistics on, for example, the age and type of change made by the clients of the erstwhile Occupational Guidance Units and it has followed up some of its TOPS trainees; McIntosh, 1976: the Open University has details of the background, motivations and occupational experiences of its students and its 1977 Graduate Survey specifically sought information on 'career change'; Routledge, 19 : work-in-progress on the minute changes within managerial jobs seen within the context of 'career'; Stewart, Prandy and Blackburn, 1980: a large-scale treatment of social stratification and occupational 'careers'; Thorne and Goodman, 1974 and Warr and Lovatt, 1977: re-training after redundancy, but two studies from the many which no doubt deal with the problems inherent in 'mid-career changes' but are not necessarily labelled thus.)

#### Evaluation of the studies of 'mid-career change'

Having concentrated the content and method of these studies into the outlines presented above, this chapter facilitates the identification of the characteristics they have in common. Many of these were noted in the discussion of the definitions of 'career change' in Chapter Three but some will be elaborated upon further here.

##### 1. The assumptions underlying the researchers' approach to their topic

Although movement and progress are essential elements in the definitions of 'career', these studies are alike in their focus upon the disjunction of 'career change' rather than upon the continuity of 'career'. They are not studies of 'career' development of which 'career change' is a part, even though some take account of the occupational and environmental changes which bring it about. Their concern is primarily with a discrete event, not one inextricably interwoven with the individual's past and future. The researchers have adopted a well-established academic approach of explaining behaviour in terms of personality, and hence of matching personality and occupations, and thus focussing upon occupational choice. This is clearly seen in the many references to congruence and consistency and to Holland's theory of occupational choice (see Chapter Eight: 2 (b iv); for example, Bingham; Gottfredson; Neapolitan; Robbins; Wiener and Vaitenas).



This is explicable when their research philosophy is noted (see below) and when it is recalled that until the early 1970s 'career change' was still considered by vocational theorists as deviance on the part of the individual which required explanation. Although changing economic and social conditions have forced a re-evaluation of this view (see Chapter Eight: 2 (b ii)), at the time many of these studies were started it was still in varying degrees accepted. In those terms the researchers were justifiably interested in what caused 'career change' and what sort of people undertook it. Virtually all the studies took note of the characteristics of the 'career changers' and some examined them closely. Many also looked at changes in these characteristics and in the individual's circumstances to explain the occurrence of 'career change'. There was considerably less interest in how the change was undertaken (Hiestand; Robbins), presumably because the reasons for the change, or aberration, were perceived to be of greater significance than the mechanics of it; these might be of more interest if 'career change' were more widely experienced.

## 2. Parallels with 'mid-life crisis'

In some respects it would seem that many of the researchers approached 'mid-career change' as though it were the 'mid-life crisis' of occupational life. Robbins, indeed, hypothesised an association between the two. Much of this research, therefore, seems to have been undertaken in much the same spirit as that found in the literature reviewed in the last chapter: the application of some prior concept to the experience of the individual. Though 'career change' research is often thorough and 'scientific', it can, nevertheless, be evaluated in terms very similar to those expressed in Chapter Six. That evaluation will not be repeated again here, though attention is drawn to the discussion of the significance of a close-up or a distant perspective upon 'mid-life crisis' and 'mid-career change' and of its societal context.

## 3. Research philosophy and methods

Neapolitan's study stands apart from the rest in its intention to ground theory in the data, for many of the researchers work within the psychologists' tradition of hypothesis-testing and the application of



scientific method. Many use standard tests to identify and measure individual characteristics. (Bingham; Clopton; Gottfredson; Robbins; Vaitenas and Wiener). Others also adopt the observer's perspective which enables them (and also reinforces their view) to isolate 'career change' as a discrete event and to examine various aspects of it. It is not clear that they seek access to the actor's perspective though some, like Thomas, appear to incorporate the observer's view of the individual's subjective experience.

It would thus seem that the concept of 'career' which underlies their research is that of the substantive 'career', with perhaps the occasional recognition of the phenomenal 'career' (LaBuda and Neapolitan), and the socially symbolic 'career' (Gottfredson; Murray et al.).

Largely, it would seem, because of the difficulties of definition, all the studies except those of Gottfredson, Murray et al. and Sheppard used samples of undergraduates or graduates, that is, of middle-class or upwardly mobile people.

#### A taxonomy of 'career change' studies

A further analysis of the similarities and dissimilarities between these pieces of research leads to the development of a taxonomy of 'career change' studies and thus to the clarification of the objectives of my own research. The starting-point of this taxonomy is the classifications of 'career change' proposed by some of these studies.

In analysing complex and ambiguous data and striving to wrest meaning from them the researcher may devise a classificatory system which offers some order and, through order, meaning. Such a classification can be revealing of the nature of the research itself. Several of these studies make such a classification of 'career change'; the discussion below also includes references to some of the literature referred to in Chapters Three and Eight.

Their classifications fall into two types. The first makes a simple categorisation of the nature or degree of 'career change', whereas the second devises a more complex categorisation of the causes of 'career change'.



## 1. The initial taxonomy of 'career change' studies

This taxonomy classifies the research studies according to their classification of 'career change'.

### a. Studies which devise a simple classification of 'career change'

Some studies recognise that 'career change' can be classified as one of a few simple types defined by the direction and degree of movement between the first and second 'career'. (Clopton's classification into Types A, B or C also belongs here, although it relates to the cause of change.) Hiestand identifies four kinds of change, an example of which is the 45 degree shift. Robbins's three categories classify according to the degree of the 'radicalness' of the change as defined by the applicability of old skills and the need to acquire new. Watts (1981, pp. 227-8) distinguishes six kinds of job change (sequential, lateral, regressive, spiralist, augmenting and recycling). 'Career change' would be classed as one of the last three types; or as Driver's (1980) spiral or transitory 'career concepts'.

### b. Studies which devise a complex classification of 'career change'

Other studies attempt to classify 'career change' according to the factors which cause it and they recognise that several factors will be involved in any instance of change. Roe and Baruch distinguish between the endogenous and the exogenous classes of factors. Haug and Sussman's categories of 'push' and 'pull' factors refer to dissatisfaction with the former and attraction to the new 'career'. (They may be either exogenous or endogenous). Murray et al. elaborate upon the internal/external dichotomy while also recognising the significance of attraction and dissatisfaction. Thomas (1980) uses the same approach, while Entine (1976) analyses whether change results from internal or external factors and is anticipated or not.

Neapolitan introduces greater complexity. Just as Murray et al. have refined Haug and Sussman's classification (though without reference to it), so Neapolitan has extended their model (but again without reference to it, though he mentions Haug and Sussman) by introducing the concepts of intervening obstacles and personal factors.



## 2. The recognition of a third category of 'career change' studies

There are, however, some aspects of these studies whose significance is lost or underestimated when they are classified into one of these two types. There are also other ideas, explicit or implicit in the literature but not expressed in the research, which seem likely to grow in significance in response to the changing conditions of contemporary life. For example, Schlossberg (1975) makes explicit a conclusion perhaps implicit in some of the other studies above and certainly in the general literature on 'careers', as can be seen in some of the definitions noted in Chapter Three. She recognises a convergence of various factors to bring about change and a continuing process of adaptation throughout the working life. Thomas's (1977) reference to changes in the life structure, draws attention to the relationship between 'career' and other domains of the individual's life; 'career change' hence has implications outside the occupational domain.

This suggests that there is a submerged third category into which some 'career change' studies could be classified, a category derived from their recognition of a dynamic, holistic model of 'career' of which 'career change' is a part. The existence of this third category offers a new perspective on the other two and so leads to a revision of the initial taxonomy.

## 3. The revised taxonomy of 'career change' studies

The admission of this third category brings about the recognition of the similarity between the other two categories: they focus on a static view of 'career change'. The research takes a snapshot of an event and describes it simply or explains it in terms of past experiences and decisions. The third category comprises research which acknowledges the dynamic context of 'career change'. The taxonomy can, therefore, be revised thus:

- a. Studies which view 'career change' as a static event and either describe its nature or explain its causes
- b. Studies which view 'career change' within a dynamic and holistic model of 'career'



The perception of 'career change' in the terms of this new category changes the focus of research into it. The emphasis is on the continuity of 'career' and the significance of 'career change' as a disjunction within it. The researcher adopts a longer time horizon and notes the past and the potential development of the individual's 'career' and the interaction of various factors within it, many of which are not visible in a snapshot view. Attention shifts from the examination of personality and other factors to explain the change to an interest in their influence upon the negotiation of many changes, large and small, which make up the 'career'; from the precipitating event or situation to the longer term developments and underlying trends; from a solely occupational view to one of the individual's life as a whole.

While this new category is consistent with Schlossberg's conclusions (above) and with Super's 'career adaptability' (Super and Knasel, 1981; see Chapter Eight: 2 (b ii)), none of the other research studies above unequivocally falls into it. The work of LaBuda, Murray et al. and Thomas are the nearest approach to it.

#### Studies of 'career change': conclusions and implications for this particular study

Many of the studies reviewed above were made towards the end of the period of economic growth and the relative stability of social values, when there were accepted 'career' norms concerning progress, consistency and commitment. Because of the normal expectations of the majority, 'career change' was identifiable, for it was a deviation from the norm. As such, it called for examination and explanation: the majority wanted to understand the behaviour of the aberrant minority. This concern underlay the research of both Clopton and Hiestand, but neither found the changers they studied to be the deviants they might have supposed. As the next chapter will show, this finding led to a modification of existing 'career' development theory.

Now perhaps it will never be known how deviant those early 'career changers' were, if at all, for the world has changed and the clock cannot be put back. Clopton's and Hiestand's worlds had perhaps already experienced discontinuity and they were picking up some of the



early vibrations of the massive societal and economic upheavals which have since increasingly rumbled through the Western world. Higgin (1973, p. 105 ff.) likens the present sense of loss of direction to a centroverson crisis (or 'mid-life crisis'). 'The acceleration of change in our time is, itself, an elemental force', concludes Toffler (1971, p. 11). Change is now the norm. 'New personal and social values, expectations and lifestyles influence people to make changes in their occupational lives as they seek self-fulfilment. (Cavanagh, 1976; Pearse and Pelzer, 1975). Political, economic and technological changes are forcing them into occupational change. 'Career change' is thus no longer a deviation from the norm; it is the experience of a growing number of people and may eventually become the norm.

It is, therefore, no longer of particular interest to examine who makes a 'career change' and why (although these questions are still being asked: Osborn et al., 1982). All are now potential changers so that other questions are becoming imperative. Why do some people recognise the need for change and welcome it while others ignore or resist it? How do they change? How do different people approach change and are some ways more effective than others? How may people improve their management of change and what help do they need in doing so?

An understanding of the individual's response to a changing environment is of value to many fields outside those of 'career' theory and counselling: to education, the social services, the management of people and to management education. It calls for the second category of research into 'career change', which takes a holistic and dynamic view of 'career' and 'career change', even though this is difficult to achieve. Because in future occupational changes will be experienced by perhaps the majority of the working population, for whom the concept of 'career' may often be little more than a euphemism, research which is to inform theory and counselling cannot exclude the bulk of that population by its sole use of middle-class samples and its focus upon middle-class ideas of occupational progression. It will also have to recognise individuals' subjective interpretations of their work experiences in order to understand their responses to them: to attempt to glimpse their phenomenal 'career'.

My original research proposal (reproduced as Appendix One), while acknowledging the changing world, was nevertheless influenced by



existing theory and research and thus conceived in their terms. Having established the logic of a dynamic, holistic model of 'career', I had, as I describe more fully in Chapter Ten, to abandon my original design and to work instead within that new model.



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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 'CAREER CHANGE' WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF 'CAREER'

#### Introduction

The last chapter concluded that a processual view of 'career change' should be adopted: this means that it has to be seen within the context of 'career'. This chapter will, therefore, examine the theories and explanations of 'career' to identify 'career change' in their conceptual terms and to locate it within the context of 'career' development as they see it. (Following the literature, the terms 'career' and 'career' development will be used interchangeably: a further chapter would otherwise be required to be able to discriminate between them.)

As well as established 'career' theories, which draw upon the concepts and insights of several academic disciplines, the chapter also examines other explanations of the individual's 'career' which have not yet been fully exploited in 'career' literature. Although a wide range of literature will, thus, be presented, it nevertheless has limitations. For example, as Chapter Five discusses, integral to the concept of development may be certain normative assumptions: this will be raised again in the section on the endogenous factors. Further, no one theory or explanation below encompasses the multi-dimensional reality of 'career', whether (in the terms of Chapter Three) substantive or phenomenal, socially symbolic or transcendental. They all tend to align with a particular academic discipline or school of thought, so that each offers a relatively narrow perspective upon 'career', a partial view of 'career change'. The chapter will note these various limitations (its evaluation will be continued in the chapters of Phase Three) and will conclude with a discussion of the need for a more comprehensive theory of 'career' development.

Although there exist several classifications of 'career' theories (for example, Law, 1981; Osipow, 1973; Pietrofesa and Splete, 1975; Super, 1981; Watts, 1981), this chapter proposes another which derives from the analysis of the 'career change' studies of the last chapter. As Figure Eight shows, it has four major categories: the theories and explanations concerned with factors exogenous to the individual; those concerned with endogenous factors and those concerned with the interaction of the two. The actor's view of 'career' development forms the fourth category.



## Theories of Career

1. Theories and explanations concerned with the exogenous factors influencing 'career' development and focussing on
  - a. Political, economic, demographic, social and technological factors
  - b. Social structure and social mobility
  - c. Organisational and occupational structure and mobility
2. Theories and explanations concerned with the endogenous factors influencing 'career' development and focussing on
  - a. Physiological factors
  - b. Psychological factors
    - i) psycho-analytical
    - ii) life-span development
    - iii) self concept
    - iv) compatibility between personality and motivational needs and occupation
3. Theories and explanations concerned with the interaction between exogenous and endogenous factors
  - a. Decision-making
  - b. Social learning
  - c. A three-dimensional approach
4. The actor's view of 'career' development

Figure Eight

Typology of Theories and Explanations of 'Career' Development



1. Theories and explanations concerned with factors influencing 'career' development which are external to the individual

a. Political, economic, demographic, social and technological factors

This is a very large, miscellaneous and unwieldy category of theories and explanations which, although significant, can only be mentioned briefly here. They fall within the province of academic disciplines which do not often address themselves to such personal issues as that of the individual's 'career'. Although the factors they deal with are rarely emphasised in specific 'career' development theories, they are certainly manifest in everyday lives, as Haug and Sussman (1970), LaBuda (1974), Murray et al. (1971) and Robbins (1977) found in their research and as I found in mine.

These factors impinge upon the 'careers' of both white-collar and blue-collar workers. They combine to create, distribute, re-distribute and at times to eradicate jobs. By surmounting or submitting to the obstacles they present, the individual shapes or changes the 'career'.

War is the grand example of these factors at work, destroying some 'careers' and creating and developing others: as in the 1982 Falklands crisis with its resignations, deaths, injuries, promotions and new commercial ventures. Other examples of political factors are changes in government with consequent major shifts in policy.

Economists examine such factors as the changing structure of employment with its shift from employment in manufacturing to service industries, from manual to non-manual occupations (Unit for Manpower Studies, 1975); the decline in some traditional industries and the attendant decay of some regions. All these changes impinge upon 'careers'. At the same time new industries and jobs are appearing with the development, for example, of micro-technology and information technology. The increased expectation of life, the recently noted shift in population from town to country, the slowly changing status of women and the re-negotiation of their economic relationships with men: these and many, many more factors influence occupations in general and the individual 'career' in particular.



Structural changes, policy decisions, new configurations among these external factors have human implications. Although they present opportunities, as will be seen in the lives discussed in Phase Three, they also cause loss. The re-organisation, rationalisation and the redundancy they bring can be construed as leading to 'career change' as the individual moves from employment to unemployment or is retrained for another occupation. (For many manual workers this redirection is often labelled 're-training' rather than 'career change'.) Similarly, the return to employment after a spell of unemployment or the initial entry to employment for those who have never had a job could also be seen as 'career change'.

Far from the cataclysmic events of such large-scale redundancies are the quiet but equally painful individual experiences of obsolescence which is yet another fruit of external forces. Far-reaching technological developments and the explosion in the growth of knowledge threaten to leave people in previously secure jobs high and dry. An American study suggests that a person becomes increasingly obsolescent after the mid-30s, though additional education and adaptability to change within the individual (Shearer and Steger, 1975) or preventative measures by the organisation (Kaufman, 1974) can slow down the process.

While so many of these external factors, like war, can be experienced as overpowering and ineluctable, destroying the certainties of the past and threatening hopes for the future, they also open pathways for those who can see them or are equipped to take advantage of them. They can, thus, be likened to the changes of 'middle age' discussed at the end of Chapter Five which 'unlock' the resources of the individual and so offer the opportunity for growth. They, therefore, must be fully recognised in theories of 'career' development.

## b. Social structure and social mobility

### i) introduction

The relationship between people's positions in the social structure (their socio-economic background), their social mobility (their movement within that structure) and their occupational choice and progress is one which has been extensively studied by sociologists in this country and in the United States (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Goldthorpe and Llewellyn, 1977). Keil (1981) has summarised some of these very complex



issues for 'career' theorists and practitioners. She draws attention to the demonstrated relationships between social background (the socio-economic status of parents) and education, between social background and occupation and between education and occupation, though acknowledging that it is not yet possible to explain those relationships satisfactorily. She notes that there are structural constraints on the level at which anyone can first enter the occupational status hierarchy and as Sofer (1974) notes, their subsequent movement within it because of the structure of employment opportunities, their socio-economic status and educational achievement as well as employers' policies. However, she points out, this knowledge does not explain individual differences; there is still lacking a conceptual framework which accommodates both sociological and psychological variables.

Once again, although of relevance to an understanding of both 'career' development and 'career change', this category dealing with complex external factors cannot be explored further here. I shall, however, highlight a few of the issues which have proved to have significance for my study.

#### ii) opportunity structure or occupational choice?

One of these issues is the 'opportunity structure-occupational choice' debate which has been reverberating through the 'careers' world for a number of years. Its major protagonist is Roberts who, on the basis of his work with school-leavers, has been arguing for many years (1968, 1977, 1981) that the majority of young people have no choice of their first and subsequent occupations. They can do no more than respond to the opportunity structure which manifests itself through parental socio-economic status, education, employers' policies etc. He declares (1981, p. 284)

'Their opportunities are cast by the occupational structure and employers' recruitment practices, and these respond no more than marginally to the individual's aspirations. Not only is the total range of opportunities determined independently of individuals' choices, but access to different levels of employment depends upon educational attainments and, to lesser extents, upon family and other particularistic contacts. It may be true that every school leaver has some scope for choice.



This is not in dispute ... Within their own localities, school leavers' opportunities can be extremely limited.'

The existence and power of the opportunity structure, he continues (1981, p. 291), militates against the effectiveness, indeed the integrity, of the practice of vocational guidance, which in the United Kingdom is firmly established on the theoretical foundation of the implementation of the self concept through occupational choice. (See section 2 (b iii) below).

'Irrespective of their sincerity, career workers cannot simply help young people towards self-understanding and jobs in which they will optimise their own values. Careers workers either orient young people towards jobs they are structurally obliged to enter, in which case they are objectively acting as part of the social control apparatus, or they encourage young people to develop aims that discord with the opportunities they eventually encounter.'

Roberts's view is strenuously opposed by Daws (1977, 1981), who (1981, pp. 276-277) argues that with such a 'pessimistic structural view' Roberts is not making a valid comment on the function of 'careers guidance'.

'... Roberts has implied that because his theoretical model can account for the labour-market allocation of school-leavers without reference to a choice process, then such a process does not occur.'

Daws asserts the existence of a 'choice process' and sees the function of 'careers education and guidance' as a means of helping people overcome the pressures of society upon them. (1977, pp. 14-15)

'... force pupils to think and to reflect upon the effects of all the socialisation pressures to which they have been subjected ...'

While my research is not concerned with the initial entry to work, the first job is nevertheless the starting-point of the occupational



history and thus has some influence upon later developments. LaBuda (1974), Neapolitan (1980) and Robbins (1977) certainly found this the case: they all describe how many of their respondents had entered the first occupation in response to external pressures and constraints but were embarking upon the second in response to their internal needs. This debate is, therefore, of considerable interest when viewing 'career change' as a process and will thus be taken up again in Phase Three and particularly in Chapters Twelve and Fifteen.

### iii) occupational and social mobility

'Career' development can be examined in terms of occupational or social mobility. The Nuffield study, a recent major investigation of social mobility in Britain, illustrates a number of significant issues for this study of 'mid-career change'. It contributes to the discussion both of the substance of 'career' and of the appropriate method of studying it: Goldthorpe and Llewellyn (1977, p. 293) note the differences in findings obtained from a 'diachronic' (biographical) or from a 'synchronic' (cross-sectional) perspective on mobility.

This study strongly indicates a high degree of occupational mobility: some degree within the 'working' class (classes VI and VII of the Hope-Goldthorpe scale based on the 'general desirability' of occupations); a significant amount of upward mobility into the 'service' class (professional, administrative and managerial classes I and II); and many complex movements within the 'intermediate' class (non-manual occupations, self-employed, supervisors). For example, of a sub-sample of men aged 25 to 49 who originated in the 'intermediate' class and had started their working life there, half had made major changes, both upwards and downwards, between the main survey and a follow-up two years later. Goldthorpe and Llewellyn (1977, p. 280) note

'Overall occupational movements entailing shifts of class position, in terms of our seven fold schema, averaged 2.4 per man'.

They suggest that this movement casts doubt on the reality of Miller and Form's (1951; see 2(b ii) below) 'stable work period' for contemporary British life.



Whether these many movements constitute 'career' development and 'career change' turns upon the definition of 'career' (and hence 'career change') employed. It is to be recognised, however, that because the ability to discern such movement derives from the construction and use of finely-tuned scales it is the substantive 'career' which is here under examination. This raises again a question posed in Chapter Three and explored further in Chapter Twelve: is 'career change' identified and defined by such methods by an observer meaningful for the individual in whose life it is taking place? What meaning does it have? What is 'career change' and in what other ways may it be identified by the researcher?

iv) the subjective experience of mobility

The Nuffield researchers were also aware of the possible differences between the objective and the subjective experiences of mobility and in order to identify them asked respondents in a follow-up study to write 'life history notes'. Goldthorpe (1978) reports that even those objectively defined as 'intergenerationally stable' wrote of their experience of mobility. Those in the 'service' class had experienced this through advancement in their working lives (p. 11).

'For them, it would seem, the changes both in and within occupations that they have experienced take on meaning essentially in the context of their careers - as representing steps, checks, turning points in their progress ... To the extent that the process of counter-mobility (leaving and then returning to the class of origin) ... is actually represented in their life history notes, it is in 'career' terms: for example, in terms of 'finishing training', 'becoming qualified' ...'

Those 'intergenerationally stable' in the 'working' class, though commenting on the immobility in their working lives, had been aware of upward mobility intergenerationally: they had a much higher standard of living than their fathers had had. Many of those 'intergenerationally stable' in the 'intermediate' class shared this sense of improved living standards. Goldthorpe (p. 14) also notes that, characteristic of this class, there was

'... a further response reflecting the experience of a notably inconsequential or 'disorderly' kind of movement, whether



associated with uncertainties of choice or the force of external circumstances.'

This example of the way in which the subjective experience of the actor overlays and invests with meaning objective experiences classified by an observer confirms the need to take account of the phenomenal 'career' in this exploration of 'career change'.

#### v) personal agency and luck

This need is further underlined by Goldthorpe's analysis of the ways in which the respondents had accounted for their mobility. Those who tried to explain the difference between their social position and that of their fathers did so in terms of the secular trends of economic growth, the progress of the working class and the expansion of the opportunities for mobility. Those who wanted to account for their mobility within their working lives attributed it to their own personal agency (p. 28).

'In their lifetimes the opportunities for such mobility may have increased, but these opportunities had none the less to be seized: more specifically, examinations had to be passed, qualifications gained, promotions won ... The existence of opportunities in itself obviously provides no guarantee that any particular individual will succeed.'

The researchers had asked whether the respondents could give examples of 'luck, or whatever it was'. This has generally interpreted as 'good luck' and very few cited it as the explanation for their mobility (pp. 28-9) except in reference to what Goldthorpe calls 'career contingencies', the advantage of being in the right place at the right time. The exceptions were among the 'intergenerationally stable' in self-employed and minor entrepreneurial positions and those who had been downwardly mobile from Class I largely because of entrepreneurial failure (p. 31).

'What is implied in these respondents' accounts is the relatively insignificant role of individual striving in the face of the quite decisive influence that may be exerted by "chance" events.'



The concept of luck is used in other studies of mobility. Jencks et al. (1972) conclude that it is a major factor in determining the individual's position in the class structure. Further, the individual may construe as luck the otherwise unexplained variations in life-chances for, as Keil (1981, p. 191) points out,

'... the complexities of the potential relationships between the features of social structure ... may have the consequences of introducing an apparent randomness of outcome at the individual level.'

The perception of personal agency or luck can indicate an individual's internal-external locus of control, which is discussed further in Chapter Nine. Several of the 'mid-career change' studies refer to this. Roe and Baruch (1967), for example, note that many of their respondents stressed contingencies and external pressures to change rather than their personal choice. Murray et al.'s (1971) model of the pressures for change is based on this distinction and Thomas (1980), using the same approach, notes that the 'Force-outs' were externally rather than internally controlled. Clopton (1973) had hypothesised that his 'Shifters' would be more internally controlled according to Rotter's scale than the 'Persisters' but he found otherwise. Neapolitan (1980) found that the difference between his changers and dissatisfied non-changers lay in their perception of the obstacles to change and their belief in their mastery of their circumstances. The perception of and orientation to the environment of the men I interviewed will be discussed further in Chapter Sixteen.

### c. Organisational and occupational structure and mobility

#### i) introduction

This is a well-worked area which has become established in 'career' development theory: indeed, many of the references to the objective 'career', such as Wilensky's (1960) definition, refer to 'careers' in the organisational or the occupational setting. This section will deal jointly with organisational and occupational mobility; the former refers to the movement through a sequence of jobs within an organisation and the latter to the movement through a similar sequence in different organisations. Both settings offer the possibility of 'careers' in



professional and bureaucratic occupations: in taxi-dance halls (Cressey, 1932), lorry-driving (Hollowell, 1968), ballet dancing (Sutherland, 1976) as well as many other occupations.

While the progression through the status hierarchy is generally upward, there are some 'careers' which spiral downwards (Cressey, 1932). Status is generally achieved through the formal organisation (Glaser, 1964), though Dalton, Thompson and Price (1977) identify the important but unformulated hierarchy of the informal system.

### ii) socialisation and adaptation

There are two aspects of the process of mobility through an organisation or occupation to which attention is paid in the literature: socialisation and adaptation. (Argyris, 1957; Bakke, 1953; Barrett, 1970; Schein, 1971, 1978) Socialisation is the influence of the organisation on the individual with an emphasis on the external pressure on the individual. From this point-of-view, the individual is seen as a role player moving through a patterned sequence of jobs.

The access to this sequence is limited through various 'gateway' procedures and its progression controlled through various 'filtering' systems. This is one of the views of 'career' development that Schein (1971) adopts: he identifies an organisation's internal boundaries and examines the individual's passage through them with its consequent 'career' stages (pre-entry, novitiate period, initiation, acceptance, termination, etc.)

Using Schein's (1971) concept of organisational boundaries, Hayes and Hough (1976) examine 'career transitions'. They explore boundary activities and their effects upon the individual who experiences 'identity strain' (p. 95), when blocked from making a desired crossing or pushed when preferring to stay. I shall refer to this again in Chapter Nine.

Adaptation is the individual's response to organisational pressures. See Chapter Five for discussion of psychologists' use of 'adaptation'. It gives scope to individuality and personal agency: Argyris (1960) describes how people adapt to maintain their integrity and in so doing develop informal groups within an organisation, and Knibbs (1979)



identifies the 'personalising' responses made by managers to their organisations.

Schein (1978) elaborates his ideas on organisational 'careers' to incorporate the notions of individual development through the life cycle and of the stages of family development and their interactions with the organisational 'career'. (This leads to his three-dimensional approach described in section 3 (c) below.) He also develops the concept of the 'career anchor' (p. 127)

'... the pattern of self-perceived talents, motives, and values - serves to guide, constrain, stabilize, and integrate the person's career.'

His conclusion is that there is a need for an effective match between organisation and individual, 'an integrated view of human resource planning and development' (p. 243).

Many of his ideas have been influenced by the empirical research which he and his associates have carried out at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology over a number of years on the 'careers' of their students, many of whom have now reached 'mid-career' (Bailyn, 1977; Schein, 1975).

### iii) the mentor

Both Schein (1971, 1978) and Dalton, Thompson and Price (1977) draw attention to the role of mentor, someone higher in the organisational hierarchy who advises young employees, facilitates their development and acts as role model (Schein, 1978, pp. 177-9). The significance of such a figure is also raised by Levinson et al. (1978, pp. 97-101) and by Vaillant (1977, pp. 218-9), though they are writing of the role outside as well as within the organisation. In a similar way, Strauss's (1969, pp. 109-18) 'coach' guides the novice or junior through a status passage. I discuss this further in Chapter Nine and elsewhere (Collin, 1979 b).

### iv) time perspective and timing

The literature discusses the nature of individual commitment to the organisation and its contribution to organisational stability (Becker, 1960; Wilensky, 1960). This influences the time perspective, for the



employee has to take a long-term view of 'career' and defer immediate gratification for later pay-offs.

This introduces the questions of timing, which is a crucial aspect of the movement through an organisation (Roth, 1963; Seltzer, 1976) and of the perception of time during transitions (Musgrove, 1977; Van Gennep, 1960). These, however, have already been discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six and will thus be noted but not explored here.

d. Theories and explanations concerned with factors external to the individual: summing-up

This section has outlined some of the many factors external to the individual which can be said to influence 'career' development and noted some of the theories which acknowledge them. It has drawn attention to those factors which can bring about 'career change' or influence the way in which the individual handles it and the references to them in the 'career change' research. I shall discuss many of these issues again in Chapter Fourteen when I examine the influences upon the process of the 'careers' of the men in my own study.

Implicit in the literature concerned with these exogenous factors is the recognition of the variety of possible individual responses to them. Different people will respond to the same factor in different ways, will see it as a threat or an opportunity, a constraint or a challenge. (Murray, et al., 1971; Neapolitan, 1980; Roe and Baruch, 1967; Thomas, 1980) Thus this section has referred to such notions as personal agency, luck, the implementation of the self concept and subjective interpretation. These issues lead to the wider consideration of the ways in which the individual manages change in Chapter Nine and later in Chapters Thirteen and Sixteen.

This section complements the final section of Chapter Five, where I reported a view of development as the 'unlocking' of parts of the self in response to the experiences of external changes. This section has elaborated some of the external influences for change within occupational life.



## 2. Theories and explanations concerned with factors influencing 'career' development which are within the individual

Just as a discussion of those external factors involves a recognition of the individual's response to them which derives from internal factors, so the acknowledgement of the external factors, where not explicit, is often implied in the literature which will be examined below. Sometimes, indeed, factors here classified as internal may be perceived by the individual as external.

### a. Physiological factors

Although there is growing understanding of the subtle interactions between mind and body and hence the possibility that people can bring about their own physical dysfunctioning or achieve effective functioning (see the stress and biofeedback literature; for example, Tarler-Benlolo, 1978), individuals may well perceive their physical capacity and condition as largely outside their sphere of control and hence as yet another external factor. Physiological factors are, however, classified here as internal because of the measure of control which many people are able to exercise over them.

The physical and mental condition, the limitations and changes within them, greatly influence (and sometimes define) both blue- and white-collar 'careers'. Entry to an occupation is partially determined by, for example, such characteristics as physique, mental capacity, health and eyesight. These same characteristics can influence the progress through an occupation and will, in their turn, be influenced by occupational experiences: the development of 'industrial' diseases, for example, or the stress symptoms of certain occupations. The physiological factors, therefore, influence 'career' development and can, through illness or accident, precipitate 'career' change, forcing the individual into early retirement, unemployment, retraining or into a job which makes acceptable physical demands. Finally, they can also terminate the 'career', either through ageing (though the limit to the working life, once physically determined, is now socially and institutionally defined), illness or accident.

The assumed decline in capacities with age (discussed in Chapter Five)



leads to considerable discrimination against 'middle-aged' and older workers by employers, of such proportions that anti-discrimination measures are a matter of concern for the International Labour Office (Boglietti, 1974). Although knowledge of actual decline shows that it varies in rate and nature between individuals and is not likely to be of great consequence during the average working-life (Meier and Kerr, 1976), the fear of discrimination may make the individual 'changing career' anxious and may deleteriously affect the self concept.

Although poor physical health, illness or accident may, indeed, have been caused or influenced by the individual (through carelessness, smoking, overeating or whatever), they may, nevertheless, be perceived as external factors. They may well combine with other external factors such as the distribution of jobs, or discriminatory practices to limit the individual's choice of new 'career'. Physiological factors can, therefore, be powerful influences in 'career' development and 'career change', as Chapter Twelve will show of the men in my study.

#### b. Psychological factors

##### i) psycho-analytic factors

Although, from a Freudian perspective, the deep-seated and forceful bases of the self are worked out, perhaps hidden or disguised, in all aspects of the individual's life, relatively little attention has so far been paid to their manifestation in the arena of 'career'.

One example of a psycho-analytic framework to explain 'careers' is offered by Bordin, Nachmann, Segal (1963). They relate the gratification of the various body zones to occupational characteristics, using accountancy, plumbing and social work as illustration. They also identify the 'sexual mode' of the occupation: accountancy and plumbing are 'masculine', social work 'feminine'. The 'sexual mode' (also seen as significant in another work context by Mant, 1977) may be of relevance to the understanding of 'mid-career change' for, as noted in Chapters Five and Six, there is said to be a re-balancing of masculine and feminine aspects of the personality in 'mid-life'. 'Mid-career change' may permit a move into work in a more appropriate 'sexual mode', as happened, Robbins suggests (1977, p. 71), among those of her sample who 'chose new careers in areas that are considered



less traditionally masculine'.

Other psycho-analytic interpretations mentioned in the literature are identification with parental figures which leads to 'career' problems (Sommers, 1956) and the manifestation of the ego defence mechanisms in the 'career' (Pietrofesa and Splete, 1975). Vaillant (1977, p. 373) sees a correlation between mature ego defences and, among other things, 'objective vocational success'. Cherry (1976) finds evidence of a relationship between job changing and incipient personality or psychiatric problems. This was in a young sample and she states explicitly that a different result may have been obtained with an older cohort.

The psycho-analytic framework looks to early deep-seated experiences for explanations of some later behaviours and attitudes. Thus, it might be supposed that childhood experiences of pain or loss through the death or divorce of a parent, or separation through evacuation or hospitalisation might eventually influence 'career' choice or development. Similarly, geographical mobility or the adult experiences of marital difficulties could affect the 'career'. However, Clopton (1973) found that the 'Shifters' had no greater experience of childhood change than the 'Persisters', though they had more problems in adult life and Robbins (1977) found no correlation between 'career change' and marital breakdown.

This is clearly a difficult area to investigate but the psycho-analytic approach appears to offer the possibility of explanation for seemingly irrational elements of 'career' choice and development and thus will be referred to again in the chapters of Phase Three.

## ii) life-span development

Some of the theories which conceive of life as a sequence of 'phases' or 'stages' each having its own characteristics and essential tasks, were outlined and the concepts underlying them discussed in Chapter Five. These ideas were incorporated into 'career' development theory in the 1950s to produce a model in which the adult goes through the stages of establishment and maintenance of the chosen 'career'. In this normative model a change of 'career' in 'mid-life' is referred to as 'floundering'; this assumption gives significance to the findings



of Clopton (1973) and Hiestand (1971) concerning the stability of their respondents and the comments of LaBuda (1974) and of Schlossberg (1975) on the uneven and continuous nature of 'career' development.

The work of Miller and Form (1951) was mentioned in section 1 (b iii) above. They divide the working life into five stages: preparatory, initial, trial, stable and retirement. Their empirical research suggested that 'insecure' 'career' patterns, such as those of the unskilled or semi-skilled, rarely reached the stable work period. Goldthorpe and Llewellyn (1977), however, comment upon this, as noted earlier above, and suggest (p. 294) that their own findings 'undermine' the notion of 'a normal career curve'.

Another early model is that of Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad and Herma (1951). This is of interest not only because of the influence it has had but because its eventual modification by Ginzberg (1972) marks the response of theory to the insistent voice of empirical data. Initially, Ginzberg et al. had conceived of 'career' as an irreversible process which passed through well-defined periods until about the age of 24 and which was based upon a compromise between personal inclinations and actual possibilities. Ginzberg's reformulation accommodates the later information about adulthood made available by such research as Hiestand's (1971) and he now regards 'career' as a reversible process, open-ended and co-existent with the working life, not based on the 'static principle of compromise' but on the 'dynamic concept of optimization' (p. 171).

'Men and women seek to find the best occupational fit between their changing desires and their changing circumstances.'  
(p. 171)

'The individual remains the prime mover in the decision-making process.' (p. 175)

'... the passage of the years implies that the individual is undergoing important changes. He is accumulating skill and work experience; his interests and values are likely to shift - his personal and family circumstances will not remain the same.'  
(p. 172)



These changes of interest and values and the search for a better fit between them and work are cited as the reasons for 'career change' in a number of the studies referred to above. Over half of Hiestand's (1971) respondents indicated that they had returned to college because of a development or change in their interests and ambitions. The dominant motive of LaBuda's (1974) sample was the search for 'more intrinsic outcomes' from work such as achievement, independence and intellectual stimulation, while their first career choice had been dictated largely by situational and security needs. Robbins (1977) also found that 'career changes' were made in order to find more meaningful work, the opportunity for greater achievement and a better fit between personal values and work. The respondents in Robert's (1975) study, though successful in their original 'careers', had felt exploited and had 'dropped-out' to find personal satisfaction.

Super is perhaps the most influential, authoritative and prolific writer on 'career' development; for thirty years he has developed and redeveloped his ideas. Two major themes of his work are the developmental nature of 'career' and the implementation of the self concept in the 'career', which is discussed in the next section.

Super (Super et al., 1963) sees 'career' development progressing through the following stages:

0 to 14 years period of growth

15 to 24 years period of exploration

A period of transition and trial during which 'floundering', a random succession of jobs, takes place.

25 to 44 years period of establishment

A tendency to end 'floundering' and to stabilise the 'career' (particularly in blue-collar workers) and/or to advance it (particularly in white-collar workers).

45 to 64 years period of maintenance

The preservation of what has been achieved or, if the 'career' has been stabilised prematurely, 'nagging by the self concept'.



65 years onwards      period of decline

Like Ginzberg, Super (1977a) has modified this schema to take account of possible developments in 'mid-life'; he now acknowledges that a new cycle of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline may begin then. Murphy and Burck (1976) consider that there is sufficient evidence from research to suggest that another developmental 'stage' be inserted in Super's basic model, that of 'renewal', which takes place between the ages of 35 and 45, between Super's 'establishment' and 'maintenance'. Some of the 'career change' research, although not carried out within Super's conceptual framework, could well be described in these terms. (Clopton, 1973; Hiestand, 1971; LaBuda, 1974; Robbins, 1977; Roberts, 1975; Schlossberg et al., 1967) However, any modification of the schema must raise questions about its validity as a normative model.

Havighurst was mentioned in Chapter Five for his developmental approach. His extension of this into the 'career' field (1964) takes the following form.

5 to 10 years	<u>identification with a worker</u>
11 to 14 years	<u>acquiring the basic habits of industry</u>
15 to 24 years	<u>acquiring identity as a worker in the occupational structure</u>
25 to 39 years	<u>becoming a productive person.</u> Mastering the skills of one's occupation; moving up the ladder within it.
40 to 69 years	<u>maintaining a productive society.</u> Emphasis shifts toward the societal and away from the individual aspect of the worker's role; individuals see themselves as responsible citizens and attend to the civic responsibility attached to their jobs. They induct younger people into the early stages of 'career'. Having time and energy they branch into broader types of activity.



This shift in emphasis in the middle years was noted in some of the 'career change' studies. In Robbins's (1977) sample a number of men explained their change in terms of changed values and social conscience. One reported that

'his goals and values had broadened; he is now more concerned with ethics and not just Sunday religion' (p. 71)

Many moved into the helping professions such as teaching or social work. Haug and Sussman (1970) write that one of the motivations for undertaking a second 'career' is to find socially useful work. Roberts's (1975) middle-class 'drop-outs' had experienced conflict between their values and their company's but had chosen to leave the system altogether.

There are other theorists who adopt the developmental approach. Moment (1967), for example, is interested in the changing orientation to work over the life-span and the external influences upon choice. Schein (1978, mentioned in section 1 (c ii) above) describes the 'stages' and tasks of the male biosocial cycle, the 'career' cycle and the family cycle and focusses on their integration from the point-of-view of the organisation. Tiedeman (1961) is concerned with the decision-making aspects of 'career', which will be discussed more fully later in this chapter, and plots the nature of decision-making in the individual's occupational and other areas of activity throughout life.

As shown in Chapter Five, one of the concepts intrinsic to the view of sequential, normative development through the life-span is that of the developmental task. Translated into 'career' development terms this is vocational maturity, a concept which has generated much research and discussion over the last twenty years or so. Super (1977b) describes how it originated in Columbia University's Career Pattern Study, directed by him, which followed the subjects from their adolescence in 1951 until their late thirties. He (1977b, p. 294) defines it as the ability to cope with tasks appropriate to the 'life stage' relative to others at the same 'life stage'. It is thus a relative concept and maturity has to be regained in each new 'stage' of the 'career'. The early models (for example, Crites, 1965) were concerned



with adolescence but have since been adapted for application to adults (Sheppard, 1971). Super (1977b) proposes what he sees as a more appropriate model which incorporates 'planfulness' or time perspective, exploration, information, decision-making and reality orientation and discusses its measure, the Career Development Inventory, Adult Form.

Even if the normative view of 'career' development which engenders the concept of vocational maturity be held, there are operational difficulties in the application of the concept. Without considerably more research it is difficult to establish criteria of 'maturity' in adult 'career' behaviour. Indeed, it would seem that the concept has so far drawn its strength from theory rather than from empirical data. In her thorough discussion, Kidd (1981) highlights some difficulties with its validity and suggests (p. 372) that it should be 'dispensed with for the present' and that a 'more operational approach' be adopted to the 'career' development of adolescents. This suggestion must surely also be appropriate to the treatment of adult 'careers'. Super himself, with Knasel (1981), has re-considered his views and concludes (p. 199) that the concept of 'career' adaptability may be more appropriate for adults.

'The new model based on adaptability ... casts the individual as a responsible agent acting within a dynamic environmental setting. ... the new approach places greater emphasis on the competences and attitudes of the individual rather than on some abstract and hypothetical construct of the individual's "level of maturity" ... suggests that more attention should be paid to the dynamic nature of the career tasks which confront people ...'

This, they continue, is of significance in a changing world. The earlier model, stressing tasks at a given life stage, had been appropriate in a stable economy.

This recent questioning and new approach is welcome, for there could have been every danger of judging and counselling people against an artificial and perhaps meaningless standard. Super and Knasel's recognition of both internal and external factors accords with the view of 'career' being developed in this chapter.



### iii) self concept

One of Super's prime contributions to 'career' development theory has been his application of self concept theory. This derives from Roger's (1951) humanistic approach to psycho-therapy which is based upon a recognition of the self concept and its tendency towards differentiation, autonomy and growth (self-actualisation, in Maslow's term, 1954) and towards congruence with experience which is achieved either through modification of self concept or of the environment (see also Chapter Nine).

Using the life-span development framework, Super (1957) sees 'career' as a process of compromise in which the self concept is developed, implemented and tested against the demands of reality. Both nature and nurture contribute to the self concept. From childhood 'behaviour potentials are acted upon by the environment' (Super, 1957, p. 81); through identification and positive and negative reinforcement, the child begins to develop a concept of himself as a distinct person. This self concept may have incompatible components or may not be realistic; through exploration in various situations it is modified to stand 'the test of reality'. The process of implementation, modification and reality testing continues through life but with a tendency towards the stabilisation of the self concept with time. The occupation will be chosen for its likely fit with the self concept. It might prove that the individual has to modify the self concept because of occupational experience or, if the self concept is strong, to look for a job which is more appropriate to it. The 'career' will follow the course of life-span development noted in the previous section.

This approach has been adopted and extended by other theorists: Jordaan (1963), for example, incorporates Festinger's (1957) notion of cognitive dissonance (see Chapter Nine). It has generated much research, which in general has been supportive. Mitchell, Jones and Krumboltz (1975) estimate that 17 per cent of the empirical vocational studies reported from 1969 to 1974 investigate the self concept approach, whereas one half are concerned with Holland's theory. (See section 2 (b iv) below.)

There are also references in the literature to the relationship between self concept and age. Murphy and Burck (1976) report a decrease in the



positive self-concept during the late 30's and early 40's. After an uncomfortable period during which there is an examination of values, a questioning of the meaning of life and a comparison of goals with achievements, they suggest that there is a revival in the self-concept in the late 40's with an acceptance of present reality and increased reflection and contemplation. Hall and Mansfield (1975) find a significant correlation between Maslow's hierarchy of needs and age: the importance of esteem, security and love increases with age while the need for self-actualisation decreases. There is a peak in the need for autonomy during the years 40 - 49.

Such changes in the self-concept, either caused by, leading to or in some other way connected with the deep-seated changes during 'mid-life' discussed in Chapters Five and Six, would be likely, within Super's framework, to demand some kind of occupational adjustment and this, indeed, is what is reflected in the 'career change' research. Even though the studies do not necessarily even use Super's terminology, there are several prima facie examples of a changed self concept seeking a more congruent occupational reality. The self concepts of Bingham's (1966) trainees matched that of counsellor rather than of teacher. Hiestand (1971) reports that the interests or ambitions of the mature students he studied had changed. LaBuda's (1974) respondents seem to have developed a more positive self concept and in their 'career change' were seeking 'more intrinsic outcomes'. The 'self-determined accommodation career' of Murray, Powers and Havighurst (1971) suggests the implementation of a strong and positive self concept in the face of environmental pressures. The attitude of Neapolitan's (1980) changers to the obstacles to change, implies that they had a strong self-concept seeking implementation. Robbins's (1977) subjects looked for a better fit between work and values. Thomas (1980) singles out the 'Force-outs' who appear to have poor self concepts and are 'relative "losers"'. Roe and Baruch (1967) seem to be dealing also with those of poor self concept and Schlossberg et al. (1967) with those of positive self concept.

However, despite the attractiveness of Super's approach, its widespread application in 'careers' counselling and the considerable support (both explicit and implicit) it receives from the literature, it poses some major difficulties for which it has come under criticism. These



difficulties concern its conceptual basis and its application.

First, the self concept, according to Rogers (1951) and hence Super, is the individual's perception of self. In his client-centred therapy Rogers does not seek to interpret or diagnose his clients' self concept, but accepts both it and the view of the world seen through their eyes. Roberts (1980, p. 162), in tune with both Rogers and Mead (1934), writes that

'... the self constantly changes in interaction with significant others and in the dialogue between the "I" and the "Me" ... simply thinking about myself alters it ... the self is dynamic and more like a process than a structure.'

Interpretation, definition and the implementation of the self concept, central to Super's understanding of 'career' development, Roberts continues, are, by contrast, 'static' concepts,

'based on the assumption that there is something there (in your head) which you look at (somehow) and then put into operation ...'

They are thus inappropriate to the concept of the self: its essence is destroyed when attempts are made to define it, qualify it or to make it operational (and in so doing to reify it and render it an object). This is, indeed, the dilemma in the conceptualisation of the self which Smail (1978) discusses and one which, as noted in Chapter Fourteen, I experienced for myself when analysing my interviews.

A further difficulty with the conceptual basis of this self concept approach to 'career' development is encountered when this open-ended concept is incorporated into a normative, life-span development approach to the 'career'.

Even if the theorist finds the 'static concept' of a 'still-life snapshot of the self in process' (Roberts, 1980, p. 162) legitimate and acceptable, there still remain the problems of defining and applying it. Kidd (1981, pp. 55-6; p. 98) discusses some of these. The self concept is essentially the actor's construct and thus the approach to 'career' development which is based upon it focusses upon the phenomenal or the



transcendental 'career', in the terms proposed in Chapter Three. However, as Kidd points out (pp. 61-2), some of the research used to support this approach employs scales composed of items deemed by the researcher to be relevant or significant (and which is, therefore, dealing with the observer's construct and the substantive 'career').

She also notes (p. 62) that little is known about the development and maintenance of the self concept and the development of the occupational self concept. She points to the need for British research not just to replicate American studies but to widen the investigation. Of Super's view that the implementation of the self concept gives 'career' satisfaction, she notes (p. 99) that, although not refuted by research, it is by no means supported because of 'the impossibility of interpreting the data in terms of cause-and-effect relationships.' This criticism is echoed by Thoresen and Ewart (1976, p. 35) in their evaluation of 'career' development theories.

'At best, this research does a good job telling us what we already know: that self-concepts and work roles tend to be related. But it does not help us untangle the complex network of causal interaction between self-estimates and occupational feedback that influences career choice and satisfaction.'

Although these are substantial criticisms, which must eventually be faced, there are few people actually making them and many more who uphold the approach. I, too, found it of potentially considerable value in the understanding of the experiences of the men I interviewed though, as noted above, I recognise the temptation to abuse it. Its value and limitations I discuss further in the chapters of Phase Three. Super himself expresses (1981, p. 18) confidence in it

'The influence of self-concept theory on practice has been considerable, for it has appealed to the zeitgeist and its use in counselling is simple.'

He also suggests (p. 51: see final section of this chapter) that it offers the means of synthesising other theories about 'career'. This claim will be discussed further in Chapter Eighteen.



iv) compatibility between personality and motivational needs and occupations

Pietrofesa and Splete's (1975, p. 46) definitions are adopted here:

Personality is 'the organising and governing agent of the person and produces order and integration among (his) isolated experiences'

Needs are 'hypothetical constructs that stand for a force that organises perception, apperception, intellection, conation and action in such a way as to transform in a certain direction an existing unsatisfying situation.'

Several 'career' development theories focus upon the compatibility between personality and motivational needs and the chosen occupation. For example from her research into the personality traits of artists and scientists, Roe (1957) concludes that there are major differences in personality between physical scientists and social scientists in terms of the interactions they have with people and things and that such differences derive from childhood experiences. She thus advances the theory that there is a relationship between genetic factors, the expenditure of psychic energy, the development of patterns and strengths of basic needs, childhood experiences and vocational behaviour. However, little support has been found for this in research in general and, among the 'career' change studies, Clopton (1973) hypothesised that he would be able to discriminate between 'Shifters' and 'Persisters' on the basis of their childhood experiences, but could not do so.

Hoppock (1967) proposes that the chosen occupation is that which is believed will best meet such needs and that 'career' develops as individuals learn to anticipate how prospective jobs will meet their needs. Occupation is always subject to change when it is believed that a change will better meet their needs.

Holland, another influential 'career' theorist, whose work has been well supported in research and widely applied in practice, sees occupational choice as a process in which people seek environments which are congruent with their personality. His focus is upon choice rather than development; indeed, as Super points out (1981, p. 20) upon preference rather than actually chosen occupation.



Holland (1966) proposes that people can be classified into six personal orientations, or typical modes of adjustment, which are matched by six work environments. These are

1. realistic

Typically masculine, physically strong, unsocial, aggressive; having good motor skills and lacking verbal, interpersonal skills. Examples of preferred occupations: electrician, surveyor.

2. intellectual

Typically task-orientated, intrceptive, asocial; prefers thinking to acting. Examples of preferred occupations: astronomer, zoologist.

3. social

Typically sociable, responsible, feminine with verbal and interpersonal skills. Examples of preferred occupations: missionary, speech therapist.

4. conventional

Typically conforming, preferring structured verbal and numerical activities and subordinate roles. Examples of preferred occupations: book-keeper, traffic manager.

5. enterprising

Typically verbally skilful in selling, dominating, leading. Examples of preferred occupations; hotel manager, television producer.

6. artistic

Typically asocial, feminine, and needing scope for self-expression. Examples of preferred occupation: art dealer, stage director.

The relationship between the personal orientations is expressed as a hexagon: see Figure Nine.



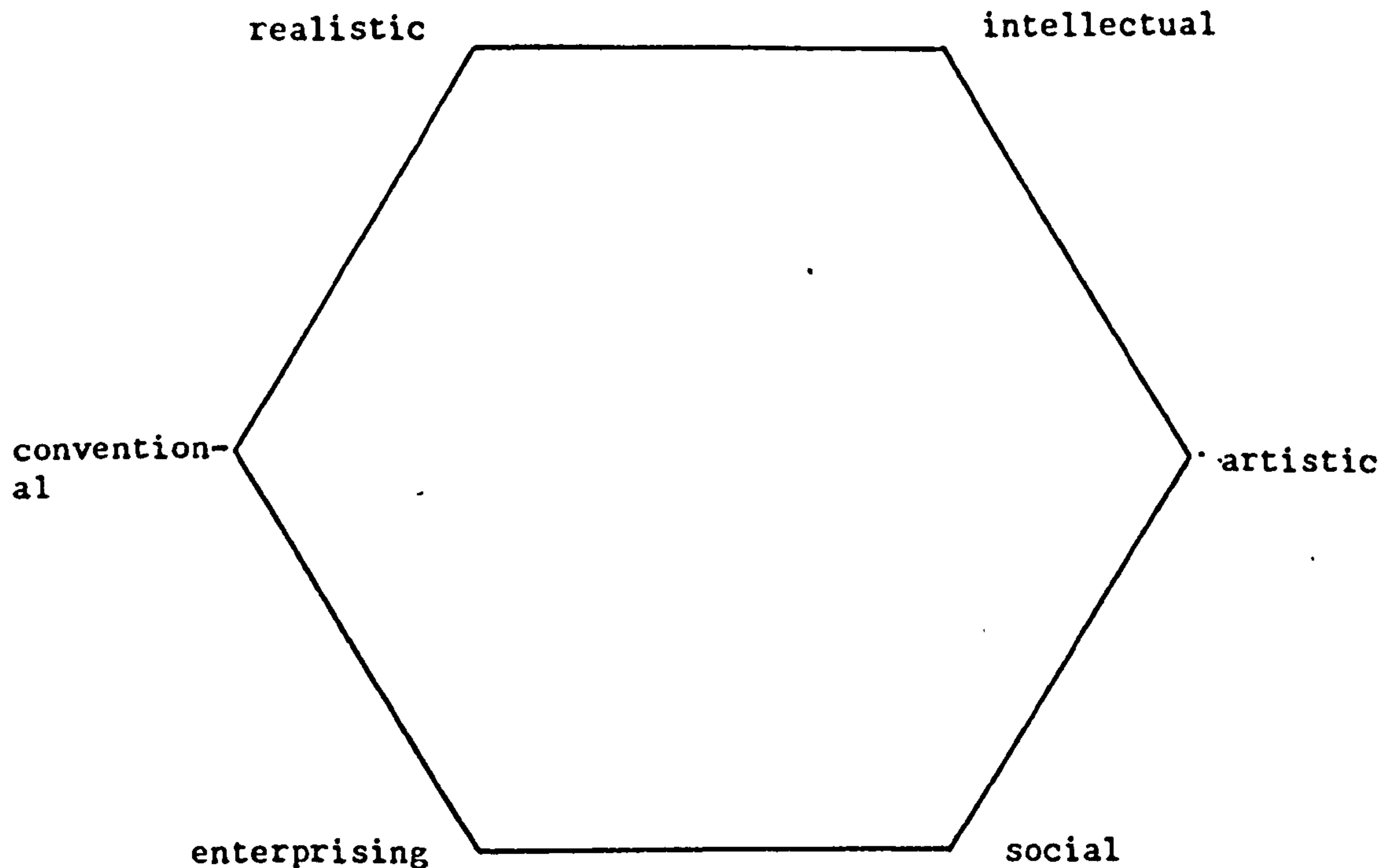


Figure Nine

Holland's Personal Orientations and Work Environments

Categories which are adjacent are more closely related to one another than to those on the other side of the hexagon; hence Holland's assessment of the individual takes note of the several dominant traits. Those, which are apparently assumed to vary little over time or between situations (which Mischel (1973: see Chapter Nine) would query) are identified by means of the Vocational Preference Inventory or the Self-Directed Search.

Several of the 'career change' studies specifically make use of Holland's theory: Gilbride (1973); Gottfredson (1977); Robbins (1977) and Wiener and Vaitenas (1977). Robbins, for example, notes (1977, p. 97) that some of the 'career changers' had made their initial choice of 'career' under the pressure of economic circumstances.

'They were extremely unhappy over the long run, but circumstances had forced them into it. Only after great turmoil were they able to break away and go into a field which they really enjoyed and found compatible.'



Using Holland's Theory she hypothesised that she would find congruence between their personality type and their new occupation, but she found no statistically significant correlation. Twenty-six men moved to more congruent careers in Holland's terms, 25 to less congruent careers and 16 made no change. She says (p. 62)

'This finding would tend to disprove Holland's theory ... Particularly in a population such as the one studied, in which the man had the educational background and financial resources to be occupationally mobile, one would assume that personality variables might take precedence, especially in a voluntary career change.'

However, Robbins recognises that the individual expresses personality and motivational needs in all areas of life and she recommends that future research examine hobbies and other non-work activities in terms of Holland's categories.

Although he does not refer to Holland's approach, Neapolitan (1980) uses the concept of congruence: in this case between orientation to work and rewards of a job. His changers lacked such congruence in their first occupation but experienced it in their second.

Holland's theory has been subjected to much testing which is reported to have given it a large measure of support (Osipow, 1976). Schlossberg (1975) and Holland and Gottfredson (1975) indicate its ability to account for 'career change'. Parsons and Wigtil (1974) conclude that it is more appropriate to an understanding of 'career change' than of 'career' choice, for their research had suggested that the choice of the first occupation was determined by the availability of jobs and that it was only later that personality factors became significant in job choice. On the other hand, there are criticisms made of it in the literature in reference to both 'career change' and to 'career' generally. For example, Thoresen and Ewart (1976, pp. 33-4) point out that it has not yet been extensively tested with working adults (more than two-thirds of the studies have been on students) and that it does not address itself to the possibility of what they call 'self-mastery and change': the individual's potential to modify self and environment. They refer to the growing recognition of psychologists (such as Mischel (1973): see Chapter Nine) that the individual displays different



personality traits in different situations and at different times so that a single instance of classification, as in Holland's typology, reveals little about the individual's capacity for change.

In a recent review of Holland's theory and the research related to it Super (1981) points out that many of the studies claiming to uphold it have been concurrent rather than predictive studies: the subjects may have had appropriate orientations for their jobs because of the socialisation which they had undergone in those jobs rather than because of their initial orientations. This, he notes, points to the need for longitudinal studies and concludes (p. 23)

'But the validity of Holland's theory ... remains in doubt, and therefore so does its usefulness in practice.'

The possible contribution of Holland's work to a study of 'career change' must, in the light of these criticisms, be judged doubtful and this is indeed what I conclude from the analysis of my interviews in Phase Three. With its psychometric approach it offers little insight into the way in which the individual's needs and interests respond to a changing self and a changing environment.

c. Theories and explanations concerned with factors within the individual:  
summing-up

In outlining those theories and explanations of 'career' development which focus upon endogenous factors I have indicated how they have been used in many of the 'career change' studies. They have received greater emphasis there than have the explanations concerned with exogenous factors (though most theories in both 'families' acknowledge the existence and significance of the other set of factors) and they also feature strongly in the theoretical underpinning of contemporary British 'careers' guidance, as Roberts (1977) notes disapprovingly. When analysing my own research material in Phase Three I, therefore, examine the contribution which they make to its understanding.

However, the discussion of the classification of 'career change' studies in Chapter Seven suggested that the model of 'career' as a dynamic and holistic process was appropriate in a changing world.



Integral to this model is the conceptualisation of the interaction of exogenous and endogenous factors from which, the conclusion to Chapter Five suggested, came the possibility of the individual's growth. An examination of the theories concerning this interaction is, therefore, needed in a study of 'mid-career change'. None of the theories noted so far in this chapter focus on this nor divide their attention equally between the two 'families' of factors, though, perhaps, self concept theory approaches this. The next section, therefore, introduces those theories of 'career' development which explicitly recognise this interaction. Before passing on, it should be noted that Robbins's (1977) recognition that needs are also met in out-of-work activities - echoing the comments by her co-worker Thomas (1977), reported in Chapter Seven, on the relationship between changes in work and in life-style - endorses this holistic view of 'career'. The theories so far discussed, however, scarcely conceptualise this.

### 3. Theories and explanations concerned with the interaction between exogenous and endogenous factors

#### a. Decision-making theory

The literature on decision-making (for example, Harrison, 1975) conceives it as a dynamic process in which the individual responds to, acts upon and interacts with the environment. It begins with the definition of objectives and the analysis of the problem and continues with the identification of possible alternative solutions, their evaluation and the choice of the most appropriate within the given constraints, its implementation and the subsequent monitoring of results.

Effective decision-making involves the recognition of and adjustment to both exogenous and endogenous factors. It calls for accurate and regular intelligence about the environment so that the opportunities and threats which lie therein may be identified. At the same time it demands that individuals are continuously aware of their needs and assess their strengths and weaknesses. The effective decision will have to achieve a balance, if only temporarily, between these various pressures so that it almost always involves some degree of compromise or 'satisficing', the decision which is 'good enough' in the circumstances (Simon, 1960). The concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger,



1957: see Chapter Nine) is often found of relevance in an analysis of decision-making.

Arroba (1977, p. 150) suggests that

'... each individual will possess a repertoire of decision-making styles ... (which) vary across different situations.'

She identifies six styles in her empirical study; they can be arranged along a continuum from active to passive. The 'logical' style involves objective appraisal whereas the 'no thought' involves none; the 'hesitant' style involves procrastination; in the 'emotional' style subjective feelings sway the decision, while in the 'intuitive' the decision is made on the basis of a feeling of 'rightness' or inevitability; the 'compliant' style is used when expectations of the situation or the self create passivity in the individual. Arroba concludes that the subjective meaning of the situation influences the individual's choice of style.

Chapter Sixteen will suggest that, as well as recognising predominantly cognitive or affective styles, it may be possible to identify cognitive, affective and conative components of the decision. The cognitive component has been emphasised in this section so far and is the one perhaps most generally stressed. Its skills can be analysed, taught and improved. Apart from overall emotional responses to decision-making, the affective component lies also in the ability to suspend judgement and generate alternative solutions to the situation and to live with the ambiguity and uncertainty of a sub-optimal decision. The conative lies in the deliberate passage through the various phases of the decision process, the choice of one solution from among the alternatives available and the implementation of it.

Many of the concepts of decision-making have been applied to the field of 'career' and several specific models of 'career' decision-making have been developed. Gelatt (1962) follows the general model above closely and Hilton (1962) incorporates the concept of cognitive dissonance: 'career' development may thus be shaped by attempts to reduce dissonance. Tiedeman and O'Hara (1963) examine the various stages of the decision-making process. They suggest (p. 43) that activities are random in the early exploratory stages and that a 'career' choice is made when 'imagination meets reality'. Tiedeman (1961) weaves decision-making into a life-span developmental model of 'career' and traces the patterns of occupational



decisions throughout life. Super (1981) in a similar manner indicates the decision points in each of the major roles of the 'life career'.

Various 'career' decision-making skills are identified in the literature, many of which echo aspects of vocational maturity (discussed earlier in this chapter) but without its normative expectations. For example, Friel and Carkhuff (1974) examine the need for self-awareness, occupational awareness, the weighing of alternatives and a plan of action. Gelatt et al. (1973) analyse the strategies in choosing between alternative solutions in terms of the risks and certainties involved. Whereas, as noted also in section 2 (b ii) above, Ginzberg (1972, p. 171) embraces the 'dynamic concept of optimisation', Sofer (1970, pp. 45-6) thinks

'... we would expect in occupational decision-making at least an element of ... "satisficing" behaviour ...'

Another aspect of decision-making is the relationship of means to ends. This is conceptualised in Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory which identifies the anticipated satisfaction of achieving a particular goal (valence), the probability of achieving it (expectancy) and the likelihood that such goals will lead to other desired outcomes (instrumentality). Super (1981) notes the relevance of this in 'career' development theory and Lewis (1981) is currently using it in her study of 'career change'.

Super (1981, p. 50) writes that

'theorists and practitioners alike have now come to see that decision-making is the essence of career development.'

Nevertheless, none of the 'career change' studies mentioned in Chapter Seven closely examined decision-making, although references are made to some aspects of it. For example, both Hiestand (1971) and Robbins (1977) note the period of time taken to decide to change 'career'. LaBuda (1974), Neapolitan (1980) and Schlossberg et al. (1967) note the need for awareness of self and/or occupational realities and the degree to which this was shown in their subjects. Roe and Baruch (1967) express concern about the lack of alternative solutions examined while Haug and Sussman (1970) and Robbins (1977) refer to the element of risk involved in 'career change' decisions. There are also many references to the interaction and balancing of internal and external pressures, central to the decision-making process but not formulated in these terms:



Haug and Sussman (1970), Hiestand (1971), LaBuda (1974), Murray et al. (1971), Neapolitan (1980), Robbins (1977), Schlossberg et al. (1967) and Thomas (1980).

Because the nature of 'career' decision-making is of considerable interest, both in terms of learning how individuals handle the interaction between exogenous and endogenous factors and how they may achieve greater conscious control over their 'careers', it merits closer attention than it has so far been given in 'career change' research. I shall, therefore, examine it in the analysis of my own interviews in Chapter Sixteen.

#### b. Social learning theory

Another theory which takes account of the interaction between exogenous and endogenous factors is social learning theory, one of the later developments in the behavioural school of psychology (Miller and Dollard, 1941; Bandura, 1965). While firmly based on learning theory, it diverges from it in its recognition of the cognitive processes which intervene between stimulus and response, so that the learning process is more complex than the reinforcement of the stimulus-response sequence. Learning from earlier successful (rewarded) behaviour develops expectations: the individual learns to foresee the consequences of many actions and this anticipation influences behaviour. Cognitive strategies are developed to attend to environmental information and to organise it into meaningful categories. Behaviour in any situation is thus influenced by the specific nature of that situation, the individual's appraisal of it and by previous reinforcement of behaviour in similar situations.

Other factors mediate between the individual and the situation. Social learning theory recognises the contribution of vicarious learning, of learning through observation: appropriate behaviour and emotional responses may be learned from role models. It also emphasises the scope for self-regulation and planning: individuals establish their own standards which they use to regulate their behaviour through self-imposed rewards or punishments.

Social learning theory highlights the reciprocal relationship between individual behaviour and the environment. The cognitive processes already noted influence individual behaviour and this, in evoking reward or punishment from the environment, shapes the environment



experienced by the individual. Bandura (1977) demonstrated in an animal experiment how, in acting upon the environment, the individual changes it and so generates a new environment. One may thus conclude that while the potential environment may be the same for all, the actual environment results from the individual's behaviour. However, apart from an explanation in terms of learning, this theory does not address the question of the nature of and reason for individual differences which might pre-dispose the individual to behave in one way rather than another.

This theory appears to offer some valuable insights into most behavioural processes including, according to the writers mentioned below, 'career' development and decision-making. Having surveyed the range of 'career' choice and development theories and detected therein support, albeit implicit, for social learning theory, Mitchell et al. (1975, pp. 10-11) assert its advantages over them.

'It allows for the influence of economic and sociological factors as well as for psychological influences such as experiences, aspirations, and skills.'

They see it as more comprehensive than other theories (though in calling for 'global theories of career development' Super, 1981, p. 51, disregards it). Mitchell et al. note that it can conceptualise the life-long process of decision-making and grant an understanding of experience through the analyses of input and output variables and cognitive mediating processes: an understanding, they claim, which is more testable than that afforded by Super's self concept theory.

Mitchell et al. suggest that the following factors interact to influence 'career' decision-making: inherited characteristics and special abilities, environmental conditions and special events, specific learning experiences and such 'task approach' skills as problem-solving, perceptual and cognitive processes and emotional predispositions for coping with the environment. Krumboltz et al. (1976) spell out these propositions in terms of an individual's 'career'.

Just as learning theory provides the framework for the modification of behaviour, so, as Thoresen and Ewart (1976, p. 36) indicate, social



learning theory can be applied to the modification of 'career' behaviour.

'The selecting or changing of a career as well as experiencing satisfaction in it is more complicated than the personality-type matching or self-concept implementation studies suggest. An effective "career-decider" must develop and sustain many diverse behaviours over time ... Such behaviours are the means a person uses to engineer selection and satisfaction ... analyzing the environment; committing oneself to take action and maintain action; identifying and altering faulty perceptions, beliefs, attributions, trying out new ways of acting; and restructuring the environment to promote change and foster encouragement.'

Thoresen and Ewart then analyse the process of 'behavioural self-control' as applied to 'career' development and outline a framework to teach and learn it. Its major areas are commitment, awareness, restructuring environment, evaluating consequences and setting standards for self-evaluation. They strongly advocate (as I shall discuss in Chapter Ten) breaking out of the established form of 'careers' research and guidance in order to

'face the challenging task of teaching people how to become better architects of their lives'. (p. 41)

Social learning theory could thus be significant to an understanding of 'mid-career change', not only because it deals with the exogenous and endogenous factors but also because it offers a framework within which people can learn how to manage change effectively: I shall use it in the analysis of my interview material. However, despite its attractions, its potential contribution to 'career' development theory has not been recognised outside the examples already quoted. It is mentioned only briefly in the most recent and comprehensive British work (Watts et al., 1981) and is not referred to in the 'career change' research outlined in Chapter Seven, although it is implicit therein. Clopton (1973), for example, hypothesised that the 'Shifters' would have had more experience than the 'Persisters' of change and separation on childhood, in marriage and in geographical mobility. Like Neapolitan



(1980), he notes how enjoyment of a hobby led eventually to a change of 'career'. Other studies (LaBuda, 1974; Neapolitan, 1980; Robbins, 1977; Schlossberg et al., 1967) note the relationship between early 'career' choices and the subsequent 'career change'. These considerations clearly fall within the province which social learning theory is competent to handle.

As noted earlier, the 'career change' studies have been more concerned with the endogenous factors than with the exogenous: perhaps this and a tendency to sheer away from behavioural approaches explains the neglect of social learning theory in this field so far.

### c. A three-dimensional approach

Schein holds a significant place in the literature on organisational 'careers' with his many and various analyses and models. Some of these he never fully develops, but they remain a stimulus to new thinking. For example, he writes (1975, p. 11) of the conflicts between the demands of 'career', family and self-development and of the problems they pose.

'My own hypothesis about the cause of mid-career, mid-life problems is that our value system with respect to work, family and self-development is no longer integrated. People have more options and are experiencing more conflict because the options are to varying degrees mutually exclusive.'

He does not develop this embryonic three-dimensional model here. However, in a later paper (1976, pp. 10-11), having written of the two dimensions of 'career' (the external, or the objective progression through an organisation and the internal, 'the individual's own concept of that progression'), he introduces the 'career cube', which is shown in Figure Ten. The three dimensions, echoing but not exactly reproducing the ideas of the 1975 paper, are the external factors of occupations, roles and work settings; the internal factors of motives, values and talents; and the stages of life, 'career' and family. Schein presents the cube as a schema for 'analysing the interactions' between the three dimensions, suggesting that these interactions have both external and internal outcomes. The former are 'patterns of accommodation' (the resolution of tensions between the dimensions) and of



productivity and creativity. The latter are 'patterns of involvement' and satisfactions from work, family and self-development.

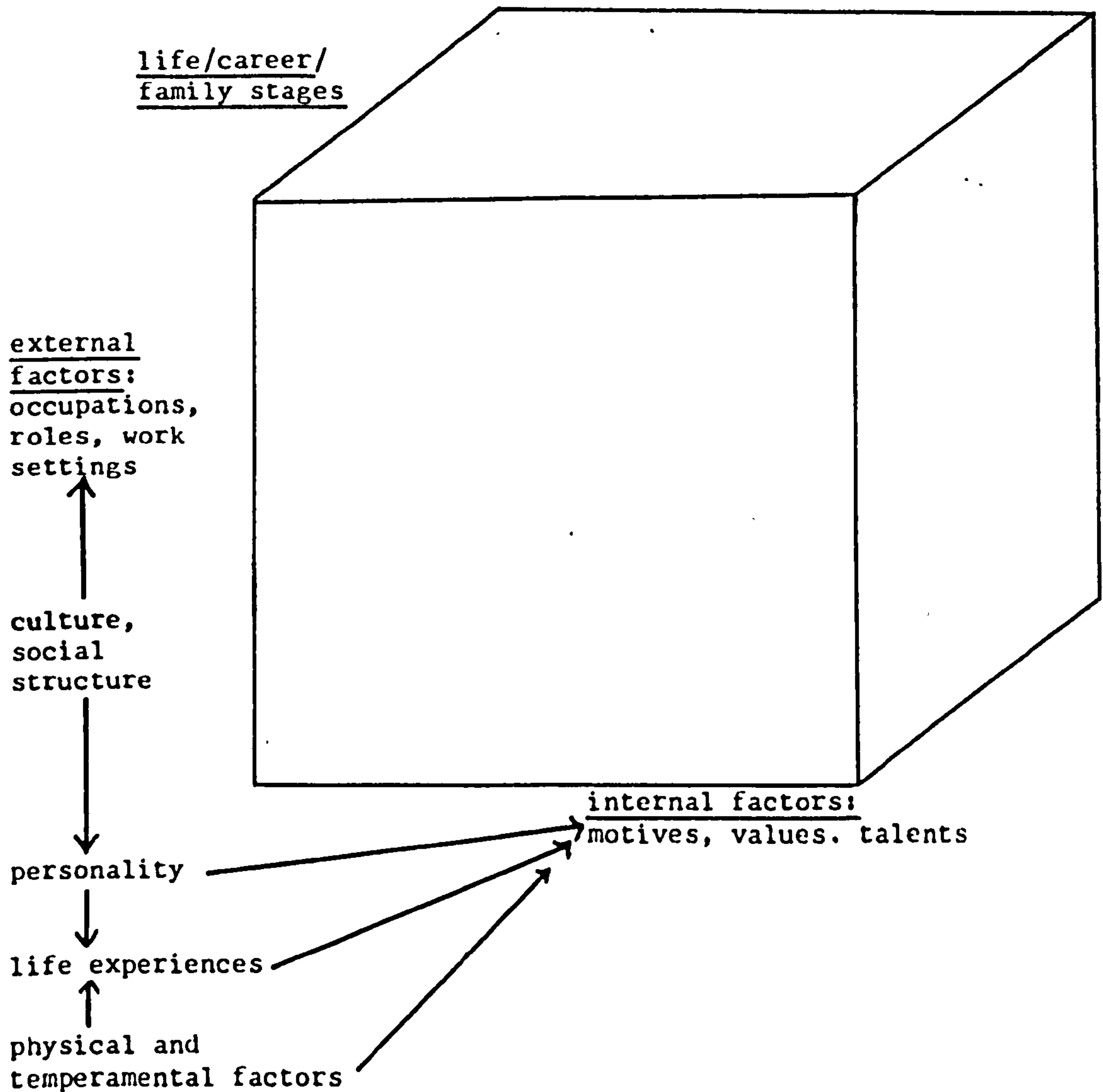


Figure Ten

The 'Career Cube' from Schein, 1976

The notion of a three-dimensional approach to the interaction of the exogenous and endogenous factors dealt with in this chapter is very attractive. It could conceptualise the outcomes of such interaction and so lead to a fuller understanding of 'career change' and the implications for the individual undergoing it; it could offer both a dynamic and a holistic view of 'career'. Schein's cube, however, does not appear to achieve this, perhaps because the dimensions lack conceptual clarity; they could, however, be effectively re-defined as



time, social space and the individual. This would possibly offer the basis for a coherent and comprehensive model of 'career' development which might generate hypotheses which could then be tested empirically. It might thus lead to a more comprehensive theory of 'career' development - and of 'career change' within it - than there exists at present.

To conclude this section it is appropriate to elaborate upon the reference made at the start of the chapter to Law's (1981) classification of 'career' theories. He offers a three-dimensional schema (a 'jig-saw') as a means of analysing and clarifying a wide range of literature.

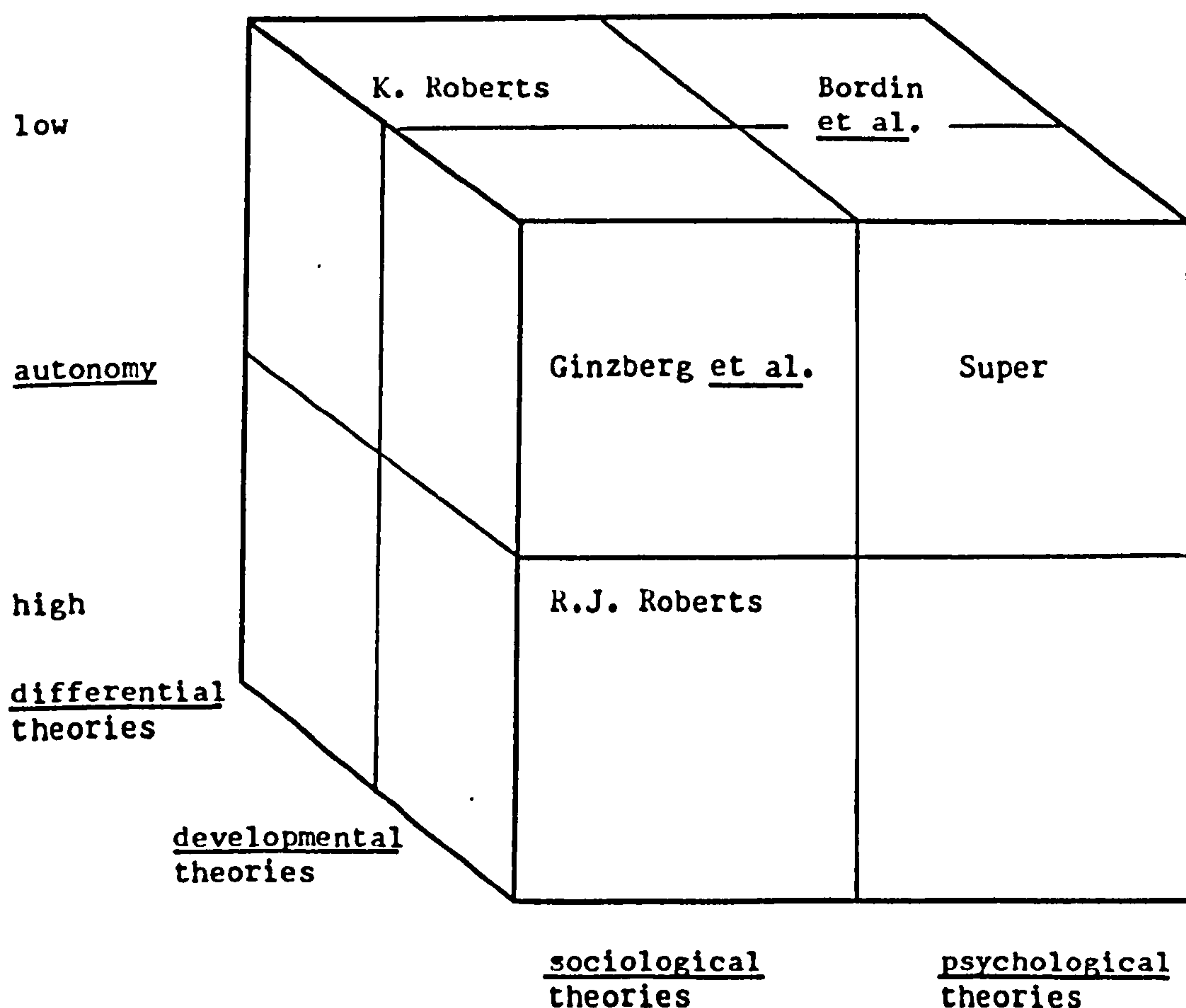


Figure Eleven

Based on Law's (1981) Analysis of 'Career' Theories on Three Sets of Criteria



Law writes (p. 332)

'Much of what is set out in careers theory is an application to the field of well-developed perspectives taken from elsewhere. The whole spectrum is there, from functionalist sociologist to psycho-dynamic psychologist, from psychometrician to ethnomethodologist, from existentialist to behaviourist. Careers theory is caught in all the dilemmas which the behavioural sciences face.'

To one dimension of his cube he allocates theories classified as psychological or sociological; to another developmental or differential theories; and to the third theories based on a conception of a high or a low degree of individual autonomy. As Figure Eleven shows, he thus classifies Super's theory as psychological, developmental and with an emphasis upon low autonomy.

Acknowledging what he calls (p. 337) 'the muddiness of the analysis' (the dimensions, for example, cannot be continua), Law presents this figure to suggest the relationships between the theories and to

'establish that the dimensions exist as issues for careers theory, and for understanding the space which any general theory of careers needs, eventually, to occupy and illuminate.'

The desire for 'general theory' I shall discuss further in Chapter Eighteen. Meanwhile, it is intriguing to note that the relationships between the theories could perhaps be effectively expressed and explored if Law's schema were translated into the solid form of a Rubik's cube.<sup>1</sup>

#### d. Theories and explanations concerned with the interaction between exogenous and endogenous factors: summing up

This section has introduced those theories of 'career' development which have as their concern the interaction between the external and

<sup>1</sup> A three-dimensional puzzle, each face of which is composed of nine coloured squares which are themselves the faces of smaller, revolvable cubes. The puzzle thus offers very many permutations of pattern and colour of each face.



internal factors so that, with their implicit recognition of process, they more nearly than any of the other theories noted in this chapter approach the dynamic, holistic model of 'career' which Chapter Seven concluded was needed in a changing world. They have not been exploited in 'career change' research so far, but I shall use them in the interpretation of my interviews, for they illuminate certain aspects of the ways in which people cope with change.

While offering so much that is valuable and not available from the other 'career' theories they are, however, in their own way limited. They omit some of the insights yielded by other approaches, such as self concept theory, and they tend to emphasise some rather than all aspects of the interaction. They focus upon the individual's handling of the interaction rather than upon the dynamic interplay of forces at whose centre the individual stands. They particularly stress the cognitive aspects of the individual's response and ignore subjective experience. Schein's career cube raises expectations which it does not fulfil, not only because of some conceptual weakness but because, while modelling the interaction of its various dimensions, it excludes the conceptualisation of the ways in which the individual manages them.

#### 4. The actor's view of 'career' development

This final category is not included in others' classifications of 'career' theories nor used explicitly in the studies of 'career change'. It finds its place here, however, because of the significance attached to it in the discussions of definitions in Chapter Three.

An approach which seeks the actors' view of their situation uncovers the meanings which people find in the happenings of their lives, meanings which translate 'events' into 'experiences' and which are said to be socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1971; McCall and Simmons, 1966). This is the social action approach in sociology in which research is more concerned with the interpretations made by the people studied than with those made by an observer according to some theoretical framework brought to the study from outside. Such an approach to 'career' development would be focussing upon the phenomenal and transcendental 'careers'. This contrast with the theories dealt with already in this chapter which relate to the substantive 'career':



even when they have looked at endogenous factors, as Super's theory does, they generally do so from a position outside the individual.

An exception whose work was noted in Chapter Three is Roberts (1980). In his discussion of the opportunity structure-occupational choice debate between Roberts (1977) and Daws (1977), which was discussed in section 1 (b ii) of this chapter, he conceives of 'career' (pp. 163-4) as a 'nomic instrumentality' which creates a 'canopy of meaning'. (See Chapter Three for a full quotation.)

An example of the adoption of this approach in a related field can be found in the work of Musgrove which was referred to in Chapters Four and Five: in his study of adult change (1977) and in an exploration (Musgrove and Middleton, 1981) of the significant stages of turning-points in life. They identified these through loosely structured interviews in which they asked such questions as 'looking back on your life, would you pick out any particular stages or turning-points?' They write (pp. 41-2)

'... the meaning and identification of a stage in life or a turning-point are the subject's; its categorization as a rite of passage is the investigator's.'

'... only if a "turning-point" clearly had symbolic value, standing for something other than or beyond itself, and was clearly highly emotionally charged, was it judged to have the character of a "rite". Neither leaving home nor, for the younger men, marriage qualified. Acquiring a mortgage (by the single as well as the married) was the most highly symbolic and emotionally charged rite de passage of all.'

This is a conclusion unlikely to have been anticipated by a researcher, so that had the question of 'turning-points' been approached from the researcher's perspective rather than from the actor's, as it might well have been in a questionnaire or structured interview, this finding might never have emerged: the questions asked might not have permitted such an answer. The ability of this approach to give insights into the perceptions, experience and hence behaviour of people makes it of particular value to research which aims to understand them. It is, therefore, a valuable approach to adopt in a study concerned with the



subjective 'career' or with 'career' development and change generally. It does, however, have important implications for the method of research: these are discussed in Chapter Ten.

Theories and explanations of 'career' development: conclusions and implications for this study of 'mid-career change'

In this chapter I have presented a review of the theories and explanations of 'career' development, discussed the context of 'career change' which they indicate and noted how they informed the 'career change' studies of Chapter Seven (and how some of these, in their turn, have influenced theory). The typology of theories emerged from the analysis of the 'career change' research. All of its classes offer some important insights into the reasons for and manner of 'career change' but, despite some expectation that the theories focussing upon the interaction of exogenous and endogenous factors would parallel the dynamic, holistic model of 'career' which emerged in Chapter Seven's analysis, this was not found to be the case. The inclusion of the fourth class is in recognition that the other three adopt an observer's view; that insight is also needed into the phenomenal or transcendental 'career'. Sometimes implicit but more often excluded from these theories is an analysis of the way in which individuals handle these factors. This forms the topic of Chapter Nine.

Of his analysis of 'career' theories (see section 3 (c) above), Law (1981, p. 333) writes

'... the analysis no more bruises the theories than the theories themselves bruise the reality they seek to represent.'

I would claim the same for the typology I devised: it organises a wide field of very diverse literature into simple, logical categories which reflect the nature of the literature. Its value, however, cannot transcend the value of the theories which it so organises and they have weaknesses to which the typology itself draws attention. Not only do some of them 'bruise' reality, as the discussion of their underlying assumptions and methods has shown, but they are also limited in scope. None is able adequately to represent the dynamic, holistic 'career' within a multi-dimensional reality and thus none is able to form an adequate framework for research into 'career change' in contemporary society.



This chapter, therefore, concludes that there are three sources of major dissatisfaction with existing 'career' theory. The first stems from their epistemological basis which excludes an examination of the actor's view of 'career' and which often favours a normative approach. The second derives from their common failure to encompass both exogenous and endogenous fields and the third from their often very limited focus which leaves a sense of need for some overarching view of 'career', the 'general theory of careers' to which Law (1981, p. 337) refers.

Perhaps this strain towards a more comprehensive view is not (or not only) a reflection of dissatisfaction with existing theory but a characteristic of a phase of theory development, the evolution or construction of 'formal' out of 'substantive' theories (using the terms of Glaser and Strauss (1967)). Certainly the desire to conceptualise complex and shifting realities is matched by a tendency to seek higher levels of abstraction. As Simon (1971, p. 204) writes

'Hierarchy is the adaptive form for finite intelligence to assume in the face of complexity.'

Super, too, is aware of this desire for a more comprehensive view of 'career'. Concluding his review of existing theories (1981, p. 51), he describes them as 'segmental' and continues

'Each is thus generally considered to neglect other segments of theory, other aspects of career development and career behaviour. Those who do seek to encompass more suffer from the appearance of superficiality. But some day global theories of career development will be made up of refined, validated and well-assembled segments, cemented together by some synthesising theory to constitute a whole which will be more powerful than the sum of its parts. It has been this writer's view that self-concept theory, treating the individual as the organiser of his experience, might be this cement.'

Such a 'synthesising theory' would admit a wider view than that which the 'segmental' theories give: ideally of the exogenous and endogenous factors and their interaction, of the individual's handling of them, of a dynamic, holistic process of 'career'. At the same time it would



not, ideally, lose any of the insights currently afforded by these 'segmental' theories. It is unlikely to be able to encompass more than the observer's view of 'career' (see Dawe, 1970); the actor's view would thus remain as a separate and significant area to be explored and taken into account.

Despite its attractions, self concept theory is not sufficiently comprehensive to meet Super's claim for it: it cannot comfortably embrace environmental factors and their interaction. Therefore, I conclude this chapter with the recognition of an apparently still unfulfilled need for a more comprehensive theory of 'career' development; I shall return to this issue again in Chapter Eighteen.

The shortcomings of the established theories as adequate conceptual frameworks for an understanding of 'career change' forces the recognition that my own study is exploratory. Committed to a dynamic and holistic model of 'career', there was no one theory I could use to underpin the empirical work, although there were several which could be expected to offer partial insights. These are evaluated in the chapters of Phase Three. I, therefore, tried to look at 'career change' in wider terms than those allowed by the theories, to encompass the exogenous as well as the endogenous factors and to recognise the phenomenal 'career'. Chapter Eighteen will discuss whether this approach makes some contribution to the development of a more comprehensive theory of 'career'.



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## CHAPTER NINE

### THE INDIVIDUAL'S RESPONSE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

#### Introduction

Chapters Five and Six were concerned with various changes during 'middle' age and concluded with the recognition that many changes within the individual are made possible by changes in the world outside. Chapters Seven and Eight examined the exogenous and endogenous factors which mould the individual's 'career' and their interaction. Both chapters ended with a discussion of the need to conceptualise 'career' as a dynamic, holistic process of which this interaction is a significant aspect. This chapter now looks at some of the ways in which the individual responds to the external world and manages that interaction.

There is a considerable body of literature which deals with this topic but, as in the discussion of time in Chapter Four, I shall be referring to only a small sample of it. I had been aware of some of this work when I made the original proposal, for I mentioned there the Holmes and Rahe (1967) scale of life-change units and Rotter's (1966) concept of the locus of control. However, my appreciation of its significance has greatly increased as I have tried to understand the interview material and become aware of the different ways in which the men I interviewed dealt with the interaction between their needs and those of the world around them. In this chapter, therefore, I shall select and briefly treat those topics which are either of particular relevance to my own material and to which I shall be referring in Phase Three or which I consider may be of relevance to future researchers working in this area.

#### The individual's world

##### 1. The world at large

'No man is an Island', wrote Donne in the seventeenth century. The individual of today lives in a world which is even more complex, a vast network of interdependent organisations and relationships, social,



political, economic, technological, cultural .... Changes in the world at large ultimately impinge upon individuals through their immediate social and economic relationships and thus reverberate through individual lives forming the pressures, constraints and opportunities mentioned in earlier chapters.

## 2. The domains of the individual's life

Although at times made aware of the realities of the outer world, for instance, in war or recession, the individual generally focusses upon and inhabits a more immediate and intimate world of family, work, community and leisure. Thus while a very small cog in a vast machine the individual is simultaneously the centre of an individual world. Within that individual world are various areas of activity which will be referred to here as 'domains' to denote spheres of action and influence in which the individual is 'lord'.

Each domain is a complex world of its own, a tissue of other people's lives and, since the individual is central to the domain, no two individuals can experience it in the same way. Birth order, for instance, influences the personality, intelligence and achievement of children born and bred within the same family (Altus, 1966). These and other differences are accounted for by both exogenous and endogenous factors: genetic inheritance, socialisation, learning, expectations, all the aspects of the traditional nature/nurture debate.

For most people, the family with its immediate circle and perhaps more distant relationships, is a significant domain. Work, the specific job and perhaps also the organisation which provides it, is another. Beyond these lie neighbourhood and community, region and nation, lessening in significance for most people, but nevertheless having some meaning for the individual, as support for the football club and patriotism in war show.

In each domain the individual has a role to play which establishes certain rights and duties, accords social and perhaps economic status and affirms some aspects of the individual's identity. It is in the playing of these roles and the exercise of these rights and duties that the individual's life is spent.

### 3. Relationship between the domains

The domain conceptualises the network of relationships around a particular role as played by a particular person. It is thus the personal experience of the role set and exists only in relation to that particular person. Because the individual plays a role in several domains, these domains become interrelated; but without that individual, these particular interrelationships would not exist. Only the individual, therefore, can define those particular interrelationships and manage them. The definition of their successful management and thus the criteria for the quality of life again lie with the individual.

Each domain places legitimate demands upon the individual, who has to allocate time, energy and resources between them in such a way that these demands are satisfactorily met. Sometimes this involves a degree of juggling with scarce resources (Schein's 'small adjustments', 1978, p. 74-5) and sometimes there is inescapable conflict. It is often the demands of a job which overburden the individual and make it difficult to meet the demands of other domains and particularly of the family domain. This can happen in many occupational fields and levels, but has been particularly well traced among managers by Evans and Bartolomé (1980). They analyse the relationship between the professional and private lives of their sample of managers from several nationalities and find that it takes several forms, which they label 'spillover', 'independence', 'conflict', 'instrumentality' and 'compensation'. They examine the managers' use of leisure time and find that it may serve various functions, such as 'recovery' from the pressures of work or building the family.

The individual experiences change within each domain, for the factors which establish and characterise each domain change. As Chapters Five and Six have already shown, it cannot be assumed that the endogenous factors are stable: they change over the life-span. The exogenous factors are rarely stable and change from one situation to another. Such changes influence the nature of the investment which the individual has to make in the domain and hence the investment possible in other domains. Changes in one domain, therefore, may well dictate changes in the others. The individual has to make these adjustments and achieve a satisfactory balance between all aspects of life.



## Conceptualisations of the individual's world

### 1. The Life-Career Rainbow

There are several ways of conceptualising these domains and their complex interrelationships. One has already been noted in Chapter Five, Super's (1980; 1981, p.28) Life-Career Rainbow. He identifies nine different roles which the individual plays in four different 'theatres'. The roles are child, student, 'leisureite', citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent and pensioner and the 'theatres' are home, community, school and work-place. The Rainbow is a means of visualising the interrelationships of these roles over the course of the individual's life and Super uses it to demonstrate the nature of the life-career.

### 2. Field theory

A very different conceptualisation of the individual's world is offered by Gestalt psychologist Lewin (1935). The Gestalt psychologists had assimilated from physics the concepts of field and force-field and had applied them particularly to the psychology of perception. Here they asserted that each part of a whole is dependent upon every other part, that the interrelationships are important and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Lewin (1935) uses this approach more widely and conceives of the individual's life space, the totality of facts which determine the behaviour of a person at any point in time. The life space consists of the person (P), within their psychological environment (E) which is separate from the non-psychological world. Behaviour (B) is a function of the person and the environment:  $B = f(P, E)$ . The boundaries between the person and the psychological environment and between the life space and the physical world are permeable and capable of mutual influence.

It is possible to identify the forces active within the field, within the life space. There are forces for change which impinge upon the individual and determine behaviour and others which resist change and create barriers to the attainment of goals. When the driving forces equal the resisting forces in strength there is equilibrium; change occurs if the driving forces are increased or the resisting forces

lessened. Under increased pressure resistance can acquire extra force, as in a coiled spring, demanding even greater driving force to effect change. Changes in the life space of the individual can be analysed in this way.

### 3. The assumptive world

Parkes (1971, p. 103) extends Lewin's concept of the life space.

'The life space consists of those parts of the environment with which the self interacts and in relation to which behaviour is organized; other persons, material possessions, the familiar world of home and place of work, and the individual's body and mind ...'

Changes in the life space, he suggests (pp. 103-4) are important insofar as they affect the assumptive world.

'The assumptive world is the only world we know and it includes everything we know or think we know. It includes our interpretation of the past and our expectations of the future, our plans and our prejudices. ...(it) not only contains a model of the world as it is ... it also contains models of the world as it might be ...'

The life space is constantly changing and some of these changes necessitate a change in the assumptive world and, in turn (pp. 104-5) the

'altered life space will cause him to introduce further changes in his life space, to set up a cycle of internal and external changes aimed at improving the "fit" between himself and his environment. ... Insight occurs when a person recognizes a discrepancy between his assumptive world and his life space.'

Parkes introduces (p. 103) the concept of 'Psycho-social Transitions',

'major changes in life space which are lasting in their effects, which take place over a relatively short period of time and which affect large areas of the assumptive world.'



He illustrates this by reference to such experiences as bereavement and amputation and looks at grief as the reviewing of redundant assumptions and the re-structuring of the assumptive world. 'Career change' will be examined as a psycho-social transition in Chapter Thirteen.

#### 4. Other conceptualisations of the environment

Religion and art offer many other ways of conceptualising the environment but there is space to mention only two extremes. On the one hand is the world of the loving God who sees the fall of the sparrow and shepherds the individual: 'all things work together for good to them that love God' (Romans VIII, 28). On the other, there are the irresistible, impersonal and hence merciless forces which bear down harshly and unpredictably upon the individual. Nature or the sea, for example, are used to represent these unchanging natural forces which are untouched by the trivial tragedies of the humans who traverse them. The individual suffers and endures.

#### Influences upon the individual's response to the environment

Personality theorists would tend to explain the individual's response to the environment in terms of individual variables. Mischel (1973), however, argues that situational as well as personal variables and the individual's interpretation of events must all be taken into account. I shall now examine the first and third of his categories, omitting his 'personal variables' as a well-worked, though problematic, field in personality theory.

##### 1. Situational variables

The exogenous pressures upon the individual are various and of differing strengths. First, there are the events to which the individual makes no contribution and over which there can be no personal control, such as war, famine, economic recession or a pools win. There are, however, several possible responses which may modify the experience of the event or attenuate its pressure: resistance, acceptance, recognition of new opportunities in the changed circumstances or use of the new situation in the furtherance of personal objectives.

Secondly, there are events to which the individual may, indeed, have contributed through ignorance, negligence or diffidence, like illness which results from an indulgent lifestyle or unemployment which lack of educational qualifications makes unavoidable. Again, the individual



may respond in a variety of ways and so influence the outcome of the event and may or may not acknowledge personal responsibility in it.

Finally, there are events which result almost directly from the individual's own activity, like success in a job because of hard work or a road accident because of dangerous driving. Again, there will be various forms of response and acceptance of responsibility.

Thus the environment and its effect upon the individual may be classified in many ways (for example, Moos, 1973). Mischel (1973), however, warns that this could be as unprofitable as classifying personality traits: it is the interaction between person and the environment which is of significance.

## 2. Individual variables

Lazarus (1980, p. 48) writes

'We know little about the kinds of people who typically appraise stressful encounters as challenging rather than threatening and vice versa ... A working hypothesis about the causal antecedents of threat and challenge is that the former is more likely when the person assumes that the specific environment is hostile and dangerous and that he or she lacks the resources for mastering it, while challenge arises when the environmental demands are seen as difficult but not impossible to manage, and that drawing upon existing or acquirable skills offers a genuine prospect for mastery. In addition to assumptions about specific environments, people may have very general belief systems about themselves and the environment ... systems that also influence appraisal of specific encounters.'

In this section I shall distinguish between the individual's perception of the environment, the individual's perception of self and the individual's pre-disposition to act in a particular way, though they are perhaps inextricable in experience. The aspects I have chosen to include are those which I have found of value in understanding my own interviews or which seem to be potentially relevant to other researchers.

This is not the occasion to examine the reasons for the individual differences which will be mentioned (Mischel's, 1973, 'personal variables'), but it should be recognised that an understanding of them is significant for the development of effective support services for people undergoing change in their lives.

#### a. Perception of the environment

##### i) Gestalt psychology

The Gestalt school (Wertheimer, 1938) referred to earlier in this chapter, took as its premise that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, so that mental processes cannot be analysed into elementary units because wholeness and organisation are intrinsic to such processes. This approach has been particularly applied to the understanding of perception, the most important principle in which has been recognised to be that immediate experiences are organised in wholes; certain items are perceived as belonging to one constellation rather than another and the perception of items is modified by such association. Conscious knowledge derives from a framework within which to understand what is 'known': the figure is part of the surrounding ground which, while always present, is not always consciously seen. Figure and ground together form the field of interdependent relationships which make up understanding.

The tendency to interpret in terms of pattern, to seek wholeness, could well influence the individual's perception of the environment. A change in that perception through a perceived re-arrangement of the pattern could lead to a change in response and behaviour.

##### ii) attribution theory

I shall refer to attribution theory in this section and to aspects of the employment of attribution in the following sections on locus of control, luck and risk.

Attribution theory is concerned with the set of theoretical principles which are used to account for the way in which people make causal inferences about the behaviour of others. It originated in Heider's (1958) work on phenomenal causality and his assumption that people seek to



perceive their social environment as predictable and hence controllable. They, therefore, attribute events to personal (distinguishing between intention and accident) and impersonal causes. There is a tendency to give greater weight to personal rather than situational factors (Ross, 1977): the fundamental attribution error.

The attribution of cause and motive influences the individual's perception of the environment and hence the way in which to respond to it. Hartley (1981), for example, demonstrates how the attributional style of managers changing jobs contributed to their successful adaptation to their new situation.

### iii) locus of control

The concept of locus of control is a specific form of attribution which developed out of social learning theory. According to Rotter (1966), learning about the 'locus of control of reinforcement' from past experiences is generalised to a stable set of expectancies about life as a whole. People differ in the degree to which they believe they have control over their lives and are personally responsible for what happens to them. They can be identified on the continuum internal to external locus of control. At one end the 'internals' attribute the cause of reinforcement of their behaviour, whether positive or negative, to their own personal qualities or actions. At the other extreme, 'externals' regard these reinforcements as unrelated to their own behaviour and due to forces outside their control, such as luck, powerful people or 'the system'.

Rotter devised the I - E scale to measure the individual's position in the continuum. While its reliability has been demonstrated, its validity has been questioned; for example, some of the items may be contaminated by the effects of 'social desirability' (Edwards, 1957) and there are doubts about its factorial purity and thus about what it is actually measuring. Collins (1974) concludes that the scale does not distinguish between attributions to predictability or chance nor between attributions to situation or personality, with the result that people with a high external score could feel that they live in a complex and difficult world, or that effort and ability are unrewarded, or that life is governed by luck, or that the government is unresponsive. Gurin et al. (1969) identified four factors operating in the scale:

personal control, control ideology, system modifiability and racial ideology.

The I - E scale, therefore, has significant weaknesses, but the concept of the locus of control remains of considerable interest when examining the relationship between the individual and the environment. Peck and Whitlow (1975) refer to research which suggests that 'internals' have confidence in their ability to change both the environment and their own behaviour and are more independent, dominant, achieving and effective than 'externals'. These, on the other hand, feel relatively powerless to effect change, being but pawns in the games played by impersonal others such as authority figures or luck. They are suspicious, have high levels of anxiety and few aspirations.

While it should be remembered that these research results were probably obtained through the use of the I - E scale and may thus be open to question, the nature of the results in general suggests that the I - E concept, operationalised in some other way, would be of particular value in a study of change. As I previously noted in Chapter Eight: 1(b v), the concept was employed in a number of 'career change' studies and I had, indeed, considered using the scale in my own until I revised the objectives of the research, as described in Chapter Ten. However, it still remains of interest and in Phase Three I shall discuss the nature of the concept in relation to my own interviews.

#### iv) luck

Another aspect of attribution and of locus of control is the concept of luck, the random, unpredictable, uncontrollable and (generally) impersonal causative factors in the environment to which some people attribute the good and ill they experience. I have already referred to this in Chapter Eight: 1 (b v).

The acceptance of luck as a factor in life influences behaviour. Peck and Whitlow (1975) write that behaviour differs in gambling situations according to whether people believe the results of their behaviour are caused by skill or by luck. If they are believed to be due to skill, people increase their bets with success and lower them with failure. However, if they attribute the outcome to luck, then working on the law of averages, they increase their bets with failure and lower



them with success. Cohen (1964) notes that it is common to conceive of a 'store' of luck which can become depleted or which may be replenished after a run of 'bad luck'.

Luck may be used to account for events. Fairhurst (1975) writes of 'luck-labelling' as such an accounting mechanism among managers: it provides a plausible answer and maintains identity. It can also be a convenient way of shelving responsibility or of avoiding placing blame on someone else.

#### v) risk

Knight (1965) distinguishes between risk and uncertainty. In risk the outcomes from previous experiences are known so that present probabilities can be calculated. Uncertainty exists when there is no, or too little, previous experience on which to base a calculation. Individuals face risk because of the nature of their environment, their own nature or the resources available to them. It offers ambiguity and the possibility of loss or failure. However, it is a calculable possibility and it is thus important that information be available to calculate the risk and so reduce the area of uncertainty. However, implicit to the notion of risk in everyday thinking is the element of luck, the unexpected and uncontrollable factor which may bring success or disaster.

Haug and Sussman (1970) note that the element of risk should be studied in 'second careers' and Robbins (1977) found that many of her changers took a high financial risk.

#### vi) cognitive dissonance

Festinger (1957) writes that when an input from the environment jars with the individual's established knowledge, attitudes or beliefs it creates cognitive dissonance, an uncomfortable, disequilibrating experience. The individual needs to reduce or eliminate the discomfort by accommodating the disruptive input and so regaining internal consistency. This is achieved by changing either the environment or some aspect of self. Chapter Eight refers to the use of this concept to explain 'career' development.

## b. Perception of self

The individual's perception of self will influence the response to the environment: 'Am I the kind of person who would or could do that?' The answer will affect the way that individual then behaves.

The first three sections below are as applicable to perception of the self as to that of the environment, under which heading they have already been mentioned, and will, therefore, not be discussed further here.

### i) attribution theory

The principles of attribution apply equally to self-perception (Bem, 1972).

### ii) locus of control

### iii) cognitive dissonance

### iv) self concept

Chapter Eight introduced some of the literature which dealt with the significance of the self concept in 'career' development; its significance more generally in the response to the environment is noted here.

In Rogers's (1951) theory, that part of the organism (the individual as a whole) which he refers to as the self concept consists of all the perceptions, feelings, attitudes and beliefs which characterise 'I' and 'me'. This perceived self influences the perception of the world and hence the individual's behaviour. Some-one with a strong and positive self concept views the world differently from another with a weak self concept. The feedback from the environment may lead to a modification of the self concept.

Rogers also puts forward the concept of the ideal self, the person the individual would like to be. The well-adjusted person has a self concept which is consistent with experience of the world and flexible enough to assimilate new experiences and which is, at the same time, not dissimilar to the ideal self. Where there is discrepancy, the individual experiences 'incongruence', which may lead to a modification



of the self concept or of behaviour.

According to Rogers, the motivating force of the individual is a striving towards self-actualisation, towards growth, fulfilment and autonomy.

#### v) self esteem

Whereas self concept refers to the perception of self, the term self esteem denotes the individual's evaluation of self, or positive self-regard, in Rogers's terms. Much behaviour is directed towards the obtaining and maintaining of positive regard from others and from self. The need for and level of self esteem, therefore, plays a part in the response to the environment.

#### c. The individual's predisposition to a particular response to the environment

This section corresponds with Mischel's (1973) 'individual variables' and deals only with those aspects of personality which seem particularly relevant: there are vast areas of personality theory left untouched.

#### i) autonomy

As noted above, the organism strives towards self-actualisation, which encompasses autonomy. Various conceptions of autonomy are discussed extensively by Law (1981): as a variable feature of the personality, as a progressively acquired characteristic in individual development, and as part of the individual's repertoire of response styles.

The need for autonomy and the level already achieved are likely to influence the way in which the individual behaves in response to the environment.

#### ii) psychological success

Argyris (1964) perceives the individual as continually seeking to enhance the self concept and to raise self esteem by achieving psychological success. This involves the setting and attaining of challenging goals. Hall (1971, 1976) has focussed upon the search for psychological success as an important aspect of the organisational 'career' and

particularly of the early 'career' ; some of the research he finds to support his model is noted in Super, Hall (1978). Evans and Bartolomé (1980) make use of Hall's 'success spiral syndrome' in their analysis of managers' 'careers'.

While this concept has so far been used primarily to explain behaviour in an organisational setting, it has equal relevance to the understanding of the individual's response to the environment generally.

### iii) ego defence mechanisms

The psycho-analytical approach in psychology views the individual in terms of the tensions between the unconscious and the conscious parts of the personality and between the individual and the outside world. It conceives of the ego having to defend itself against the demands both of the id and of external reality. The defences it employs are unconscious processes which distort the individual's perception of reality and so make it bearable or alter the individual's feelings about reality and so make them bearable.

Vaillant (1977), whose work was referred to in Chapter Five, develops a hierarchy of maturity among these mechanisms and emphasises that they are adaptive and 'are healthy more often than they are pathological' (p.7). He illustrates this through the lives of the men who had been studied over a period of thirty-five years and his discussions and conclusions suggest that recognition of the defence mechanisms is important to an understanding of the readiness of the individual to respond to the environment.

'Often such mechanisms are analogous to the means by which an oyster, confronted with a grain of sand, creates a pearl. Humans, too, when confronted with conflict, engage in unconscious but often creative behaviour.' (p.7)

'Defenses can become the critical variables that determine whether environmental stress produces madness or "pearls". Put differently, much of the increased stress observed in the lives of the emotionally ill is a result, not the cause, of poor adaptation ... the corollary finding that the sons-of-bitches in this world are neither born that way nor self-willed.



Sons-of-bitches evolve by their unconscious efforts to adapt to what for them has proven an unreasonable world.' (pp. 370-1)

iv) need for achievement, fear of failure and avoidance of success

McClelland's (1961) concept of the need for achievement (nAch), which motivates people to achieve mastery over their environment, to strive towards high standards and to overcome difficulties, has been found to correlate with several individual characteristics such as perseverance and delay of gratification. Independent of nAch is the fear of failure (FF), identified by Atkinson (see Atkinson and Litwin, 1960): people with high levels of FF lack self-confidence and have a low opinion of their abilities.

Individual behaviour results from the interactions of nAch and FF. People with high nAch and low FF choose tasks of intermediate difficulty in which there exist both incentive to perform and probability of success. Those with low nAch and high FF are most anxious with these tasks of intermediate difficulty where there is some danger of failure and are happier with easy tasks or with exceedingly difficult tasks in which failure can be accounted for by the nature of the task rather than by their own shortcomings.

A third aspect of achievement motivation has been identified by Horner (1972) among women: the motivation to avoid success. Kets de Vries (1977, pp. 49-51) notes a fear of success among entrepreneurs.

Achievement motivation was mentioned in several of the 'career change' studies. For example, despite his expectation, Clopton's (1973) 'Shifters' did not have a greater need for achievement than his 'Persisters'. Robbins (1977), however, found that her respondents had given the opportunity for achievement as one of the reasons for 'changing career'. One of the distinguishing features of the 'potential candidates for flexible careers' noted by Sheppard (1971) was their greater need for achievement. Vaitenas and Wiener (1977) found fear of failure among their older group of 'career changers'.

These various motivations all affect the individual's readiness to respond to the environment. For example, they will influence risk-taking behaviour, for those with high FF attempt the more difficult tasks

which involve greater risk. They also influence the degree of perseverance after failure..

#### v) time perspective

The individual's time perspective has already been discussed in Chapter Four and will not be elaborated upon again here. I shall merely note that the time perspective influences the readiness and willingness of the individual to act. However, despite a few references to time perspective (for example, with respect to the assumptive world of Parkes, 1971. p. 103; or the present time perspective of the entrepreneur, Kets de Vries, 1977, p. 49), there has been little exploration of its significance in the response to the environment.

#### vi) the personality of the entrepreneur

I include this category in order to include this description of a particular response to the environment; it is doubtful whether enough is yet known about business entrepreneurs to be able to conclude that such a response is exclusive to them.

From his review of some of the research on the personality and behaviour of the entrepreneur Kets de Vries (1977, p. 41) concludes

'It appears that particularly high achievement motivation is an important aspect in the entrepreneurial personality, but in addition, autonomy, independence and moderate risk taking are contributing factors ... and anxious individual ... "inner directed" ... self-reliant ...'

He then examines the dynamics of the families from which entrepreneurs come and hypothesises that they typically displayed a pattern of high control and rejection of the child. This, he suggests, develops feelings of confusion, rejection, frustration, low self-esteem and anger towards self and others. The entrepreneur develops non-conformist rebelliousness as a way to exert power over 'an environment perceived as dangerous and uncontrollable' (p. 48). He continues (p. 49)

'These people seem to be characterised by a low tolerance for frustration and tension and a low attention span, seemingly



in pursuit of immediate gains and satisfactions ... A lack of analytical thinking, an absence of active search procedures and self-critical reflections becomes a predominant mode.'

#### vii) goal conflict

Response to the environment is often influenced or inhibited by conflict between the goals to which the individual aspires. Miller (1959), influenced by Lewin (1935) conceptualises this in terms of approach and avoidance tendencies.

Sometimes people are attracted to two desirable but mutually exclusive goals; the attainment of the one precludes the attainment of the other. This is approach-approach conflict. Avoidance-avoidance conflict exists when a choice has to be made between two unattractive and mutually exclusive goals. When a goal has both attractive and repulsive qualities the individual faces an approach-avoidance conflict. (Dollard and Miller (1950) show that the tendency to approach or to avoid increases as the distance from the goals decreases.) Such conflicts can lead to delay, vacillation and indecision as the individual evaluates the goals and copes with the stress and anxiety which such ambivalence engenders. The conflict may never be resolved; or similar situations may be avoided in the future, perhaps to the detriment of the individual's development.

#### viii) predisposition to act on the environment

Although, as Chapter Sixteen shows, the analysis of my interviews identified the men's predisposition to act upon their environment as a significant aspect of their negotiation of change, there is, disappointingly, no evidence in the literature of a body of relevant theory. There are some specific references to activity and passivity but not brought together into a coherent whole. Argyris (1960), for example, states that one aspect of individual development is from infant passivity to the increasing activity of the adult (and quotes Erikson's (1950) initiative and Bronfenbrenner's (1951) self-determination. Arroba (1977: see Chapter Eight) notes an active/passive dimension in decision-making. Gutmann (for example, 1980) sees an association between 'ego mastery' and age, with the transition from active to passive mastery in later 'middle age'.

Some concepts used in the writings on personality characteristics or motivational drives may throw light on this predisposition. It would perhaps be identified at the internal end of Rotter's (1966) I-E scale and may be associated with autonomy (as a personal characteristic: see (c i) above). Achievement and autonomy as motivation (see c i, iv), curiosity and stimulus-seeking (see Hilgard et al., 1979; Seligman, 1975 on 'learned helplessness'; Wright et al., 1970) are probably also relevant here. Angyal (1941, 1952) notes the motivation towards autonomy and active mastery of the environment which calls for a balance between the individual's tendencies towards self-determination and self-surrender.

This predisposition is implied in the concepts of competence, mastery and autonomy as personal striving (see Law, 1981). Clausen (1972) sees 'investment of effort ... on his own behalf' as one of the four major variables affecting the individual's life-span. Fiske (1980, p. 247) finds competence ('with its concomitant sense of effectance ... some degree of autonomy') as one of the areas of commitment which change over time. Parkes (1971, p. 105) writes of mastery that 'it is necessary to act in order to stay within the same assumptive world'. White (see Chapter Five and Rotter, 1966) also writes of competence, the characteristic to explore and master the environment. In an early report upon 'lives in progress' (1952, pp. 328-30), he concludes that the idea of 'natural growth' has to accommodate the fact that 'the person not only receive influences but takes action on the environment. ... The environment acts on the person ... the person acts on the environment.'

Other elements of this predisposition to act are also present in the notions of reactivity (perceiving a limited range of responses to the environment and having little influence upon it) and proactivity (reaching out and 'making things happen'). Further exploration and clarification of these concepts would seem desirable.

#### Conceptualisations of the individual's response to the environment

While the specific response to the environment of a particular individual will be influenced by some or all of the factors outlined above, the responses can be conceptualised in the following general terms.



Lazarus (1980, pp. 36-8) conceptualises this response as a transaction.

'... a transaction means that not only does the environment affect the person, as in a S-R sequence, but also that the person affects the environment; both influence each other mutually in the course of an encounter ... in addition to implying mutuality of influence - which, incidentally, the term "interaction" could do adequately - implies the fusion of person and environment into a unit, a relationship, a system.'

He explains the handling of the transaction in 'cognitive-phenomenological' terms: the individual makes an 'appraisal' of the situation and then deals with it through 'coping'.

The conceptualisation of the response to the environment as interpretation is epitomised by Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory. He perceives the individual as a scientist, seeking to make sense of the world around and striving for personal meaning. He proposes that this is achieved through the individual's system of constructs.

A further conceptualisation of the individual's response is as the conversion of environmental inputs into whatever the individual needs for survival, physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. The outputs eventually modify the environment, as Bandura's experiment (1977) indicate. This is the view of social learning theory and, when translated into information-processing terms, of decision-making theory, both of which were discussed in Chapter Eight. This is an active response, through which the individual is conceived as having a large measure of control over the conversion process and thus over the environment. It is often perceived mainly in cognitive terms.

### The individual in a changing environment

#### 1. Introduction

The environment is rarely stable but constantly changing and individuals have to change their lives accordingly in order to retain their own

stability. Emery and Trist (1965), indeed, analyse the contemporary situation (at least for organisations) as one of 'turbulent fields', so that an understanding of the ways in which people negotiate change becomes increasingly important. Change is implicit in some of the concepts already mentioned in this chapter, such as force field analysis or goal conflict. Other aspects of the response to changes in the world have been noted in Chapter Five in the references to rites de passage and role change and loss. Using the concept of transition, Adams, Hayes and Hopson (1976) explore the question further.

A change, whether originating within the individual or the environment, may be assumed to initiate a process of adjustment each phase of which works to re-assert a good fit between the individual and the environment. The change, say, occurs within the environment and affects the individual who, in order to accommodate it, has then to make some adjustment to self or to the environment or to both. In changing the environment further changes to self may become necessary or desirable and so on ....

This process of adjustment is carried out through the individual's typical mode of response as examined in this chapter but, because its result is not merely a functional fit between the individual and the environment but a subjective experience, and one which constitutes the quality of life, this does not mean that it has to be habitual or unthinking. It is clearly possible and, for the self-actualising, autonomous individual essential, to be aware of the responses used and why, to modify them if necessary or to replace them with more effective responses; to be self-managing and in control of life.

In the remainder of this chapter I shall first note some of the effects of environmental changes upon the individual and then discuss various aspects of the individual's negotiation of the process outlined above.

## 2. Effects of environmental changes upon the individual

The range of possible effects of environmental change upon the individual is obviously large and varied and comprises those which are perceived as desirable as well as those which are unwelcome. I have chosen to mention only three, all of which receive some notice in the literature.



### a. Impact upon the individual's identity

The juggling with internal and external changes, as proposed in the introduction to this section, could be expected to leave in doubt the nature of the individual's identity and this, indeed, is mentioned in the literature. For example, and as noted in Chapter Eight, Hayes and Hough (1976) write of 'identity strain' which occurs when an individual moves into a new organisational role and feels unable to implement the self concept in it. This may particularly happen when a person is pushed involuntarily across an organisational boundary or is prevented from making a desired crossing. They suggest that this could lead to the mobilisation of coping strategies similar to the grief cycle mentioned below.

Fairhurst (1975, p. 186) suggests that managers try to preserve their identity when under stress by using the concept of luck.

'The actor is allowed a breathing space for re-evaluation and re-presentation of self ... He plays one identity against another, and luck is the mechanism which he uses.'

Clearly any questioning of the identity, unless brief and superficial, may affect the perception of self and of the environment and thus modify in some way the response to the environment.

### b. The grief cycle

As already mentioned in Chapter Five, significant loss such as bereavement or amputation has been observed to initiate a predictable cycle of experiences (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Parkes, 1971: see Figure Twelve). This same concept has been extended to other potentially traumatic experiences such as redundancy or other job loss (for example, Hayes, 1976), though more positive attitudes among managers in such situations have also been noted (Hartley, 1981; Slater, 1980).

The awareness of the possibility of such reactions to loss is significant in an examination of or recommendation for the individual's negotiation of change. The individual may not be capable of certain responses at a given phase of the grief cycle, however effective they might otherwise be supposed to be.

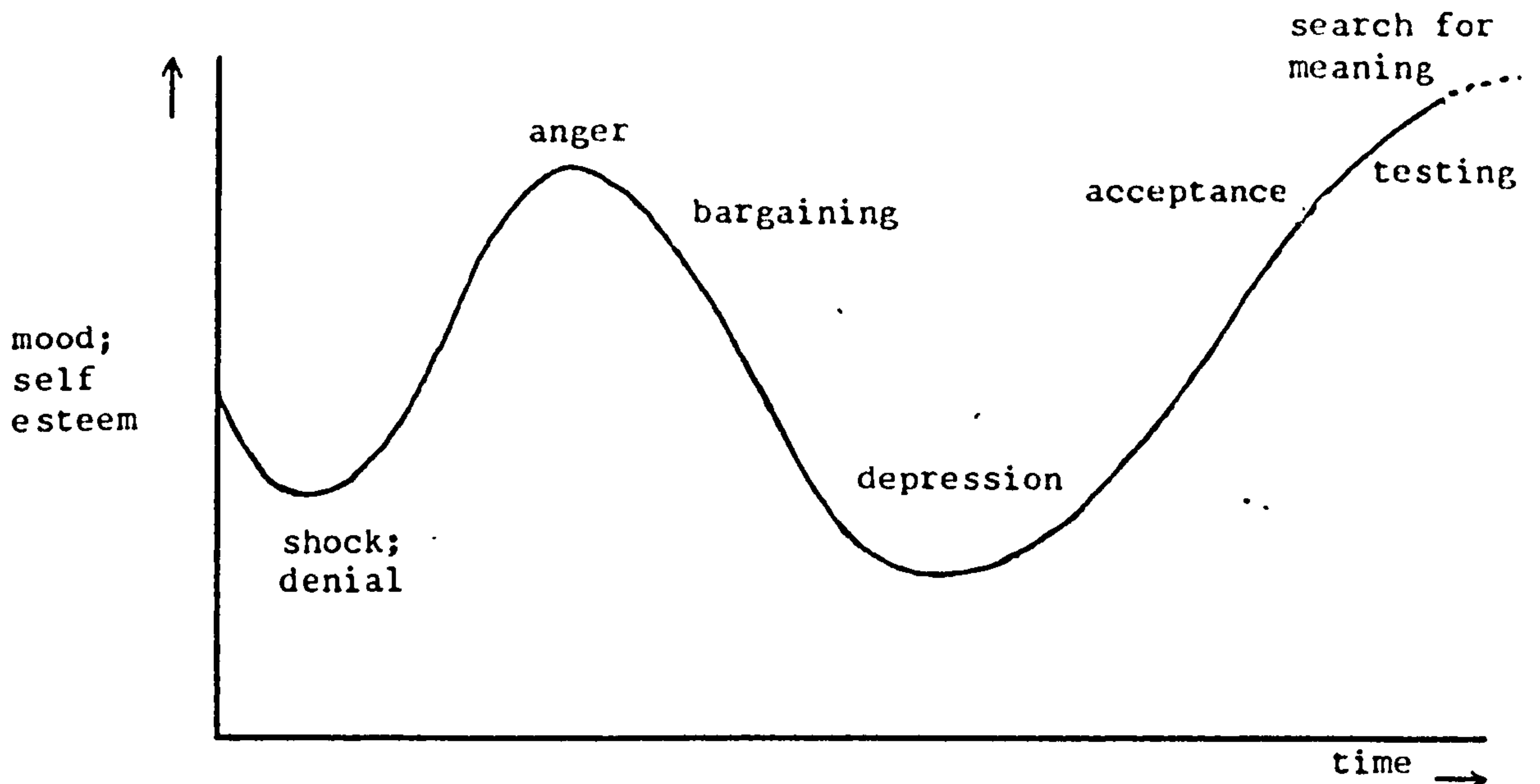


Figure Twelve

The Grief Cycle, Adapted from Hopson and Adams, 1976 and Others.

### c. The effect upon health

There is accumulating evidence that changes in the environment may, because the individual experiences them as to some degree stressful and stress affects physiological functioning (for example, Selye, 1956). Holmes and Rahe (1967) propose that certain levels of 'life change' lead to a propensity for illness and the cumulative effect of even minor changes in life can endanger health. Kasl and Cobb (1969) report upon the physiological effects of job loss.

This possible physical impairment, when compounded with the experiential and emotional disorientations mentioned above, makes the individual in the process of change very vulnerable and thus perhaps unable to manage that process effectively. This may lead to actions which destabilise the environment and the individual is then in danger of slipping down a spiral of mistakes and failure.

## 3. The individual's negotiation of change

### a. Awareness of the environment

Scanning, the gathering of intelligence, is referred to in the models of coping of both Lazarus ('information-seeking', 1980) and Schein



('diagnosing the problem', 1978). It can involve not merely a review of the present environment but of possible future changes as well.

For this intelligence to be meaningful and for the individual to be able to identify opportunities and threats within it, the information gathered has to be compared against a conceptual framework, the individual's working model of a satisfactory or desirable world, the assumptive world. The process of scanning may generate far more information than the conceptual framework (some of the influences upon which were discussed earlier in this chapter) will enable the individual to use. Equally, the conceptual framework may distort the reading of the intelligence. Lazarus (1980, p. 56) also acknowledges the importance of the 'palliative function' in information-seeking: 'ignoring the negative implications of what one knows'.

#### b. Awareness of self and the needs of the domains

Part of the framework mentioned above is created by the awareness of the needs of self and of the various domains, such as marriage or job. The part that self concept and self esteem play in the individual's response to the environment has already been discussed. Here the element of self-assessment, of the identification of strengths and weaknesses, referred to by Evans and Bartolomé (1980), Lazarus (1980) and by Schein (1978) must be mentioned: this is a pre-requisite for the eradication of any weakness by an investment in skills or other resources (Evans and Bartolomé's 'development', 1980). The availability of resources, particularly financial resources, was mentioned as significant in the 'career changes' studied by Clopton (1973), Haug and Sussman (1970), Hiestand (1971), LaBuda (1974), Neapolitan (1980) and Robbins (1977).

The individual also has to assess the needs of the various domains and of the people within them, as Evans and Bartolomé ('negotiating with the family', 1980) and Schein (1978) note.

#### c. Choice of appropriate action

The choice may be consciously or unknowingly made; it is likely to be influenced by those factors which pre-dispose the individual to respond in a particular way which were discussed earlier. Schein (1978)

discusses 'selecting a response' and Evans and Bartolomé (1980, p. 93) write of the choice of a 'career' path in terms which can be extended to the negotiation of any change.

'If one has explored widely and assessed oneself, then the alternatives are clear enough though the choice process itself may be painful. If one has not explored widely, the choice - if it is made at all - is made with a feeling of regret which may colour life afterwards.'

It is at this stage that the evaluation of risk may be made.

The exercise of choice can promote discomfort and anxiety and the individual may try to postpone it, hence perhaps the lengthy periods during which the respondents of Hiestand (1971) and Robbins (1977) pondered the decision to 'change career'. Sometimes people wait until some event precipitates them into action, as Hiestand notes.

#### d. Implementation of the choice

Just as the choice may be made by default, so also the action may be begun or carried through without awareness, though there are more or less effective ways of implementation which will be related to the requirements of the situation and the people within it. Again, the way in which a person implements the choice will be influenced by those factors discussed in the first part of this chapter.

Lazarus (1980) includes in his model of coping 'direct action' upon either self or environment and he also points to the importance of the 'inhibition of action', the withholding of action that would be harmful.

#### e. Feedback

The continuous appraisal of the action taken is the feedback which could modify future inputs or the conversion process. To some extent this feedback has to be sought by the individual (Schein's, 1978, 'diagnosing the effects of the coping response'). It will also be made available by the environment: the individual will experience certain reactions from the environment to particular actions and may use that information to modify future behaviour. The experience of psychological success discussed earlier is part of this feedback.



#### f. Dynamic equilibrium

The concept of equilibrium has been mentioned several times already. At the beginning of Chapter Five I referred to Sanford's (1966) suggestion that personal change is directed at the reduction of tension and the achievement of a higher state of equilibrium; and at its end to Nydegger's (1976, p. 141) conclusion that 'the self is an equilibrating system'. Ricks (1980, p. 139) includes within his model of coping a 'zone of homeostasis', outside which functional disturbance can be expected. This concept is central to the thesis of Evans and Bartolomé (1980, pp. 38-9, 55, 150). Knibbs (1979) concludes that managers cope with the demands of their professional lives by various 'personalising' responses, which effect a more satisfying balance between the different domains of life. Super and Knasel (1981) also recognise the individual's need to achieve balance.

This is of relevance to a study of 'career change' for a person may be said to respond to changes in the environment or in self in such a way as to achieve a new balance between the various domains of life and between internal needs and external pressures. This will be discussed again in Chapters Twelve and Eighteen.

#### g. Use of outside help

There are many sources of outside advice and information upon which a person may draw to help in the scanning and assessment of the environment and the assessment of self. These range from informal sources, such as family and friends (Schein's, 1978, 'intimacy with peers', 'serious talk', 'supportive relationships') to the formal provision of help, such as 'career' guidance and counselling.

The individual may learn how to negotiate change by examining the behaviour of others, if suitable models are available; or may be schooled in appropriate responses by a mentor, as Evans and Bartolomé (1980) note and as discussed earlier.

#### h. Zones of stability

Toffler (1971, p. 342) notes that some people seem to have 'stability zones',

'... certain enduring relationships that are carefully maintained despite all kinds of other changes.'

He sees the conscious attempt to build such zones as a way of managing change in a fast-moving world. The deliberate attempt to restrict overall change would lessen the accumulation of life-changes noted by Holmes and Rahe (1967) as being potentially damaging to health.

The individual's response to the environment: summing-up and implications for a study of 'mid-career change'.

This chapter has examined various aspects of the individual's world and the ways in which the individual responds to it. It has identified some of the influences upon the person's perception of that world and of self and upon the pre-disposition to respond in a particular way. It has looked at the effects upon the individual of changes in the environment and at the way in which change is negotiated.

The experience of 'career change' disrupts the individual's world. An examination of the way in which the individual manages this change will perhaps reveal something of those responses to the environment which this chapter has discussed and could lead to a greater understanding of the relationships between those responses. I shall, therefore, pay attention to these areas in my own research and in my later evaluation of the 'career' development theories.



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

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

---

SECOND PHASE OF THE RESEARCH

The field-study of 'mid-career change'

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SECOND PHASE OF THE RESEARCH

The field-study of 'mid-career change'

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## SECOND PHASE

### of the 'career' of a piece of research

#### THE FIELD-STUDY OF 'MID-CAREER CHANGE'

The later months of the first phase of the 'career' of this study had been marked by nagging doubts about the objectives of my research, the means by which I should achieve them and about my research philosophy in general. Feeling idiosyncratic and unprofessional in thinking thus, for a time I kept these thoughts largely to myself and tried to work as though they did not exist. The second phase, however, began with an acknowledgement of the need for change and the open expression and discussion of my disquiet, the consideration of alternatives leading ultimately to the revision of both objectives and mode of enquiry. The study, therefore, experienced its own 'career change'.

In the terminology devised in Chapter Twelve, the discomfort I had felt during the first phase stemmed from a breakdown of the initial truce between the endogenous factors of the original proposal and the exogenous factors derived from my philosophy, attitudes and circumstances. In this case, the changes which led to the breakdown took place partly in the endogenous factors, that is, my changed evaluation of the objectives of the research and the weakness of its concepts and partly in the exogenous factor of the clarification of my philosophy which I now wanted to embody in the research. As Chapter Ten shows, the breakdown led to a complete revision and change of direction.

This second phase began in mid-1978. By this time I was able, when applying for an extension of the Fellowship, to recognise the pressing need for a re-statement of the objectives of the study in terms of a processual approach with an emphasis upon how such change is negotiated. It was several months after this, however, before I came to terms with the nature of my research philosophy.

Several factors contributed to my eventual recognition that my doubts about this philosophy were legitimate and thus worthy of discussion and resolution. The first was the confidence gained through the acquisition of knowledge and understanding through making the literature reviews and through the sense of achievement when they were received with approval.



Belief in the restoration of my own critical judgements (which had originally been trained in the study of literature) encouraged me to express my doubts and to learn from the discussion of them. This confidence factor (often quoted as critical in the successful return of mothers to employment, Ginsberg, 1976) interacted with a second factor. This was the opportunity to attend conferences where I met a wider circle of academics than before, humanistic psychologists and sociologists who adopted a symbolic interactionist perspective. They confirmed some of my doubts and introduced me to further ideas which in turn led to a third factor, a wider reading than before, particularly in phenomenological sociology.

There was another source of influence upon me, tentative perhaps during this second phase but growing stronger. The first inkling came with the Inaugural Lecture of Professor Gurth Higgin at Loughborough University of Technology in 1975. Talking about the research needed in an uncertain future he said (pp. 25-6)

'Too much current research only confirms the suppositions that went into it, I think we need to become rather more disreputable ... (at the present) more concerned with respectability than with new ideas ... insistence on having precise but conventional hypotheses ... deep suspicion of anything not in line with the maxims of the current literature ... To be of value a research project must follow where the enquiry leads, if necessary against traditional canons ... bound to be a backlash ... castigate any such activity as a rationalisation for sloppy scholars and for lazy and irresponsible researchers. This will undoubtedly be so in some cases. But the researchers themselves will know. If they find what they are doing exciting and challenging, the chances are they are on to something.'

This unexpected exaltation of the disreputable opened my mind to the possibility of doing research not just from a minority perspective but outside accepted conventions altogether - and this took me back to a novel I had read at the beginning of the Fellowship, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (Pirsig, 1976). This made me receptive to an emerging view on research in the social sciences, 'new paradigm' research, which I first encountered in late 1978. These ideas came too late to affect my



study profoundly, although they have certainly had some influence upon it. (Some of the tenets of this approach are set out in Appendix Four and expounded in Reason and Rowan, 1981, to which I made a small contribution.)

While the first phase of my study's 'career' had been shadowed by doubts, the second was intermittently alight with flashes of insight and excitement as I met for the first time concepts and theories which articulated some of my own incoherent thoughts. All these new but immediately familiar ideas, like personal construct theory, gave me great delight and even greater confidence. I could now translate my intuitions into an acknowledged and respectable (albeit held by a minority) theoretical framework. I found my newly-minted research philosophy emotionally congenial, as well as consistent with my own disciplinary background; I was thus able to shake off the cognitive dissonance of the positivist approach with which I started.

Looking back, it seems surprising that it took so long to grasp the nature of my own philosophy and find an acceptable and appropriate conceptual framework within which to work, 'to discover' what had been there all the time. However, I had felt a complete beginner when I started and thus very responsive to my immediate environment, in which I detected no-one who appeared to share my doubts; the literature I was first reading certainly expressed none. Not until I had developed sufficient confidence and status was I able to throw doubt upon their basic assumptions. It can be argued that this was a wasteful way of carrying out research, but it was a way which enabled me to learn: and that was the aim of the Fellowship. I made discoveries because of my needs and in so doing acquired not only new knowledge but understanding and changed attitudes as well. This surely accords with the findings about effective adult learning generally (for example, Belbin and Belbin, 1972).

This phase was thus a creative and industrious time, during which I re-defined the objectives of my study, clarified the research philosophy, undertook the fieldwork, carried out the initial analysis of the interviews and wrote the first draft of the early chapters of this thesis. The pressure of time (caused by the revision of the study and, prosaically, a broken ankle) curtailed my research aspirations so that I could not even attempt all that my revised objectives demanded. Ironically, the



process of discovering what I wanted to research and how I wanted to do it conspired to prevent me from fully carrying it out.

While there was thus greater certainty in this phase of the study than earlier, the opposite was true for the other areas of my life, where I was experiencing some of the problems common to 'middle-aged' people, sandwiched between two sometimes demanding generations. Furthermore, during the later months of the Fellowship I was pre-occupied with the need to find another job at a time when the number of jobs was dwindling fast. The three months of unemployment, however, eventually added to the research, for I shared the experiences of many of the men I interviewed: uncertainty, the shrinking of confidence, the logistics and anxieties of balancing my 'career' needs with those of my family. I took the 'career change' path out of the impasse, with the risks, challenges and hard work that that entails. This, coming at the end of 1979 and marking the end of the second phase of the 'career' of this study has, I believe, contributed to my understanding of the process of 'career change'.



INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS TEN AND ELEVEN

These two chapters constitute the 'research design and methods' section of the thesis. Chapter Ten discusses the eventual re-direction of the study as a result of the explorations made during Phase One: the clarification of the research philosophy, re-definition of the objectives and identification of an appropriate research methodology. Chapter Eleven describes the choice and implementation of methods to gather, analyse, interpret and report upon the material from the field.



## CHAPTER TEN

### Revision of the study: its objectives, philosophy, methodology and methods

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## CHAPTER TEN

### REVISION OF THE STUDY: ITS OBJECTIVES, PHILOSOPHY, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### Introduction

Each of the preceding chapters, which are recently written and up-dated versions of the reviews made during the exploratory Phase One of the research, concluded with a discussion of the implications of the contents for this study of 'mid-career change'. Each has contributed to the recognition that my original research proposals as outlined in Chapter One were not feasible, appropriate or desirable. This chapter now summarises their conclusions on the need for a revision of the philosophy, objectives and methodology of the research and discusses the grounds upon which I eventually committed myself to a new approach. The next chapter then shows how I tried to put this into effect.

#### Recognition of the need for a revision of the study

##### 1. Lack of feasibility of original proposal

From today's perspective the original research proposal looks very naive. It had a veneer of academic jargon and was over-ambitious in terms of the time available and the research skills it called for: its successful completion might well have eluded researchers far more experienced than me. (Of course, it has to be seen in terms of the role it played in my application for an SSRC Fellowship.)

As earlier chapters have shown, my thorough examination of the literature sowed doubts in my mind about the proposal, but even had I not acted upon these, it would probably have been impossible for me or anyone else to have achieved its objectives as originally conceived. For example, the definition of the concepts and basis upon which comparison between the subjects would have been made would have posed problems. At the same time, there are aspects of that proposal which, though I came to doubt them, could well have passed without comment by many other researchers. The philosophy underlying it is taken as a basic assumption of much of the work in the social sciences and its proposed content and methods are

similar to those found in several other 'career change' studies (Clopton, 1973; Robbins, 1977).

## 2. Other researchers' recommendations for future research

This section is included at this point in the chapter for convenience: although some of the recommendations I have selected to mention have had some influence upon the revision of the study, they did not contribute to my recognition of the need for it. Some were not published until after the completion of the fieldwork in early 1979: perhaps some of what I was attempting was a natural development in the field of 'career' research.

The desiderata for the formulation of theory on the adult life-course which Smelser (1980, pp. 22-3) proposes seem equally appropriate for the study of 'career'. He suggests that, on the basis of the recognition of the individual within a changing social and cultural context, research should take place into 'challenges' to the individual, both exogenous and endogenous, the individual's 'resources' to face those 'challenges', the nature and use of 'adaptive responses' (the confrontation of 'challenges' and 'resources') and the 'historical accumulation' of the responses, that is, the employment of a biographical approach. To some extent and using different terminology, as the chapters of Phase Three show, this is what I have attempted in this study of 'career change'.

Johnson (1977, pp. 77-8) also recommends a biographical approach, with an emphasis upon subjectivity and the conditions of change rather than upon critical passages or transitions. This, too, I have aimed to achieve, as Chapter Twelve notes.

Writing from a social learning perspective, Thoresen and Ewart (1976, p.40) comprehensively list their suggestions for future research in the light of what they see as the weaknesses of much existing 'career' theory. They particularly stress the need for research into 'career change'.

'... we need to know more about how to help people make career changes throughout their lives ... intensive research designs, controlled descriptive and experimental case studies of single persons over time ... More carefully planned mixed and stratified



group designs are also needed along with greater attention to person-environment relationships ... more longitudinal studies of ... adult career changers in which several carefully chosen cognitive and social variables are systematically exploited. Data from such studies could provide the base from which hypotheses could be generated and then tested using mixed factorial designs and regression analyses. The major objective would be to get closer to the personal, anecdotal reality of clients, to reduce stereotypical notions based on group designs and to build our theories out of these encounters in a systematic way. As we learn more about the characteristics and behaviour patterns of individuals in specific "real-life" situations, we may be able to develop more lasting and valid generalisations.'

For the reasons stated in the preceding chapters I, too, wanted to carry out some of what they recommend: 'the intensive study of the individual, attention to the 'person-environment relationships' and the generation of hypotheses from the data. I also aimed to look beyond a middle-class population, a recommendation they make in another part of their paper and one which is endorsed by Kidd (1981), LaBuda (1974) and Robbins (1977).

Gottfredson (1977) and Robbins (1977) call for a more effective definition of 'career change', while Watts (1981, p. 244) sees the need for the recognition of a wider definition of 'career' and for attention to 'career' patterns which in objective and normative terms would be defined as deviant. As this chapter explains, I chose to use methods which are not informed by such normative assumptions and the preceding chapters demonstrate that I share the concern about definitions.

Finally, again for reasons discussed in earlier chapters, I adopted a processual view of 'career' which would agree with the conclusion of Super and Knasel (1981, p. 199) in their evaluation of the concept of vocational maturity (see Chapter Eight).

'... more attention should be paid to the dynamic nature of the career tasks ...'

### 3. Summary of the reasons for revision

In summary, my decision to revise the study stemmed from my recognition of the need for exploration of the field and clarification of the concepts; for a different focus and content of the research; for a different research philosophy and a methodology appropriate to it.

The reviews of the literature led to the conclusion that the existing research and theory could not be used as the unquestioned foundation for my study. The literature upon both 'career' and 'middle age' seemed to be in a still molten state, constantly shifting and largely pragmatic. The confusions derived from its academic immaturity were compounded by the precipitate use of as yet unclarified concepts (Neapolitan, 1980: 'career'; Robbins, 1977: 'mid-life crisis'), the unquestioning adoption of theories as basic assumptions (Gottfredson, 1977; Vaitenas and Wiener, 1977) or the reliance upon implicit and unstated assumptions (such as those which underlie the concepts of development or vocational maturity). As the preceding chapters show, these tangled concepts and vague hypotheses required some unravelling.

I have also identified so far what I consider to be the weakness or limitation of the content of the published studies. They looked at 'career change' as a discrete and identifiable event: I argue that greater insight would be achieved by locating it within the dynamic and holistic process of 'career'. The theories have largely ignored the significance of the societal context for the individual's 'career' or experience of 'middle age'; this approach has permitted the assumption of sequential, normative patterns of development. I argue the need to recognise the influence upon the 'career' of the interaction of exogenous and endogenous factors and, as importantly, the actor's construct of 'career'. A particular weakness of the method of research they adopt is their focus upon middle-class subjects but generally their methods are consistent with their objectives.

Because the content and method of my original proposal were based on the same unquestioned assumptions and concepts and because I came to recognise the need for a more exploratory approach, I clearly had to modify the proposed study. However, as I became aware of and grew uneasy with the philosophy underlying the earlier work, I eventually rejected it for myself.



With such a discontinuity in my thinking, I was now working in an entirely new conceptual framework (a 'paradigm shift', Kuhn, 1970) and I, therefore, had to undertake a radical revision of the research.

Before outlining the revised objectives of the study, I shall discuss my clarification of the philosophy underlying the research, using Checkland's (1981, pp. 161-2) distinction between philosophy, which derives from a particular epistemology, methodology or 'principles of method' and methods or research techniques.

### The philosophy underlying the research

#### 1. The philosophy underlying the original proposal

The literature reviewed during Phase One was conceived in terms of what is still perhaps the orthodox view in the social sciences, the positivist philosophy which conceives of the social as well as the physical world as composed of facts, 'stable ... determinate entities ultimately unambiguous' (Harré, 1981, p. 17), which exist independently of human consciousness and whose arrangement and causal relationships await recognition and understanding by the scientific observer. The appropriate methodology, the hypothetico-deductive approach, employs methods which, according to Popper (1960, p. 131),

'... always consist in offering deductive causal explanations and in testing them (by way of predictions)'.

This approach values the objective more highly than the subjective, the quantitative more than the qualitative. Subjectivity threatens validity and reliability; it can contaminate the data and bias observation, measurement and deduction. The researcher, therefore, seeks to be value-free and as detached as possible from the subjects of the enquiry (who thereby become treated as objects). Similar reservations are held concerning subjective experience as a topic for research. Qualitative research is, therefore, viewed uneasily and where possible made subject to, or at least parallel with, quantitative methods (such as triangulation'; see Jick, 1979). (The need to justify qualitative research is seen in Van Maanen, 1979).

This approach is clearly at odds with the conclusions I reached from the

reviews of the literature of the need to become aware of the subjective dimension of 'career'; it is also challenged by Chapter Four's conclusions on the subjective experience of time. I had further reasons to be dissatisfied with the orthodox approach: it greatly impedes exploration. In order to ensure validity and reliability, the measuring instruments devised often inevitably have a narrow focus. The difficulties in developing them encourage the adoption of standard measures (such as the Rotter I-E scale I had planned to use originally) which constrain the nature and scope of new studies and perpetuate narrowly-focussed research. Mills (1978, p. 57) comments

'... the kinds of problems that will be taken up and the way in which they are formulated are quite severely limited by The Scientific Method.'

Thoresen and Ewart complain of this in 'career' research. (1976, p. 41).

'... we have "impaled ourselves on an inadequate construct", to cite George Kelly's (1955) apt phrase ... we have some real "troubles" to deal with in the career area and our scientific puzzles - our conventional research methods - are not well designed to solve them. Instead we seem locked in to using our puzzles to resolve "problems", that is, situations known to be solvable by using certain puzzles.'

A further constraint upon exploration in the orthodox approach is its hypothesis-testing, in which scientific methods and measures are brought to bear to ensure the hypothesis is adequately and unequivocally proven or disproven. Other characteristics of the data which are not relevant to the hypothesis are generally considered to lie outside the scope of the enquiry, thus tending again to keep research within narrow limits. Clearly an exploratory study demands a more open-ended approach.

In their exposition of grounded theory Glaser and Strauss (1967) propose a way to break out of this methodological strait-jacket. Instead of testing hypotheses, they advocate a systematic collection of data within a limited substantive field which will lead to the generation of hypotheses. These can then be applied to other aspects of the same substantive field and so refined until a substantive theory grounded in those



data evolves. It can then be applied to other substantive areas and so continue to be refined and reduced to higher levels of abstraction until a formal theory applicable to many substantive areas emerges. It was in this manner that they approached their study of terminal hospital wards, from which they derived their theory of status passages (Glaser and Strauss, 1971). Of the researchers into 'career change', Neapolitan (1980, p. 212) alone used this approach.

'Thus the aim of this research was not to test specific hypotheses, since it was unclear what they should be or how they should relate to each other. Rather the aim was to discover the factors important in radical, voluntary, occupational change in mid-career and the relationships between these factors. This study would thus provide hypotheses for future research ...'

His eventual hypotheses concern the congruence between the individual's values and needs and the occupation, the significance of finance and attitudes to other perceived obstacles to change.

It is clear that my original proposal was written in terms of the positivist philosophy. As I began to acknowledge the nature of the relevant theories in the research area and was thus prompted to engage in a basic exploratory study, I also began to recognise that the methodology and its underlying philosophy would not permit me to undertake the kind of study I eventually wanted. Furthermore, I was not intuitively attracted to the positivist approach. However, my learning experiences during the period of my Fellowship of the nature of the social sciences and the pressure of my own convictions enabled me to make a complete revision of my study. My progress towards this was partly intuitive and partly directed by the contingencies of academic life, but I have since found that there are now several valuable guide-books available (for example, Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Pepper, 1942). There are also a number of useful discussions and critiques (for example, Checkland, 1981; Reason and Rowan, 1981).

#### The clarification of my own research philosophy

My own research philosophy derives from my particular understanding of the world; while perhaps still in the process of evolution, it was

undoubtedly clarified during the period of this study. It appears to approach what Pepper (1942) labels the contextualist world hypothesis. Each of his four hypotheses is a metaphysical system, an all-embracing way of perceiving and explaining reality, providing coherence, evidence and corroboration in its own terms. In contrast to formism, mechanicism and organicism, he sees (pp. 142-4) contextualism as a synthetic, dispersive approach which recognises that 'facts' are capable of several possible interpretations and perceives the universe as

'... multitudes of facts rather loosely scattered about ... not ... highly systematic ...'

However, he acknowledges (p. 148) the tendency for the four hypotheses to draw together, 'to pull cognitively towards the center'.

This accords with my view of the individual as self-defining and self-determining. While recognising the existence and impact of the context of the individual's life (the exogenous factors of this thesis), I construe the individual's response to it of considerable significance, composed of subjective and intersubjective experiences, the individual's interpretations and meanings. The context is defined interpretatively. There is no meaningful social world without the perspective of the individual, no structured reality outside the individual's interpretation of it. As Harré (1981, pp. 3-4) writes

'... real indeterminateness in the world ... (which) may be made more determinate to human experience by acts of observation and categorization which impose structures and boundaries on the deliverances of sense.'

This, therefore, locates my philosophy within the broad area of the social sciences shared by such diverse writers as Berger and Luckmann (1967), Harré (1981), Kelly (1955), Mead (1934), Rogers (1951), Schutz (1962), Shotter (1975) and Weber (1964). Consistent, no doubt, with the contextualist's view (Pepper, 1942, p. 251), I cannot be sure of the exact location of my own within their phenomenological philosophy nor of my methodology within Mitroff and Kilmann's (1978) typology of approaches. My treatment of the material in the chapters of Phase One would suggest that I am a 'conceptual theorist', their category based on



a combination of Jung's thinking and intuitive types (see Chapter Four). At the same time, the chapters of Phase Three perhaps indicate the approach of a 'conceptual humanist', who combines the characteristics of the feeling and intuitive types. Whatever the exact identity of my philosophy, it is clear that the methodology appropriate to its phenomenological approach is one which permits Verstehen (see Schutz, 1962) and hermeneutics (see Kockelmans, 1975).

Not having been disciplined in any of these social science schools but having arrived at this philosophy through my own basic discipline in literature and subsequent learning experiences, I have not been constrained by any one approach. As this philosophy evolved, so I sought appropriate concepts and methods to express it in my study, sometimes finding or recognising them too late to use them. Thus I often approached the research intuitively, though what I did largely accords with what I have since learned is appropriate. I was attempting to be 'objectively subjective' (Rowan and Reason, p. xiii) and, in my refinement of the topics of the research, was going round the 'research cycle' (Rowan, 1981, p. 97 ff.) and following the iterative 'hermeneutical circle', of which Kockelmans (1975, p. 85) writes

'... our knowledge of the whole is continuously corrected and deepened by the increase in our knowledge of the components.'

My method of analysis is consistent with Sieber's recommendation (see Miles, 1979).

By the time of undertaking the fieldwork I had arrived at a commitment to a qualitative, phenomenological, grounded theory approach. I had by no means adopted the 'new paradigm' (see Appendix Four) of which I was then only beginning to be aware and to which I am now strongly attracted. Rowan and Reason (1981, p. xx) write of this intermediate position

'Grounded theory is an excellent example of a qualitative research approach which stays firmly within the old paradigm ... at the social objective level ...'

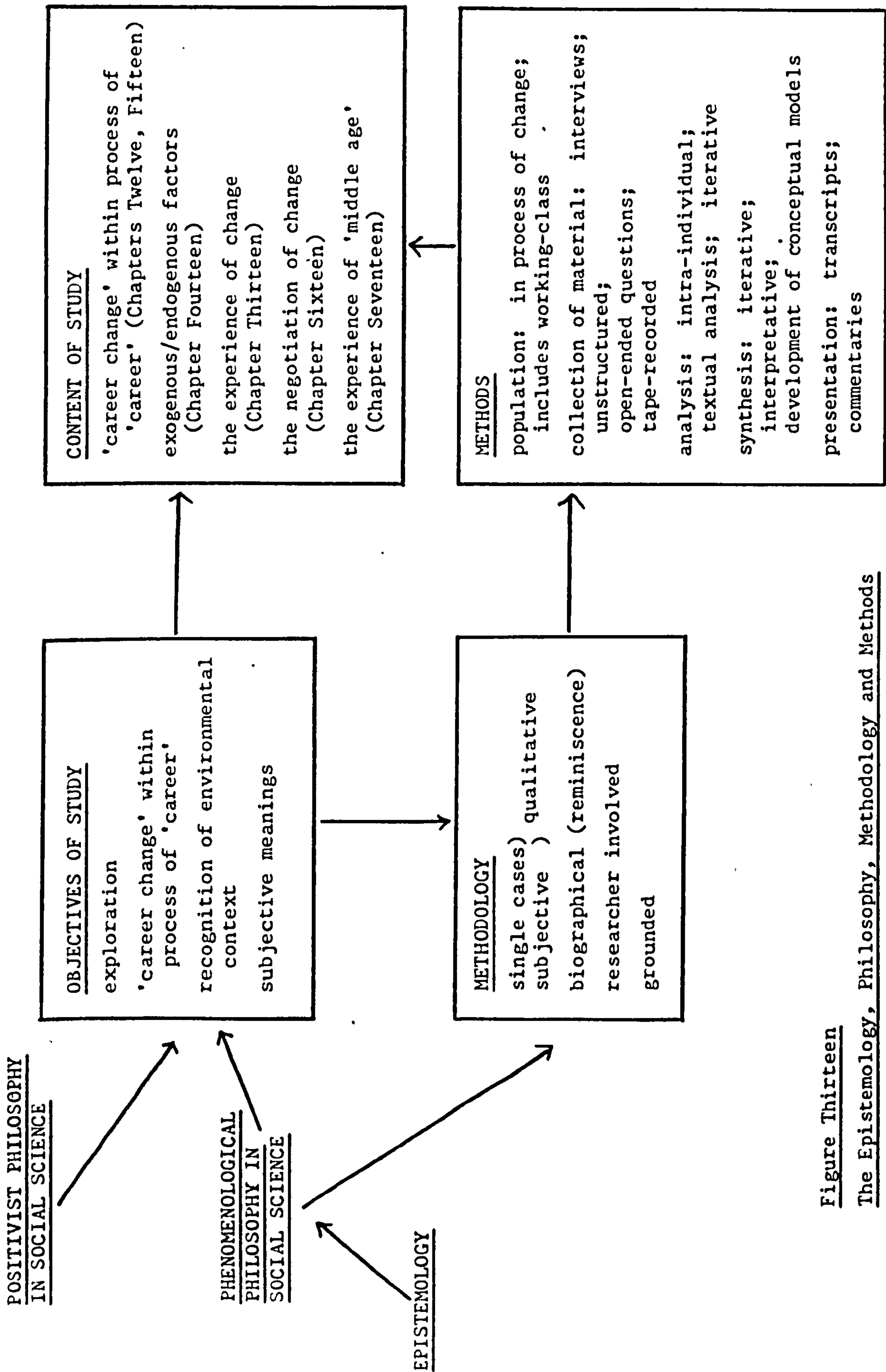


Figure Thirteen  
The Epistemology, Philosophy, Methodology and Methods  
as Related to the Objectives and Content of the Study



Although the newly-defined objectives of the study are meaningful in terms of the philosophy I rejected, the methodology and methods by which I set out to achieve them are determined by the philosophy I espoused. Figure Thirteen demonstrates the relationships between objectives, philosophy, methodology, methods and content of this thesis.

### The nature of research undertaken according to this philosophy

#### 1. Introduction

It is clear that research undertaken according to the phenomenological philosophy is very different from that conducted according to the positivist philosophy. There are major differences in what is considered to be proper topics of enquiry. This study for example, focusses upon individual cases, subjective experience and, to some degree, reminiscence. There are also differences in the methods of collecting, analysing, interpreting and presenting the research material. It is equally clear that there have to be differences in the way in which each kind of research is evaluated.

The characteristics and relative merits of each kind (or aspects of it) have received some attention. Allport (1962) compares the 'general' and the 'unique' in psychology, the nomothetic and dimensional approaches compared with the idiographic and morphogenic. Further discussions are found in Reason and Rowan (1981) and Van Maanen (1979). In outlining some of the characteristics of the approach I have adopted, I should like to emphasise that this form of research is rigorous, demanding and time-consuming, no easy short-cut for 'sloppy scholars and for lazy and irresponsible researchers' (Higgin, 1975, p. 26).

#### 2. Characteristics of the methodology

##### a. Gathering the research material

This kind of research generates a very different relationship between the researcher and the person studied from that of the objective detachment (some argue alienation, Rowan, 1981, pp. 93-6) sought in positivist research. The acceptance of intimacy, involvement and intersubjectivity facilitates the development of rapport so that with sensitivity the

researcher can learn what questions would be meaningful and appropriate to the other person and how to ask them. As trust is established, so meaning can be shared and Verstehen made possible. (In the 'new paradigm', as outlined in Appendix Four, this becomes a two-way process.)

This mode of research places an onus of responsibility upon the researcher not only for the quality of the outcome of the research but also for the effects of involvement in another's life. Acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity, it involves the 'whole person' so that the researcher, too, can be hurt or stimulated by the encounter. This implies some degree of risk (see Higgin, 1975, pp. 25-6; Marshall, 1981). The skills required are, therefore, not only technical academic skills but also interpersonal skills and self-awareness. Reason and Rowan (1981, p. 245) call this 'high-quality awareness'.

'One cannot understand any psychological state without the capacity to experience it, nor any social situation unless one can get into the "world-taken-for-granted" perspective of those involved; yet at the same time as "getting into" the experience, the researcher needs to be able to maintain a perspective on it.'

#### b. Analysis of the research material

Miles (1979) regards qualitative research material as an 'attractive nuisance' because of the 'problem' of its analysis. According to Sieber (1976, quoted in Miles, 1979, pp. 595-6) it is an aspect which has been neglected by those who write about qualitative research and so he puts together some advice on it. (As Chapter Eleven shows, this is not dissimilar from the approach I intuitively adopted in my own study.)

As I found, this is a very time-consuming part of the research. It is not possible to pre-code, because it cannot be known in advance what issues will emerge as being of significance to the individual. Content analysis as defined by Berelson (1954, p. 489) is not appropriate:

'... techniques for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.'

The difficulty lies not particularly with 'objective' (for this means



that others would assign the material to the same category as the researcher) nor with 'quantitative' (for this includes less precise forms of quantification, such as 'more' and 'less'). The criterion which precludes this method of analysis for this methodology is the 'systematic', which signifies the relation of the material to 'a system of categories devised to yield data relevant to specific hypotheses concerning that content' (p. 488). In other words, the analysis is to be structured according to some preconceived plan and this is not consistent with this form of research.

### c. Reliability and validity

These are seen as crucial aspects of scientific research and, therefore, areas in which the phenomenological approach might be perceived as being particularly vulnerable. Certainly they are difficult to achieve even in the positivist approach, and are more apparent perhaps as ideals than as actuality. (Rotter's, 1966, I-E scale is a case in point: it is frequently used even though, as discussed in Chapter Nine, its validity is questioned.)

However, the objective of this kind of research is Verstehen and this necessarily influences the need for and nature of reliability and validity. Guba (1979, quoted in Miles, 1979, p. 596) emphasises that qualitative research should be judged as 'auditable', 'confirmable' and 'creditable' rather than the usual 'reliable' and 'valid'. Further, Sieber (1976, see Miles, 1979, p. 596) writes

'Certain kinds of reliability must be intentionally violated in order to gain a depth of understanding about the situation (i.e. the observer's behaviour must change from subject to subject, unique questions must be asked of different subjects ... there is inherent conflict between validity and reliability - the former is what fieldwork is specially qualified to gain, and increased emphasis on reliability will only undermine that unique function.'

Reason and Rowan (1981, p. 250), however, suggest that although replication may not be possible, a repetition of a study could give 'binocular vision', a recognition of multiple versions of the world (Bateson, 1979).

The nature of validity in the social sciences has to be recognised as relative rather than absolute and the degree of acceptability defined according to the purpose of the research (whether for exploration or prediction; whether utility of more significance than truth) and according to the defensibility of the interpretation (as Checkland, 1981, p. 173).

An aspect of the research which contributes to its validity is a thorough search of the literature and clarification of theories and concepts before the fieldwork so that the researcher's schemata are as informed and coherent as possible. These then need to be made explicit so that the reader, having access to the raw material as well, can assess their clarity, bias and influence upon the collection, analysis and interpretation of the research material.

#### d. Implications for the users of the research

The users cannot be passive consumers of this kind of research but, having to evaluate the material, become researchers in their own right. This demands both time and energy. The additional cost of this, however, may be not as great as supposed, for much research reported in the orthodox manner has to be re-translated in order to be applied in practice. Because of statistical considerations, it is often so generalised that it cannot be applied to the particular case without a leap of the imagination: a hazard of subjectivity it was designed to eradicate in the first place.

### 3. The limitations of this kind of research

This kind of research has depth rather than width. Analysis has to be intra-individual and it is impossible to aggregate the experience of one person with that of another in any quantifiable way. It, therefore, leads to insight rather than to facts or proof: it can thus richly describe or interpret but not identify and explain causal relationships nor make predictions based upon them. This is acceptable and appropriate to the world view of the person espousing the phenomenological philosophy (see Harré, 1981, pp. 13-14 on causality).

This is a demanding and time-consuming form of research, for researcher



and the person studied as well as for the user of the research.

#### 4. The criteria by which such research can be judged

Although it is clearly not appropriate to judge this kind of research by standards derived entirely from the positivist philosophy, I have not yet encountered any established standards. Reason and Rowan (1981, p. 488) write of this as an 'issue for the future' for 'new paradigm' research,

'... establish standards of excellence, with regard both to process and to outcome.'

They suggest that researchers select the standards they wish to apply to their own work, make them explicit and apply them rigorously through a process of self- or peer-assessment.

In reflecting upon not only the process and outcome of my own study but also what has been written about phenomenological research, I suggest that the criteria of quality would include the following. The research should address a 'real world' topic and should approach the literature and theory thoroughly and analytically and so clarify its concepts and preconceptions. It should be sensitive in the choice of focus it adopts, accepting boundaries to the research which are grounded in the field, not those drawn artificially or instrumentally according to external demands. If the field requires exploration but this, for practical reasons, is not feasible, then the researcher should turn to another field and not pre-empt later research by adopting a prematurely narrow focus.

Further, such research should be reported in a way which is open and allows the user to be in touch with the raw material and to see how it has been used. The study should be reflexive, so that both researcher and user can learn from the researcher's experience. It should lead to Verstehen; readers should be able to derive insights into the experiences of the people studied, as well as possibly into those of others, the researcher and of themselves. Finally, as well as indicating areas for future research and possibly appropriate methods for it, such a study should convey some of the researcher's experience of excitement and

challenge (see Higgin, 1975, p. 26) and be, if not fundamentally seminal, intellectually challenging and exciting, then at least stimulating.

It should prompt the reader to adopt fresh perspectives, make new connections and to incorporate some of its ideas and insights into everyday life.

### The revised study

#### 1. The revised objectives and method

##### a. Exploration

First, my study was to be exploratory. Despite some vestige of similarity with the original proposal (the 'mobility' and 'motivation' have become exogenous and endogenous factors), this revised study is not an extended version of the original pilot. The changes in objectives, philosophy and methodology are so radical that this is a new study. In what I concluded from the literature reviews to be still a largely uncharted area I aimed to produce a sketch map which later researchers could confirm or disconfirm, refine or measure according to their research philosophy.

This objective had implications for the methods to be used, which had to be capable of generating rather than testing hypotheses and thus open-eyed rather than blinkered. A questionnaire or interview employing closed questions would, therefore, not be appropriate as the method of collecting material. In analysis and interpretation I had to employ methods which would not categorise the material prematurely.

##### b. Examination of 'career change' within the process of 'career'

The revised objective to take a processual view of 'career change' and to recognise the context of the whole life rather than the occupational sphere alone incurred a far greater departure from the original proposal. It called for the examination of the interaction between external and internal influences upon the 'career' and thus the identification of how the change came about. This approach would preclude the possibility of establishing any normative view of 'career' or 'career change'.

This objective made necessary the study of a process, in which is inherent



the passage of time. The research method chosen had to allow for this by, for example, contacts with people over a period of time. Open-ended interview questions, perhaps supported by an employment history, would be appropriate (a form of triangulation).

c. Awareness of the subjective experience of 'mid-career change'

By gaining awareness of subjective experience, the phenomenal 'career', I hoped to gain a fuller understanding of this experience than that hitherto gained from research. This would possibly contribute to theory and be of use both to those who counsel adults and the adults themselves.

To achieve this awareness, I had to use a method which would establish rapport, would not constrain or filter the replies nor offer pre-determined meanings (such as those of 'career' or 'career change'). This suggested that neither questionnaires nor structured interviews with closed questions would be appropriate and that I should need to tape-record the interview in order to capture the exact words spoken.

d. Examination of the negotiation of change

In addition to locating 'career change' within the 'career', I wanted to examine how people manage it: what information they use, what help they seek from others, what adjustments they make. This, too, could be of value to counsellors. Once again, the interview would be an appropriate method to gather this material.

e. Inclusion of a range of types of change and of people making them

I wanted to include in the study up to 40 people making several types of 'career change': enforced or voluntary; expected or unexpected. More importantly, I wanted to include people from both working- and middle-class backgrounds. As Chapter Three explains, the age range was to be 30 to 55. I confirmed my original decision to exclude married women returning to employment on the grounds that their particular circumstances would be likely to multiply the already vast number of issues which would emerge from the interviews.

I had to identify populations in which I would be able to find such people. Although there were some women in these populations, in the

event, none of them came for interview, and thus, apart from one wife who accompanied her husband and joined in the interview because her 'career' was closely linked to his, I saw only men.

f. Contribution to the understanding of 'career', 'career change' and 'middle age' for research, theory and counselling

Finally, I hoped to make some contribution to the understanding of these areas through the clarification of concepts, the evaluation of theories in the light of my fieldwork and, possibly, the generation of grounded theory.

2. The achievement of the revised objectives

I had to pay a price for this opportunity to make such a significant revision to my study. The original proposal had allowed time to undertake two interviews with each person studied, but the time taken to re-think the objectives and the philosophy had eaten into the amount of time left to me as a full-time researcher. I had forfeited an important resource for the study of a process and I had to find some other means of achieving this objective through a single interview with each man. As Chapter Eleven describes, I attempted to do this by identifying people who were (apparently) objectively in a process of change: the penalty of this was that I met them before their 'career change' was complete and thus never knew whether they completed it and, if so, how. Further, I considered myself unable (see Chapter Eleven) to collect from their employers a work history to give an objective parallel to their biography.

Another significant victim of the lack of time was the thorough holistic study I had envisaged. I was able to gather only relatively scanty material and could not learn of the effects of their 'career change' on their life as a whole.

As the remainder of the thesis shows, I interviewed 32 men, many from working-class backgrounds, and tackled the major areas I had identified (see list of contents in Figure Thirteen). However, the study has limitations and weaknesses. Eventually, I had to attempt less than I wished and achieved less than I hoped.



A minor and self-imposed weakness was the choice of the particular age range, so wide that the number of experiences it embraced must have greatly increased the number of issues which were to emerge from the interviews. If I were carrying out the research again (and I am now several years older and well into that original age bracket) I would probably abide by Fogarty's (1975) 'commonsense definition' of 40 to 60.

There are more significant flaws, but flaws which I perhaps could only have recognised with hindsight: I was a naive beginner and I have learned a great deal from my experiences. I can now see that the revised objectives were also unrealistic for the amount of time at my disposal and unnecessary to meet the requirements of a doctoral degree. Although my diagnosis of the need for exploration was undoubtedly correct, it was not appropriate for me to embark upon it in the circumstances. The lack of time was not my only difficulty: the evolution of my philosophy has also posed many problems. The frequent lag before I identified an appropriate method has meant that I have at times had to proceed intuitively. In the reporting of the study this has called for considerable explanation (for example, the definition of process) which has undoubtedly contributed to the length of the thesis. The rate and nature of the evolution of this philosophy has at times left me trying to reconcile inconsistent views. The thesis, I think, reflects the tension between my commitment to concern myself with subjective experience and the still strong tendency to treat this objectively and so report upon 'exogenous' and 'endogenous' factors. This can be particularly seen in the discussion of the nature of the self concept in Chapter Fourteen.

In conclusion and in mitigation, however, I have given access to some of the raw material and presented my report in such a way that, whatever weakness the design or execution of my research may have, it is visible to the reader who may thus be able to mine it more profitably than I have.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### The fieldwork and the analysis, synthesis and presentation of the research material

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE FIELDWORK AND THE ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH MATERIAL

#### Introduction

This chapter outlines the nature and conduct of the fieldwork, the method of analysis and identification of the significant issues and themes of the research, their elaboration, discussion and presentation. Although the research events to which it refers started before I had completed my questioning of the original objectives of the study, they largely took place after I had decided upon the revised objectives and chosen the appropriate methods to meet them.

#### Fieldwork

##### 1. Pilot interviews

With the available research time slipping away as I re-examined the nature of my study, I had to start planning the fieldwork before I had fully crystallised the revised objectives of the research. I, therefore, started to canvass for appropriate populations to investigate and planned the form and content of the interviews. I framed questions which would elicit information about the events, influences, motives and decisions which led from school-days to the time of the 'career change'. I included questions on topics like the future time perspective which interested me and others like the use made of advice from others which had practical implications for counselling. I assembled these questions in a biographical sequence within a loosely-structured interview schedule, employing largely open-ended questions.

I followed this schedule in three pilot interviews. Two were with mature students from a class to whom I gave a talk on the nature of 'mid-life' and whom I afterwards invited to take part in a study on 'mid-career change'. The third was with a man met in an entirely different context; having heard of my research, he declared that he himself had 'changed career' and volunteered to be interviewed.

I found that most of the questions generated answers which illuminated the topics in which I was interested and so these were to be carried over into the main research programme. Other answers prompted new questions to be incorporated into the schedule. However, the men were unable to answer some of my questions easily, such as the direct questions about the future or about the prospect of the future they considered at their various decision-points. I, therefore, modified the schedule accordingly.

Eventually, as Chapter Ten explains, I clarified the nature and objectives of the research I wanted to undertake. These then determined the nature of the fieldwork to be carried out and it became apparent that I could not approach the main interviews as I had the pilots. I had to be prepared to move outside the areas I had previously identified as being relevant if and when it seemed appropriate with any individual. I had to be aware of the subjective experience of change and avoid distorting it by translation into my own terms. Thus I could no longer use the expression 'career change' to define an event or identify a person undergoing it: I decided to abandon the use of the term altogether. I had to use a tape recorder (as I had in two of the pilots) so that I could capture what the individuals had to say without prior filtering or classification.

I, therefore, modified the interview schedule again (it is reproduced as Appendix Five) but, as noted later in the chapter, used it as a guide rather than as a firm framework for the interviews. The pilots, however, had served their purpose in refining the questions and drawing my attention to such practical considerations as the probable length of the interview and the constraints imposed by tape-recording. The material they yielded has not been used further.

## 2. Identification of people in the process of change

During the desk research phase of the study I had made contact with many organisations concerned with people making occupational changes. They were very cooperative in answering my questions and some spontaneously offered to put me in touch with individuals.

The revised objectives required that my interviews should be with those



in the process of change. I defined this as a transitional state between two occupations when, having left one occupation (or unequivocally being about to leave), the individual was expecting to begin another. Such a state would be discrete and finite: the individual entered it knowingly and would emerge from it either into unemployment or into a new occupation. Because I planned to interview while the individual was in this transitional state I would not know whether an occupational change was eventually effected and, if it was, what form it took. It was of no consequence to my study whether the eventual change would be labelled 'career change' or not.

The study's objectives also required that the people I interviewed should be aged between 30 and 55 and come from a range of social backgrounds.

To be able to make an objective identification of people in the process of change I, therefore, had to identify such a transition. I thus turned to four organisations which were concerned with such transitions: an institution running a full-time course for mature students, another running a Transfer of Employment course, the army's Resettlement Advisory organisation and an Employment Rehabilitation Centre. Each dealt with an identifiable state which was discrete, finite and recognised as being transitional.

I did not obtain in advance from these organisations a work history or any other information about those I was to interview, although this might have provided the objective data for the triangulation referred to in Chapter Ten. I thought that this might distance me from the individuals, possibly brand me as an organisational agent and pre-dispose me to categorise them even before our meeting. There was not time to do this after the interviews when I could have sought their permission for it.

Table One sets out some basic information about those I eventually interviewed. It gives only sparse detail to eliminate the possibility of their identities being revealed.

#### a. The transitions and the people interviewed

In all I interviewed 32 men, one of whom brought his wife to join in the interview. . Because of the need to maintain confidentiality I cannot identify either organisations or individuals, but should like to acknowledge here that I greatly appreciate their help.

<u>man's date</u> <u>of birth</u>	<u>his occupation before</u> <u>entering present transition</u>	<u>his father's occupation</u>
1925	unemployed (ex-clerical)	brick-layer
1933	WO 1	postman
1937	unemployed (ex-professional)	tool- and die-maker
1943	educational administrator	farmer
1925	major	deceased (labourer)
1937	unemployed (ex-skilled)	building trade
1945	WO 2	policeman
1948	middle manager	works manager
1927	unemployed (ex-unskilled)	hotel chef
1931	major	docker
1931	unemployed (ex-teacher)	insurance clerk
1937	student (ex-Services)	chartered engineer
1928	unemployed (ex-unskilled)	deceased (labourer)
1936	WO 1	miner
1935	unemployed (ex-professional)	sewing machine mechanic
1936	unemployed (ex-unskilled)	tool-maker
1937	major	coach-builder
1925	unemployed (ex-Services)	accountant
1923	chartered engineer	greengrocer
1935	unemployed (ex-unskilled)	factory chargehand
1934	WO 2	foreman carpenter
1927	WO 1	publican
1940	WO 2	refrigeration engineer
1938	unemployed (ex-Services)	factory manager
1925	major	stevedore
1933	WO 1	organ builder
1928	college lecturer	turner
1941	WO 2	WO 1
1932	WO 2	miner
1942	chartered engineer	chartered engineer
1940	WO 1	teacher
1939	unemployed (ex-unskilled)	grocery roundsman

Table One

Random List of Men Interviewed Showing Date of Birth, Occupation Before  
Entering Transitional State and Their Father's Occupation at the Time  
They Left School



i) full-time mature students in higher education

With the cooperation of the course tutor at an institution for higher education offering a full-time qualifications course advertised for people in 'mid-career', I introduced myself and my research to the students. I subsequently wrote to the 14 of them aged over 30, inviting them to take part in the study; the eight men who accepted were thus self-selected.

ii) unemployed people on a Transfer of Employment course

Professional and Executive Recruitment (PER: the professional employment branch of the Manpower Services Commission) sponsors Transfer of Employment courses which offer 'Executive Career Review and Development' to assist unemployed executives change jobs in 'mid-career'. A tutor of such a course arranged for me to spend an evening with the course members. Of the seven I met in this way and invited to take part in the study, one declined, and one I interviewed that same day; and of the remaining self-selected five I was eventually able only to interview two and that about a month after the end of their course.

iii) soldiers in the Resettlement phase of their army 'career'

The Ministry of Defence arranged for me to attend an army Resettlement Panel which interviews all warrant officers two years before they leave the service, as well as any commissioned officers who apply to it. The particular Panel I attended interviewed 15 men, five of them majors. Each agreed to my presence during their interview; I took no part in it. Afterwards I spoke to them individually, explained the nature of the research and invited them to take part. All agreed to do so.

I arranged the interviews at their place of work about six weeks later; One proved so elusive that I abandoned the attempt to contact him, judging him reluctant to take part. The remaining 14 could be said to be self-selected for, although I plainly had the support of the Resettlement Advisory organisation, the men were in a position to avoid if not to decline the interview. I did not sense a guarded approach and all except one were prepared to be tape-recorded; they were sometimes critical of the Resettlement service.

Of the four organisations through which I made contact with people to interview, the Ministry of Defence offered me the most comprehensive

and extensive relationship. I attended a two-day Second Careers Advisory course (where I again met two of the majors I had interviewed) and was invited to other Resettlement Advisory courses and to an army Resettlement Centre.

Shortly after attending the Panel but before embarking upon the interviews, I was invited to comment to the Senior Resettlement Officer upon the objectives and operation of the Panel interviews. Almost a year after the fieldwork I addressed one of the regular briefing sessions for the army's Senior Resettlement Officers on the topics of 'mid-life' and the response to change, but used material from the literature and not the interviews (which at that time were not closely analysed).

#### iv) trainees at an Employment Rehabilitation Centre

When I discussed my need to interview people from a working-class background with the Operations Manager of an Area of the Department of Employment, he put me in touch with the manager of an Employment Rehabilitation Centre (ERC), which assesses the employment capabilities and trains appropriate skills in those who, because of illness, injury or long-term unemployment, need to adapt themselves to normal working conditions.

The arrangements for the interviews were made by the Centre's social worker, to whom I explained the nature of the research and the age group in which I was interested. She selected the seven men who reported for interview. I do not know to what extent they felt able to refuse, indeed, if any did; I do not, therefore, know whether they were self-selected. When at the start of each interview I explained the study and invited questions, I did not sense that any felt regimented or obliged to be interviewed.

#### b. Differences between the transitions and the implications for the research

Although all four transitions I used to identify people in the process of change are similar in that they are concerned with change, they are also very different. The army transition takes place within the army occupation, whereas the other three exist between occupations. It is



thus strongly shaped and influenced by the needs of the organisation as well as those of the individual. It differs from the others also in that it concerns the leaving of a 'total institution' (Goffman, 1968) with all the pressures upon the individual which that implies. Entry into the transition is only completely voluntary in the case of the higher education course: the soldiers have no choice and the entrants to the other two transitions are very constrained. Further, the educational transition represents opportunity in the individual's 'career', whereas the others represent varying degrees of difficulty or constraint. However, the educational transition is not concerned with occupational change, though the individuals undergoing it may be.

These differences are noted here and again in Chapter Twelve, but are not explored further in this study, for its interest in the transitions is solely as the means to make an objective identification of people in the process of change. It is concerned with the individuals' experience of change rather than their experience of these transitions; equally, it is not concerned with the transitions from the point-of-view of the organisations running them. Although the nature of the transition and of its host organisation clearly determines the type and needs of the individual I interviewed and the nature of the experiences they report, this does not limit this exploratory study which aims to identify appropriate questions for future research rather than conclusive answers here. Nevertheless, the commentaries on the interviews and the discussions in the chapters of Phase Three note when specific aspects of the transitions may be significantly affecting the men's experiences.

### c. Differences among the men interviewed

One of the major requirements of the study was that it should include a range of social class backgrounds among those interviewed. This was achieved by the use of certain transitions as the means of identifying people in the process of change. The ERC trainees had previously all had working-class occupations and many of the soldiers came from similar backgrounds, though they had risen in the class structure because of their promotion through the army. At the time they were leaving school, two-thirds of those interviewed had a father who had an unskilled or semi-skilled job. No attempt is made in the study (indeed, it is not

possible) to compare the men's experiences of change on the basis of their social class, though the implications of their class of origin is discussed, particularly in Chapters Twelve, Fourteen and Fifteen.

Location in the age range 30 to 55 was a criterion for inclusion in the study: this presents another source of heterogeneity among the men interviewed. Apart from the possibility of any developmental differences (as discussed in Chapter Five) between people within this wide range of ages, there are certainly generational differences; that is, the range includes people belonging to different cohorts with different major life experiences. (See Soddy, 1967, referred to in Chapter Two.) Some had experienced the depressed 1920s and 1930s; some were young adults during the Second World War, others were only children or babies. Further, five of the men interviewed were of foreign nationality, though three of them had lived in Britain since early adulthood.

Once again, such heterogeneity does not itself prevent the use of the men's experiences to illustrate responses to change, though it clearly has to be taken into account. This is particularly so in Chapter Seventeen which deals with their experience of 'middle age'. The existence of this wide age range does not, for the reasons made clear in Chapters Two and Five, permit the adoption of a cross-sectional approach in the study: that is, it is not valid to infer the changing nature say, of the response to occupational change by comparing the various responses of the thirty-, forty- and fifty-year olds. The effects of differences in age have to be identified by other research methods, such as by a longitudinal study.

Finally, it should be noted that some of the men interviewed had experiences which might have pre-disposed them to greater difficulty or distress in the present. (This was not in fact apparent in the interviews.) The presence of the majors in the Resettlement Panel indicates that they had failed to achieve further promotion and that they were perhaps having difficulty with their resettlement process.

#### d. Some common experiences among the men interviewed

While there were, thus, considerable differences among the 32 men, there



were also some significant similarities which separate them from 'middle-aged' men of later generations. Most of them had experienced severe disturbances during their early years. These included the economic insecurities and deprivations of the 1920s and 1930s; the trauma of wartime experiences; the absence of the father or siblings; evacuation and other separation; disrupted education; and post-war austerities. (See Table Two.)

Another common experience was that of National Service and/or regular military service. Apart from the 14 soldiers interviewed, four others had also had regular military service at some time and five others had done National Service. All three branches of the service were represented.

	<u>Number of men having these experiences in</u>				
		<u>each transition</u>			
	EDUCA- TIONAL COURSE	PER COURSE	ARMY RE- SETTLEMENT	ERC	TOTAL
childhood experience of death and/or separation from parents	2	1	7	2	12
National Service	1	1	2	3	7
regular military service	2	2	14	0	18
foreign nationality	1	1	0	3	5
residence abroad including during military service	3	2	14	3	22
major illness at some time in adulthood	2	1	4	7	14
marital separation, divorce or death of wife	3	1	3	1	8

Table Two

Major Experiences of Change Among the Men Interviewed

Social learning theory would suggest that such special experiences, shared by so many of the men interviewed, may have influenced the ways in which they manage present changes and hence the interpretations I have made. This points to the need for further research and care in the use of these interpretations in the counselling of those who have not shared similar experiences.

### 3. The interviews

#### a. The location of the interviews

In general, I had no control over the location of the interview. I saw the students in an office in the educational institution; two of the men on the PER course in their own home and the third in the institution which ran the course. I met one of the soldiers in his own home, the remainder in their office, a conference room or a room in the officers' mess. The ERC interviews took place in the Centre's conference room.

Although the interviews were always private and not overheard by others, the circumstances were rarely ideal. In some of the offices there were interruptions from the telephone or callers at the door. In the one case where these were frequent and obviously not strongly discouraged, I judged that the man did not value the interview greatly and so kept it as brief as possible. The situation (surroundings, arrangement of furniture: as in an echoing officers' mess) seldom favoured intimate conversation or effective tape-recording. In the choice between good recording and good rapport I gave priority to the latter, a decision which partly accounts for the poor quality of some of the tapes.

#### b. The duration of the interviews

At the ERC the duration of the interviews was determined by the assessment and training schedules, which allowed the maximum interval of an hour for the interview. Elsewhere, I requested that there should be at least two hours available. A few took longer, the longest 150 minutes and a few shorter; the interview I kept deliberately brief lasted half-an-hour. Some of the men had set their own limits upon the time they would make available, but they all revised their plans once the



interview was in progress. Occasionally there was an outside limit to the length of time available, such as a pre-determined lunch-time, but in most cases it was I who concluded it when I sensed that the interchange was effectively over.

#### c. The conduct of the interviews

I began the interview by reference to the tape recorder, to which all but one had no objection. I then briefly explained about myself and the research and invited questions about it; there were none. All had known something about the study before this point (and, apart from the ERC trainees, they had all learned this from me) and had apparently considered the explanations sufficient. They had formed their own impressions of the objectives and nature of the research, for several prefaced statements on topics about which I had not enquired with remarks like 'There's something else you'll want to know'. Others referred to my own 'mid-life' re-direction when talking of their own.

Apart from the one interview in which the man felt uneasy with the tape recorder, which I shortly disconnected, rapport was quickly established and maintained. These encounters were intense and enjoyable experiences for me. Sometimes we laughed and once, briefly, wept. At the close, the transition to the everyday world seemed a perceptible shock and I felt very tired. I think that to some extent the men, too, had felt a temporary bond. Some remarked that they had never shared such details with anyone else before; others that they had not given thought to some of the matters raised or that they had never before looked at their life from that particular perspective. 'It's been a little bit of an ego trip for me', said one and for one or two I felt that the interview had been a significant experience. This reinforces for me the necessity of recognising the involvement the researcher has in a research encounter and the responsibility which flows from this.

#### d. The questions asked in the interviews

With my espousal of the revised objectives of the study, I approached each interview as an individual experience. While I used some of the questions formulated for the pilot interviews and as a result of them, I did not use a set formula of words nor a set sequence of questions

(except to follow a loosely biographical sequence). I tried to be responsive to what each man said and to follow up the statements which seemed particularly significant to him; if necessary to leave untouched the areas in which I was generally interested because of lack of time or of apparent significance to him.

I started all the interviews in the same way with questions about their family background. These were apparently unthreatening and easy to answer (though some men could not remember all the details asked for) and allowed the men to become accustomed to the situation, to me and to the tape recorder. Their answers also gave me information and a framework of dates to which I could relate the various events as they were recounted and so ask pertinent questions. After this, as the (edited) transcripts in Volume Two show, each interview pursued its individual course. (There was no difficulty, therefore, in accommodating the approach to the interview with Mr. Jackaman, who was accompanied by his wife.) I asked about the choice of first job, how they liked it and why they left; and so on for all their subsequent jobs to the present. Some of those with a fragmented work history may have elided some of the details. I listened for the topics which particularly interested me: 'career' models and mentors; the use of advice and information; the experience of ageing and the expectations of 'middle age'; references to 'luck' or 'chance' (because of my initial interest in Rotter's (1966) ideas). If these were specifically raised or hinted at I explored them further whenever possible.

At the completion of a 'paragraph' in the interview I often summed up what had been said as a device to move on to the next area of interest. This gave the man an opportunity to check my understanding of his words and he sometimes corrected me at that point (or at others). For example, Mr. Driver (116a) says 'I caution you against putting too much emphasis on it' and Mr. Baldwin (in a passage not included in the transcript) makes it clear that he is not speaking of his recognition of mortality (and thus not, as I first thought, demonstrating one of the classic symptoms of 'mid-life crisis').

This form of interviewing, responding to what is said instead of following an interview schedule, demands great concentration. This would probably have been impaired had I been a slave to note-taking. The tape recorder



released me from this chore; its other advantages are discussed in the next section.

Reference to the entries in my index of issues and themes emerging from the interviews (see the section on analysis below) indicates that all the interviews covered the basic biography from family background to the present experience of occupational change and that most of them to some degree covered the topics noted above. However, each interview was unique because of the questioning which responded to what I perceived to be the matters of significance in each individual's account. This makes the recorded interview a valuable means of understanding each man's 'career' and allows some recognition of his phenomenal and transcendental 'career'. At the same time, it prevents the possibility of aggregating the accounts of several men in order to present conclusive 'findings' about their 'career' and of generalising from one man's reported experiences to predict what might be expected in the population from which he was drawn or in any other population. The analysis of each interview has to be intra-individual. The insights into the individual which emerge from this can then be used (as a later section of this chapter argues) to construct conceptual models of the 'career' to use as the starting-point of other research.

Although this mode of questioning thus allows the eventual grounding of theory in data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), it must at the same time be recognised that there are implicit hypotheses or preconceptions in the very questions asked: why otherwise ask them? In these interviews these derived from the literature, from my general interests and my world view (Pepper, 1942). They also materialised during the interviews. However, my approach differed from the orthodox in my treatment of those hypotheses of which I was aware. I tried not to view the individual solely in their terms and so pursued whatever seemed of relevance to him. I did not raise all of the issues in which I was interested with every man, nor did I raise them in a uniform manner. I did not investigate each hypothesis systematically. The issues and themes identified in the analysis and discussed in the chapters of Phase Three are thus grounded in the reported experience of the men and are not the artefacts of a (consciously) systematic and persistent line of questioning. By referring to the literature reviews in Phase One, the men's recorded words (albeit edited) and my interpretations of them in the commentaries in

Volume Two, the reader can judge the degree to which I have responded to the individual rather than to my own preconceptions.

e. The tape-recording and transcription of the interviews

All interviews were recorded except two (one in response to the man's concern.) The conditions for recording were seldom good (and the effects made worse on the two occasions when I found I had used a defective recorder). The difficulty of hearing the playback was thus a major frustration. Because of this and the large number of tapes used, ultimately only two-thirds of them were fully transcribed. Of the remainder, I transcribed only those passages identified through the process of analysis to be particularly significant. The transcript of the interview with Mr. Scott in Volume Two is just such a case.

Apart from recording the words of the men the machine, of course, also captured mine. Thus my questions and behaviour as an interviewer are open to inspection: my probings, encouragement, insistence, surprise and hesitation. The men's use of words or ideas that I originally introduced can also be traced. I find that on two occasions I forgot my own embargo on the use of the word 'career'. The tapes enable me to recognise now that at the time I overlooked, underestimated or did not understand what was being said to me; there are instances where I regret that I did not follow up a lead very clearly offered to me. The tapes also reveal many intriguing issues of which I was not aware during the interview and which I did not set out to explore: some of the material for the opportunity structure/occupational choice debate in Chapter Fifteen and for the identification of the orientation to the environment in Chapter Sixteen, for example. Tape-recording, therefore, by making a permanent record of the interview, enables it to be examined over time and by different people detached from its origins and so to be analysed in terms other than those originally envisaged.

The recordings also make possible a close analysis of what the men actually said and how they said it. Their words, imagery, emphases, hesitations and recurrent themes or expressions give some access to their subjective experience. This level of detail would never have been available had I used a more structured form of interview nor would it have survived for analysis had I been note-taking.



However, the recording is at arm's length from the original experience. It captures only one dimension of the encounter between two people: without my recall, the sight and emotional tone of the interview is lost to the research. I have tried to give some indication of the texture of the interviews in my commentaries upon the transcripts in Volume Two, for it played a part in the rapport which enabled the men to speak to me as they did. The researcher is highly involved in the research as a person: in collecting the material and in understanding it.

The reader cannot hear the man talking, though I can still hear his voice in my head. Transcription is a brutal and irrevocable step which lops off the immediacy and idiosyncrasy from the original speech and alters the quality of the spoken word. Pauses, inflexions, emphases all become uniform symbols on the typed page. The imposition of punctuation reinforces the uniformity and standardisation and gives to hesitant, half-formed spoken thought an orderliness it did not have when uttered. Stage directions like 'spoken warmly' or 'bitter laughter' offer feeble representations of the reality of feeling expressed and of its power to touch the listener. They represent my interpretation of that feeling anyway. My continuo of assorted 'ums' and 'ahs' which take up so much space in the unedited transcripts gave impetus and encouragement for the continuation of the narrative or the exploration of an idea and demonstrate my support for the speaker.

If the transcripts are already at some remove from the original interview, the edited transcripts presented in Volume Two are more so. The demands of practicality and confidentiality make this inevitable. However, I am able to present enough to demonstrate the method of questioning and interpretation I adopted and to illustrate the men's subjective experience. I hope that these comments upon the way in which research material is refined and often thereby distorted through the research process will prompt others to explore other methods which are appropriate to the non-positivist approach in research.

#### The analysis of the interviews and elaboration of the research topics

I did not intend to analyse each interview in a uniform manner in terms of categories external to it (nor would this have been proper, given the philosophy and method of the study). The primary analysis had to be

intra-individual, in terms of the individual's reported experience. That analysis enabled me to identify the basic issues and themes (the 'research topics') of each and ultimately of all the interviews. Once these had emerged I was able to examine them in terms of all the interviews and of the literature and to use them as the basis for a secondary analysis of the interviews. In doing this the topics were elaborated and refined and, as the next section outlines, then used to develop models which allowed an interpretation of the men's experiences. Figure Fourteen illustrates this phase of the research process.

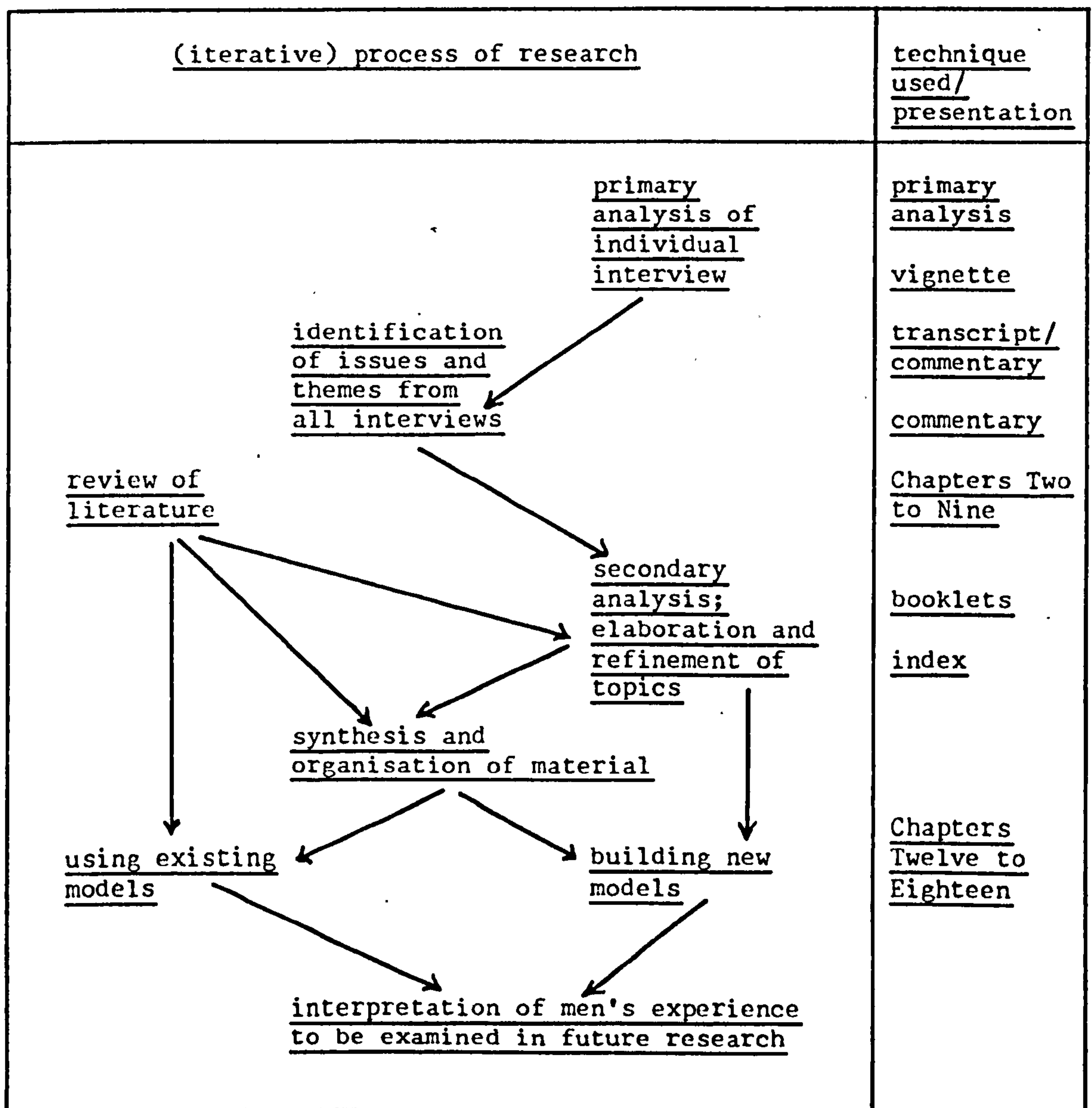


Figure Fourteen

Analysis, Synthesis and Presentation of Research Material



However, after the initial phase of analysis there began - inevitably, it would appear - an iterative process wherein the issues and themes identified as significant in one interview caught my attention and were then sought and examined in others and were also looked at in terms of theory and other research. Figure Fourteen, therefore, presents a simplified and unidirectional model of the process. For me the process continued until the writing of the final chapters, when I was still identifying in the original transcripts and subsequent analyses new and relevant aspects of the men's experiences, neglected or unperceived in the interview itself or the initial analysis. The commentaries upon the transcripts in Volume Two and the chapters of Phase Three represent the stage of elaboration and refinement reached at the time of completing the thesis: the process could undoubtedly be continued by me or, through the transcripts, by another. I shall now outline how I undertook the analysis.

First of all, I listened to the recording of the interview, when necessary a few times: a task which took several weeks to cover the transcribed interviews. This was active listening, for I was trying to correct the typist's transcription as well as to understand what was being said. I then read through the corrected transcript and marked those words and passages which I interpreted as in some way significant in their immediate context and in the interview as a whole. I also noted those which for some reason interested me. I then moved on to the next interview. Clearly, my knowledge of the earlier tapes will have had a cumulative influence upon those to which I listened later. Having corrected the typing, I thereafter worked with the transcripts, returning to the tapes for clarification only on a few occasions.

This material assimilated, I became aware of the recurrence of certain issues or themes (such as the experience of financial pressures during the early working-life, the soldiers' frustration with their promotion prospects or the anxiety about finding a job when 'middle-aged'). There were illustrations of some of the issues, like that of the 'career' model, in which I had all along been interested. Most significantly, however, I was forced to recognise other issues of which until then I had not been aware.

The prime example of this occurred when analysing the interview with

Mr. Stephens. I noticed that during the 105 minutes he had repeated the expression 'to take advantage of' 19 times, a mannerism I had not consciously noted during the interview itself. When I looked more closely at the context in which he used the phrase, it seemed that he was indicating that he saw his environment as constraining and his opportunities limited. However, because they did crop up occasionally and unexpectedly, he felt that he had to prepare himself to be in a constant state of readiness 'to take advantage of' them whenever they occurred. This led me to search through the transcript for a further indication of this, which I found in the way he related events and in his repetition of words like 'lucky' and 'opportunity'. I later examined transcripts of the other men's interviews to learn how they regarded and responded to their environment. I interpreted that some see it as open and others closed; some are active in response to it, some passive. As Chapter Sixteen discusses, this became an important springboard to the identification of the orientation to the environment.

Having thus identified the issues and themes emerging from each interview, I examined them in the light of all the interviews and of the literature and sifted them into coherent topics. I then made a secondary analysis of the interviews with the purpose of defining, refining and elaborating these topics by finding illustrations of them or by questioning or modifying them. (This is akin to the 'multiple cycle' of research (Reason and Rowan, 1981, p. 249).

For this secondary analysis I used for each interview a booklet which listed these topics: motivation, ambition and achievement; details of turning-points in the occupation; examples of external and internal pressures; references to models and mentors; aspects of ageing and change in adulthood; examples of decision-making; use of information, advice and counselling; indications of the time perspective; orientation to the environment; reference to 'luck', 'chance', 'opportunity' and 'decision'. Because of the method of interviewing, some of the interviews could inevitably shed little or no light on some of these topics. For example, it was often impossible to illustrate the several aspects of the orientation to the environment. At the same time, it emerged that the proposed open-closed dimension (see Chapter Sixteen) could be construed in other ways, such as benign-malign or comprehensible-incomprehensible.



I also used the booklet to formalise the primary individual analysis and to record the biographical material: the educational and occupational history and a description of how the present phase began. There was also space to note individual characteristics; keywords or recurrent or apparently significant words, expressions, ideas or themes. For example, the key themes for Mr. Morgan are contentedness; enjoyment; enthusiasm; loyalty; 'soldierliness'; professionalism. (Others are noted in the commentaries.) The man's use of the word 'career' and associated imagery (such as ladder, tree or avenue) is also noted, with the relevance of 'career' theories to his experience. Finally, the booklet identified significant passages for eventual quotation.

It took about eight weeks to work through the transcripts and untranscribed tapes to complete the booklets. At this point I decided that I need not transcribe the remaining tapes: that these booklets, with the transcription of any particularly significant passages (which I then carried out) would suffice. I then made an index of the illustration of the major headings from the interviews which later facilitated reference when writing Chapters Twelve to Eighteen.

Finally, I wrote a vignette of each man to sum up what I knew of him from the interview and to achieve an overall picture of his characteristics identified through the analysis. This seemed important at the time of doing it: I now recognise that it served the purpose of forcing my attention away from the separate elements of his interview back to a consideration of him as a whole person.

#### Synthesis and organisation of the research material and interpretation of the men's experiences

With the significant topics of the research refined and elaborated, I needed to synthesise the material in order to make an interpretation of the men's experiences and so meet the objectives of the study. The chapters of Phase Three, therefore, bring together the material, examine and discuss it and draw some tentative conclusions about 'career change' as a phase in the process of the men's 'career', the interaction of exogenous and endogenous influences upon their 'career', their subjective experience of change, the way they negotiate change and their experience of 'middle age'.

As Figure Fourteen shows, in synthesising this material I used several conceptual models to organise it so that it offered a coherent interpretation of the men's experience. Some of the models used, like those of the psycho-social transition and the status passage, derive from the literature. Others, such as the orientation to the environment and the broken truce hypothesis, are constructed directly from the men's experiences themselves. The validity of the model or of aspects of it is not necessarily undermined when there are few cases to which it seems applicable. Quantification is not of relevance to this study and although I indicate where there is more than one example to cite ('some', 'several') this is not intended to suggest any particular strength in the argument. The single example alone can be effective and a spur to future enquiry.

This is an exploratory study in terms of both content and method and the nature of the material presented by Chapters Twelve to Eighteen must be recognised. They do not offer an extensive and systematic analysis of each interview but weave ideas together from various sources (including the interviews) into conceptual frameworks which, whilst essentially abstract and thus artificial, nevertheless effectively explain many of the experiences reported in the interviews. Each chapter closely examines these frameworks and tentatively concludes by putting them forward as the potential starting-points (or hypotheses) for future research. They also discuss the implications for theory and counselling. In accordance with the philosophy of the study, the integrity of the original interviews is retained separately from these conceptual constructions and can be viewed in the transcripts in Volume Two.

#### The use of reminiscence as research material

In its discussion of subjective time Chapter Four referred to the difficulty of using reminiscence as research material. This could be of relevance to Chapters Twelve and Fifteen which are concerned with the process of 'career' and derive their material from the men's reminiscences of their occupational history. The other chapters deal with material which is mainly contemporaneous. However, whilst acknowledging the limitations of such remembered material (see Cranach, 1982, pp. 66-9), the study is not constrained by those limitations, for it has not attempted to describe the individual's past 'career' but has used the memories to construct a model of the process of 'career' which, it urges, needs to be closely examined in longitudinal research.



It must also be noted that some of the reminiscences are supported by past or present actions, such as the concern which is shown for their children's education (see Chapter Twelve). Although the reported memories may not indicate past objective experiences (current perceptions at the time might have been as fallible), they do point to the men's interpretation or world view, their constructed or edited biography which will have influenced their attitudes and actions both then and possibly now (see Johnson, 1977, p. 81). Mr. Dickens's struggle not to be 'pigeon-holed' and Mr. Driver's belief that he can do more in life would be examples of this.

### Presentation of the research material

The manner of presentation I have adopted is influenced by the philosophy and objectives of the research. I need to be able to present to the reader something of the original interviews, so that the way I have identified and elaborated the research topics and made my interpretations can be seen and, if necessary, challenged; and that an awareness of the men's subjective experience can be conveyed without my mediation. I thus present in Volume Two some of the transcripts with commentaries upon them and the synthesis of the material in the chapters of Phase Three.

For Volume Two I have chosen those interviews which richly illustrate the themes discussed. There are others, like that with Mr. Stephens, which had space not been limited I should also have wanted to include. However, his interview with those of all the others is used to illustrate appropriate points throughout the chapters. The transcripts have been edited for the sake of practicality. (The typing conventions for transcripts, commentaries and quotations are outlined in the Introduction to Volume Two.) They illustrate the nature of the interview, my interviewing style and, above all, give the reader some sense of the men and their 'career'.

The commentaries upon the transcripts illustrate the analysis of the interviews and the identification of the major research topics as well as many others I have not exploited for this thesis. They come as the last phase of the analysis and thus, although firmly grounded in the interviews, do not represent my raw response to the men's experiences nor my primary analysis of them. They result from the iterative process

noted earlier. Reverting to my own disciplinary background, I have in the commentary treated the transcript as one might a literary text, a latterday Beowulf. I have examined it in terms of the men's language, imagery and style; noted its manifest and latent messages, the underlying or recurrent themes. I have related what is said in one part of the interview to other parts, to the interview as a whole, to the other interviews and to the literature.

### Confidentiality

I gave an assurance of confidentiality to the men I interviewed. This means that not only have I given them a pseudonym, but I am also reticent about the exact nature of the populations from which they are drawn and edit out references in the transcript to events, people or places which could be revealing. I have, however, been provided with some camouflage because so many of them, as Table Two shows, shared several common experiences. At the same time I have had to omit reference to material which would have made a telling point but possibly revealed the identity of the man. The greatest loss here is to my discussion of the apparent need for congruence between the dimensions of the orientation to the environment. One case would have been particularly supportive. Such a loss, however, is the price for access to authentic experience.



'MIL-CAREER CHANGE':

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

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THIRD PHASE OF THE RESEARCH

The analysis and synthesis of the  
research material

(Volume Two contains examples of the interviews and their analysis)



## 'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER' AND OF THE EXPERIENCE  
OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'THIRD PHASE OF THE RESEARCHThe analysis and synthesis of the research material

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THIRD PHASEin the 'career' of a piece of researchTHE ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH MATERIAL

The third phase of the 'career' of this piece of research began as I started my new 'career' in January 1980. This further exogenous change has greatly influenced the study: its content and direction and, very substantially, the length of this its final phase.

My new job has made considerable demands upon me in terms of time, energy and accelerated learning; I have thus had to relegate the writing of the thesis to the vacations. Every summer I analysed some more and wrote some more and every autumn seriously considered whether to finish off rapidly what I had done and submit the thesis; but every year I jibbed at the final hurdle. I could not 'satisfice' to the degree that seemed necessary. Thus the burden of guilt and conflict has increased and in frustration I have had to watch new publications appear and a growing interest arise in the field.

Although the time and attention I have been able to give to the thesis have been fragmented during this phase I have, nevertheless, been able to sustain some involvement in the research itself. Regular reading of the new literature, contact with other academics in the fields of both 'career' and 'middle age', presentation of seminar and conference papers on aspects of my study: these have all kept the research alive.

Very importantly for the content and direction of the study, this enforced moratorium upon the completion of the thesis has provided unexpected benefits. My preparation for teaching has led me into unfamiliar areas, introduced new concepts and clarified others, particularly in the discipline of psychology and these new ideas have generated fresh insights into the tape-recorded material. Most significantly, I have encountered the systems approach for the first time and now recognise its potential contribution to the understanding of 'career'. I have also had time to distance myself to some degree from the material and so achieve a new perspective upon it. Thus I have been able to evaluate some of the basic concepts like that of development which I had hitherto not questioned.



I am now in April 1984 putting the finishing touches to a project which has lasted over seven years. The iterative process of research conducted over such a long period of time and in such a fragmented manner has inevitably posed many problems. I have generated a mass of material which has become increasingly difficult to manage. It has also been difficult to decide what are the major threads of the thesis, to hold on to them and structure material around them and not to be seduced into fascinating side-lines. Perhaps I have not been sufficiently rigorous or ruthless in this. Both the interview material and the world of ideas to which I have been introduced through my teaching are seemingly inexhaustible in their potential and it is still all too easy to make exciting new connections. This, too, has had its frustration for it is just as easy for the latest and seemingly unforgettable insight to be later discovered, forgotten, in some previous draft. (Although I have found it hard systematically to record and monitor these fleeting ideas and flashes of insight over this period of time, I have found that my bibliographic reference system has served me well. I cannot imagine that its computerisation would have been an improvement, though a word-processor which handled the writing from first draft to final copy would undoubtedly have been.) I have also had problems of reminiscence and rationalisation. Trying to write convincingly in 1984 about the research five or more years before, I am constantly aware of the subtle pressures of 'social desirability' as I have to infer my earlier intentions. Because I then saw the research in a different light, I did not record the intentions behind decisions which did not then appear to be crucial or significant.

Chapter Ten illustrates the nature of other difficulties faced in writing the thesis. Over this period of time I have been aiming at a moving target. While the evolution in my thinking about the research has been essential and entirely positive, it has left me with not only two very different research projects to be welded together into one thesis but with the shifting grounds between the two to be explained as well. I still have to struggle against some of the assumptions and terminology I thought I had laid aside. Thus I find that I have formulated the 'broken truce hypothesis' in Chapter Twelve. While this is, indeed hypothetical in that, having emerged from the synthesis of the material it is a notion to be explored in future research, it is clearly not one which could be scientifically tested.



Before the close of the second phase I had written what seemed to be the final versions of Chapters One to Six. The new ideas, changed perspective and recognition of new significances has meant that not only did I have to complete the analysis and synthesis of the material, but I also had to rewrite those chapters twice. It is only during this last year that I have been able to identify the thesis amid the research material, to sustain the thread of an argument and to break out of the strait-jacket of those earlier versions. I now recognise the enormity of the task I have embarked upon: 'career' and 'middle age'; sociology and psychology; fieldwork, theory and reflections upon the research process. Such breadth is clearly beyond the reasonable scope of a thesis, but I have recognised this too late and now experience a lack of confidence in what I have done. However, it would take another summer to carve a more manageable thesis out of this vast field and, although I have greatly enjoyed the study and learned a great deal through it, I am now ready to let it go and to move on.

## INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS TWELVE TO EIGHTEEN AND TO VOLUME TWO

In pursuit of one of the objectives of the study and in accordance with its chosen method, Volume Two presents some of the basic material of the research: edited transcripts of ten selected interviews with commentaries upon them which indicate the intra-individual mode of analysis carried out on all the interviews. Chapters Twelve to Eighteen refer to these transcripts and to the commentaries for explanation of my interpretations. (The Introduction to Volume Two explains the system of line referencing and the typing conventions used.)

In that analysis and interpretation are grounded the several issues and themes which are then examined and developed in Chapters Twelve to Eighteen. Because this is an exploratory study, these chapters cover a wide range of topics, not all to the same depth; they also evaluate existing theory and point to the need for future research.

Chapter Twelve, which fulfils the study's objective to examine 'career change' within a dynamic and holistic model of 'career', is the key chapter. It provides the framework for the following chapters and raises the issues which they expand and explore more fully to meet the other objectives of the research. The interaction of exogenous and endogenous influences upon 'career' is taken up and explored in both Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen. Aspects of the subjective experience of change and the phenomenal 'career' are examined in Chapters Thirteen, Sixteen and Seventeen. In particular, Chapter Thirteen explores the dislocation of change, Chapter Sixteen the negotiation of change and Chapter Seventeen and perception and experience of 'middle age'.

Each chapter notes the implications of its discussions for future research, existing theory and the practice of counselling. (This last term is used throughout to denote several forms of intervention which might elsewhere be distinguished (for example, Venables, 1974): the provision of information, advice, guidance and counselling in a psycho-therapeutic sense. While some of the implications discussed might already be familiar to the psycho-therapeutic counsellor, they could offer a new approach to the information- or advice-giver.)



Thus each chapter makes its own contribution to the conclusions of the thesis. The final chapter sums up these various evaluations and, reflecting upon the study as a whole, proposes a comprehensive theory of 'career', while duly acknowledging its limitations.

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. Homer
Mr. Argent	Mr. Lipton
Mr. Bedford	Mr. Luke
Mr. Betts	Mr. McMillan
Mr. Boatman	Mr. Morgan
Mr. Bonhill	Mr. Paddington
Mr. Bowers	Mr. Portman
Mr. Charles	Mr. Prince
Mr. Ellis	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Flint	Mr. Stephens
Mr. Gilbert	Mr. Thomas

(These are all pseudonyms)



## CHAPTER TWELVE

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

### 'MID-CAREER CHANGE': A PHASE IN THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER'

#### Introduction

The conclusions drawn from Chapter Seven's analysis of the studies of 'career change' led to the decision that my own exploratory study would examine 'career change' within a dynamic and holistic model of 'career' in which exogenous and endogenous factors interact over time. In reporting upon this approach to the experience of the men I interviewed, this chapter makes an overview of their 'career', aspects of which are highlighted and examined in further detail in the following chapters.

Since Chapter Eight concluded that the 'career' theories do not offer an adequate conceptual basis for this dynamic model of 'career', this chapter will approach it through the concept of process. Paralleling the definition of process used by Lazarus (1980, pp. 38-40) in his analysis of stress (a changing transaction between person and environment over time), this chapter views the changes of which the 'career' process is composed as stemming from the interaction of exogenous and endogenous factors. The concept, therefore, expresses much of the meaning of development but without the connotations of incremental, patterned or normative sequences discussed in Chapters Five and Eight.

Process denotes a sequence of changes so interdependent that they form a continuity through time; they have a 'logical connective tissue' (Johnson, 1977, p. 70). It signifies a state of becoming: the present derives from the past and contains the potential for the future to which it eventually gives way. Although there are, thus, certain logical pre-requisites for each change, the concept of process, unlike that of development as used in 'career' theories, does not evaluate its intermediate or end states in terms of desirability. A process - at least notionally - has a starting-point and an end-point, though both may be difficult to identify. Some form of energy is required to initiate and to maintain it. It may not proceed at an even pace and there may be considerable variation in the rate of change. Further, several series of changes, like strands, may take place simultaneously, interlinked in various ways and proceeding at differential rates. Johnson (1977, p. 81)

says 'This constant reverberation we might call social kinetics'. Such complexity is characteristic of most psychological or social processes such as the occupational 'career'.

The study of a process begins with the identification of the individual changes which contribute to the whole. It may be possible to identify each one and its interrelationships with others where the process is relatively simple and observable from its start. When it has begun before observation starts, the earlier cues to change may be missed; or the changes may be too subtle or their interrelationships too complex for the observer to become aware of them once they have taken place; or the observer may misinterpret what is seen. Of this Becker (1968, p. 149) writes

'Many of the changes alleged to take place in adults do not take place at all. Or rather, a change occurs but an optical illusion causes the outside observer to see it as a change quite different in kind and magnitude from what it really is.'

Thus it may never be possible retrospectively to identify the minute changes within a complex process. However, it may be possible to recognise major changes and the cumulative effects of past changes and so identify segments of the process which, because of such accumulation, differ from those which precede or follow them. These will be referred to as phases in the process, changes in state which are defined in terms which are internal to the process and identified by their predominant characteristics, even though the internal cues to the changes which brought them about may remain blurred or have to be inferred. However, in a complex process which has many interlinking and overlapping changes it may be impossible to discriminate between its phases by means of their predominant characteristics at any point in time. Examination of it may thus have to be made by reference to factors external to it, such as the passage of time or a sequence of social roles like child, student, worker and pensioner: segments of the process so identified will be referred to as periods.

This framework of periods, externally-defined and imposed upon a process, organises and contains its complexities and so allows the closer examination which may reveal sufficient detail to make the internal



cues to change visible. It may thus eventually become possible to understand the process in terms of its internally-defined phases. However, this is perhaps rare: such a framework, made necessary by the complexities of the process, is largely insensitive to the minute but perhaps crucial changes which constitute that very complexity. It may thus ignore or distort the idiosyncratic logic of the process.

Psychological and social processes are not only complex but also have subjective as well as objective dimensions and so resist the easy identification of their internally-defined phases. Most studies of them, therefore, have incorporated some form of external reference. Much of the literature on 'career' which uses the concepts discussed in Chapter Five makes its analysis in terms of externally-defined and normative periods: the stages used in the 'career' development theories noted in Chapter Eight: 2 (b ii), for example. Levinson et al. (1978) have attempted to detect internal cues in order to identify the phases or 'seasons' of life, but they have then linked these with chronological age. (See Appendix Three for a brief critique of their research.) In using such periods there is, as Johnson (1977, p. 77) points out, a tendency to treat them as universals and 'as though they were discrete and uni-dimensional entities upon which other "variables" have an influence.' The basis of this study, however, is the recognition that the changes which constitute the process of 'career' issue from the interaction of exogenous and endogenous factors, so that the process is unique to the individual. The phases of the 'career' therefore cannot be normative; nor, for the same reason, can the periods, although they impose a uniform structure through which the individual process can be viewed. The individual 'career' has to be examined in its own terms and this has been achieved by adopting a biographical approach in the interviews.

'Career' is a complex process and a long one: its many changes could thus not be observed except, perhaps, through very detailed longitudinal research. This study, therefore, has to contend with the difficulties noted both above and in Chapters Two, Five and Eight. It also, as discussed in Chapters Ten and Eleven, has to rely to some extent upon retrospective accounts. While, as will be suggested later, it may be possible to glimpse some of the fleeting changes in people's experience of the present situation and so identify the start of a phase, the outline

of their earlier occupational history has to rely for its content upon their memory and for its organisation upon the imposition of an external framework of periods.

The periods to be used in this chapter are defined in the neutral terms of the passage of time and refer to sequential portions of working-life such as 'the first job', 'the early working-life' and 'the subsequent working-life'. Terms used in earlier research, such as the 'exploration' or 'establishment' stages of 'career' noted in Chapter Eight: 2 (b ii), although referred to where relevant, will not be used in this exploratory study. It would not be legitimate to impose their assumptions upon the men's experiences and could prevent fresh observation. Since the methods used in this research differ from those used in the studies which generated the labels, it would in any case be confusing to use identical terms for what are almost inevitably different entities. This chapter also rejects the temptation to create its own labels ('breaking away', 'struggling to their feet', 'standing on their feet', 'reeling from the blow', 'regaining their balance') from the characteristics of the periods of the work history of some of the men interviewed, for this would imply that the issues discussed therein can be regarded as normative when, because of the way in which they have been identified, they cannot be. It eschews referring to the present as the 'mid-life phase' for the same reason and because of the possible allusion to the problematical 'mid-life crisis'. Finally, the periods outlined here have not been calibrated with such objective markers as age or, say, family roles; by relating them to such criteria the process would appear normative and thus misleading. They cannot be aligned with the periods identified in other studies by other research methods nor used to confirm nor disconfirm them. The chapter has, instead, labelled the periods in general and universal terms which possess no powers of explication for individual experience. They are merely a means of organising and examining the men's 'career', not a description of it.

The adoption of the concept of process as the basis of a dynamic model of 'career' and hence 'career change', while evading some of the objections raised to the concept of development, nevertheless encounters other conceptual and operational problems, such as those noted above. (See also Lazarus, 1980, pp. 39-40). These, with the limited time



available to conduct the research, have, as Chapter Ten observes, resulted in only the partial fulfilment of one of the major objectives of the study. However, as an exploratory study it has a contribution to make to future research through its identification and examination of these difficulties and its indication of the potential of this approach. Thus particular attention will be paid to the implications for research and theory.

The chapter now makes an overview of the process of 'career' which, it should be noted because of the exploratory nature of the study and the research methods used, offers the starting-point for future research rather than the completion of a description of 'career' in universal terms. Beginning with the known point of the present transition, the overview returns to the start and then subsequent periods of the process through to the start of the present phase of change. During each period are examined some of the issues and themes concerned with the direction and nature of the men's 'career' which emerge as significant from the analysis of the interviews. The interaction of the exogenous and endogenous factors is seen for the purpose of this chapter largely in terms of the opportunity structure and the self concept (see Chapter Eight: 1 (b ii) and 2 (b iii)) but will be elaborated upon in the next three chapters. The present phase of change (which is the focus of this study) as revealed by this processual view is then examined and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for research, theory and counselling.

### The present transition

The present transition is of particular significance in this study not only because it is from its perspective that the men recall the earlier periods of their working-life, but also because it is what they are experiencing at the time of the interview. Given the difficulties in using reminiscence in research, this contemporaneous material is particularly valuable. It makes possible the identification of some aspects of the internal logic of the process and thus, as will be seen, points to the start of both the entire process and its present phase.

#### 1. Men in the process of change

As explained in Chapter Eleven, four transitions were used to identify

men who would be in the process of change in 'mid-life', from which some occupational change (or 'mid-career change') could possibly result. At the time of the interviews (which, with the exception of those with the PER trainees, took place during the transition) the men are thus, voluntarily or perforce, disengaging themselves from their occupational past while their future is still uncertain. Although the end of the transition marks the end of the institution's involvement in their process of change, it cannot be assumed to mark the end of their experience of change: this will continue not only beyond the interviews but also, perhaps, beyond the end of the transition. This should be recalled when listening, in the next chapter, to their expressions of discomfort in the present: greater difficulties perhaps await them in the future.

## 2. Their reasons for entering the present transition

An examination of the men's reasons for being in the present transitional state shows that some are experiencing the natural and hence, it might be assumed, expected development of their army 'career'; some are there because of an unscheduled and unwelcome event such as illness or redundancy; others have given up their job and chosen to be there. These reasons could be analysed according to one of the 'complex classifications' of 'career change' noted in Chapter Seven (like that of Entine, 1976, who classifies according to the internal/external and anticipated/unanticipated factors causing the change). This analysis could be made for each transition (equating the reasons for the end of the army 'career' with the soldiers' reasons for entering the transition). This would not, however, clarify the nature of the transition and would, indeed, obscure an understanding of the men's experience, for it is possible to discriminate between the reasons for being in the transition and those for being in the process of change. Some of the men chose to leave their former job but not all of these chose to enter this particular transition, like the one who considers himself to have been drafted into it by a government agency; others became aware of this transition only by chance, though it was probably congruent with their thinking about the direction of their lives (see Mr. Bolton, 25b). Of those who had no choice about leaving their former jobs some, like Mr. Bedford, Mr. Bolton and Mr. Dickens, say that they sought out this particular transition.



Further, it is apparent that the transition itself does not inaugurate the present sequence of change nor the men's awareness of it. The illness or accident which brought some of the men into the present transition has in some cases been troubling them for years and eventually cost them their former jobs two or three years before the transition (in one case eleven years before the interview in 1978-9). Mr. Gilbert's precipitating experience occurred in 1970; Mr. Townley gave up his job in 1975; the redundancies were not all recent. The soldiers have long known the probable date of leaving the army, calculated from their date of joining so that, although some developed expectations or hopes of further promotion, the inevitable transition could be said to be long-expected. However, it is not as clearly defined as might at first appear and the actual timing of its end is by no means certain. Mr. Morgan was prepared to leave two years before the interview, but was offered first a one year extension of service and after that another two years'. Just before the interview he was invited to apply for a further two years' extension. Others (Mr. Hampden, 125-7a; Mr. Jackaman, 146a; Mr. Jordan, 35b; Mr. Southwell, 79b) also mention this possibility, though they say that they do not intend to stay on.

Although all are in a transitional state, the men are there for different reasons and are at different stages between its beginning and its end. The present transition is thus but one part of a longer sequence of change, in many cases long under way by the time of the interview and often with an end not yet in sight. Further, as a later section will suggest, in some instances it can be directly related to experiences which led to the start of the 'career'. An examination of the present transition is, therefore, insufficient for an understanding of 'mid-career change': the study of this longer sequence of change and of the whole process of 'career' becomes essential.

### 3. Their experience of the present transition

It is difficult to differentiate the men's experience of the present transition from that of this longer sequence of change generally, which is closely examined in the next chapter. However, some of the men do comment upon it specifically. Mr. Betts calls it a time 'to calm down, get used to being a civilian and achieve something at the same time'. Mr. Driver (213a,b) sees it as 'a period of adjustment'.

Mr. Bolton (392a) speaks of '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.' (There is some suggestion, however, that he may be using the transition to postpone any real decisions: 316b).

The transition imposes its own statuses and behaviours upon the men: those of the mature student or trainee, for example, which differ from those of their previous life. 'I'm a student now, which is virtually the lowest of the low (...) People don't take as much notice of you as we've been used to', says an ex-officer. Another man (Mr. Dickens, 169b) speaks of his sense of dependence upon those who are currently assessing him and his fear that they will 'pigeon-hole' him. Such feelings may affect the experience of the process of change which the men report in the interview.

#### The antecedents of the present transition

This section of the chapter examines the process of 'career' as the context of the present sequence of change (which in other studies might have been labelled 'mid-career change'). It begins with the start of the process and the first job, then looks at the early and subsequent working-life and finally the start of the present phase of change. Based on the issues which emerge from the interviews, it discusses in each period the exogenous and endogenous factors which apparently influence and constrain the men's occupation, focussing in the earlier periods mainly upon the opportunity structure and the self concept and in the later upon the changes the men experienced.

##### 1. The start of the process of 'career'

Some of the interviews seem to indicate a relationship between the men's reasons for entering the present transition and their experience of their socio-economic status at the time of leaving school. For them at least, the start of the process of their 'career' appears to lie in that experience and from those origins stems the series of changes which eventually brings them to the present phase of change in 'mid-life'. This is, indeed, also either explicit or implicit in some of the studies outlined in Chapter Seven, for example LaBuda (1974),



Neapolitan (1980) and Robbins (1977). (Table One in Chapter Eleven notes the occupation of their father at the time they left school; I also asked them about the occupation of their grandparents.)

The men point to the possible origin of this process as they report both objective and subjective experiences. At the objective level, the present transition is a natural outcome of the 'career' of those soldiers who had entered the army as a reaction to some aspect of their early life accounted for by their family's socio-economic status. This point will be illustrated in later sections on the opportunity structure. It is the subjective experience of other men which locates the origin of the process in their socio-economic background. Mr. Driver's reason for embarking on this particular transition (for example, 275a ff.) appears to stem ultimately from his father's advice 'to get myself qualified' (18a), which he relates (38-9a) to his father's social background and his 'rather depressing situation that he had in his youth'. Mr. Dickens enters the present transition because of his physical disability. That alone, however, does not explain his particular experience of it (for example, 93a ff.): this, he makes plain, stems from his experience of his family's social background, his impoverished education and the struggles of early working-life (85a,b ff.).

If the view that the process of 'career' begins even before the first job is taken and is bounded by powerful ('real' or perceived) forces emanating from social stratification and the economic system were accepted (as it is by some of the literature outlined in Chapter Eight: 1 (b)), then it would follow that the individual has to struggle to achieve self-fulfilment from the start and throughout the 'career'. The direction and nature of that 'career', whether substantive or phenomenal, will be influenced by these environmental forces and the individual's responses to them, responses which spring in part from the individual's concept of self and consequent interpretation of the environment. As the remainder of this chapter and Chapters Thirteen and Fifteen will show, a tension between self and environment can be seen in some men in each of the periods of their 'career' while the predominant characteristic of their present phase of change is a revision of their interpretation of self and environment and a renewed negotiation between them. Their orientation to the environment, as Chapter Sixteen discusses, seems to be a significant aspect of their response.

## 2. The first job

The interviews indicate that exogenous factors such as the opportunity structure and the father's involvement were a strong influence upon the taking of the first job. Some men, however, point to the effective influence of what can be interpreted as the endogenous factor of their sense of self.

### a. The opportunity structure

Roberts (1981, p. 284, quoted in Chapter Eight) asserts that the majority of young people have to respond to the opportunity structure which is manifested through their parents' socio-economic status, their education, local job opportunities and so on. This was certainly the reported experience of most of the men interviewed here. Very few of them now believe that they had much choice in their first job on leaving school: the exceptions who refer to or imply choice came from middle-class families. (Not all of the few from middle-class families, however, feel that they had choice: some say they were strongly influenced by their father.) Most of the men speak of having had little or no choice: this was an issue explored in most of the interviews.

Those who now feel that they had no choice then explain this in terms of what they remember as their father's dictatorship or pressure (see Mr. Driver, 22b). This will be discussed further in the next section. Those who speak as though they then had little choice refer to the following pressures: family poverty which made any job or the best-paid job imperative (Mr. Scott, 3a,b ff.); family, school and working-class expectations (Mr. Dickens, 9a,b; 'you never raised your intellect higher than get an apprenticeship', 25-6a); limited job opportunities where they lived (Mr. Boatman, Mr. Charles, Mr. Hampden, 2a,b). Some refer to their lack of educational qualifications as a constraint upon their choice of first job (Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Dickens, 9a,b); or as a continuing concern throughout early adulthood, as will be discussed in a later section. A further constraint upon job choice which was peculiar to that generation was the eclipse of their future by the requirement to complete National Service (see Mr. Dickens, 30b).

Many of the men indicate that, at the time they left school, they were not aware of other opportunities available to them. Mr. Dickens (219-20a,b) is explicit about this: he did not 'look across over the horizon'. Mr. Southwell speaks (31-2a) as though he may have had this awareness but felt that, without education, he was powerless: 'I knew, I think, as a



young man (...) I must have something to carry me through life.' Perhaps such perceptions need reinforcement by parents, school or others for them to be acted upon. Mr. Dickens, for one, did not receive this (20-1a): 'my parents were all right, but from the school (...) in one end and out the other, sort of attitude'. Compared with later generations, these boys, who left school in the 1940s and 1950s, lacked formal 'career' guidance. Mr. Bolton's remark (43-4a) 'I don't think I was aware of the existence of any career guidance in any formal way' is echoed by several others. Only Mr. Driver refers (31b) to specific advice given by some-one outside the family at this stage; advice from within the family and 'career' models, where they existed, were thus influential. Family advice will be discussed below and 'career' models in a later chapter.

Many of the men indicate that they had not seriously investigated other job possibilities for themselves: 'I have never really shopped around' (Mr. Southwell, 9a,b; Mr. Driver 22b). They convey little sense of direction nor intentional exploration, thus reinforcing Jordaan's (1963) recognition of several dimensions to the exploration stage of Super's 'career' development theory outlined in Chapter Eight: 2 (b ii). They speak as though they had sought immediate gratification, whether in their job (Mr. Thomas gave up his hoped-for apprenticeship within weeks when he found that he could immediately earn more money in an unskilled job) or in the teenage 'way of life' (Mr. Dickens, 224a,b).

The recollections of many of the men in this study seem to support Roberts's (1977, 1981) thesis of the deterring influence of the opportunity structure at their transition from school to work and locate the start of the process of their occupational 'career' in their socio-economic background.

#### b. Their father's influence

Mr. Dickens (9b, 22b) refers to the influence of home and school on the child's levels of aspiration in and exploration of the occupational world in the 1940s and 1950s. Given the nature of the parent-child disciplinary relationship at that time and the virtual absence of outside professional advice, it is not surprising to hear the men speak of their father's considerable influence upon the choice of their first job. His continuing influence seems more surprising. However, before

embarking upon this discussion, I must introduce a note of caution. In every interview it was I who, when asking about their parents' jobs and attitudes to their education, first referred to their father. If they initially spoke of him in strong terms I would often refer to him again later in the interview. On this issue, more than on most others, I may thus have elicited strong responses from them merely through my prompting and may, therefore, have developed an exaggerated view of his influence. Nevertheless, their comments raise some interesting questions which, bearing in mind this proviso, are worthy of report here and warrant further investigation in other research.

i) their father's influence on their first job

This section will first examine the father's influence as a 'career' model, then his parental concern over their first job and finally his choice of the first job.

There is at times a faint suggestion, not always clearly expressed, that the father or some other relative provided a 'career' model for the son as he left school. Mr. Baldwin joined the army when he found he could not follow the path he had first chosen; he came from an army family, '165 years' continuous service in one regiment'. Mr. McMillan refers to an uncle upon whom he consciously modelled himself initially: 'he was much admired and I admired him ... and I wanted to follow his example'. The topic of 'career' models generally will be discussed more widely in a later chapter.

Some men speak of their father's influence and parental concern. Mr. Driver's father was concerned that his son get himself qualified and 'kept impressing this on me' (40a), believing 'it was a way out of a rather depressing situation that he had in his youth.' (38-9a). He, therefore, arranged for his son to apply for an apprenticeship in the company where he worked. Mr. Southwell's father 'always said I would never go down a mine' (4a), like himself; 'I stayed with them until my father got me a job' (7a). Mr. Stephens says

'I can always remember my father going out one day and he pointed to the school (...) "that's the school you're going to" (...) it was one of these private schools in the middle of the country somewhere (...) and that's what he set his cap on



because (...) in the 1930s a school teacher was someone in life.'

Unfortunately, his father died while he was still young and 'my uncles decided' that the army, rather than teaching, would be 'the best sort of career' for him.

The way in which some of the men recall their father's concern over their first job suggests that they experienced it as dictatorship. For example, Mr. Luke had loved photography from the age of 12 or 13 but says that his father would not allow him to pursue it as an occupation. Instead his father, 'in consultation with my uncle' (which suggests that he had carefully considered the matter), placed the boy as a pupil in a profession. His training involved day-release classes, but Mr. Luke was a poor attender and used the time for his hobby instead. When threatened with examination failure and thus about to be conscripted he volunteered for the regular army. Because of this, he says, his father did not speak to him for three years. Since then he has had a chequered and unstable work history in which both photography and some aspects of his professional training have played a part.

Mr. Morgan recounts a similar story, but this will be detailed in the following section. As a boy, Mr. Roberts loved flying but his father thought the Air Force 'a waste of time' and held that his own profession of mining engineering offered 'a far better career'. So the boy who longed to fly was destined to a 'career' which looked underground. At first he tried secretly but unsuccessfully to join the RAF and eventually did so when the conditions and prospects of his apprenticeship were changed. He progressed through the ranks and remained until 'mid-life'.

These boys' memories of such strong paternal direction may be interpreted as evidence of the nature of the emotional tie between father and son (to be referred to again shortly), of the influence of the opportunity structure or of both. What the boy experienced and now reports as his father's coercion may have been the father's attempt to ensure that his son would not be limited by the opportunity structure he perceived or experienced himself. The father's choice of the son's first job perhaps speaks of the influence of the opportunity structure, while his son's rejection of it speaks of the insistence of the self concept

to be acknowledged and implemented in occupational choice. This interpretation prefigures the discussion on the opportunity structure/occupational choice debate later in Chapter Fifteen.

This interpretation, rather than that of the father's emotional domination, is supported by the current attitudes of the men interviewed, many of whom had felt for themselves the constraints of the opportunity structure, towards their children's education and life chances. (None, however, notes a parallel with his father and only Mr. Morgan of the three men quoted above mentions concern for his son's education.) Mr. Dickens, for example, says (98-9a,b, where there are also references to some of the other men) 'I believe in education (...) I'd sacrifice anything to make sure my lads got one'. Mr. Southwell, who tells (17a, 31-2a) how he recognised the importance of education and 'manners' for himself at an early age, talks (34a,b ff.) of the quality of his children's education and of their needs (82a) which are influencing his decisions about leaving the army. All this testifies to the 'reality' of the constraints that both fathers and sons have experienced, whether these were objective, as K. Roberts (1977, 1981) maintains or subjective and socially constructed as R.J. Roberts (1980) argues.

#### ii) their father's continuing influence

Some of the fathers seem to have maintained a strong influence through to their son's 'middle age'. This appears to be so in Mr. Morgan's case. He had been apprenticed in his father's own firm, with the prospect of an eventual directorship, despite his strongly felt and very different occupational interests.

'I think my father almost forced me (...) to me the choice wasn't really there.' Did you apply anywhere else (for a job)?  
'No ... There was no question of it really ... the thing was I was going to work with him (...) I was extremely reluctant. I couldn't have been a very good apprentice.'

Mr. Morgan used National Service as his escape route from this unwanted apprenticeship and shortly after signed-on for regular service. Now about to leave the army at the age of 47, he mentions as one of his possible future directions a return to his father's firm. Does this show his vulnerability in the face of major change, the strength of his



father's continuing influence, some combination of these factors or another factor entirely?

Mr. Driver's father obtained an apprenticeship for his son in the same large organisation in which he worked himself. Mr. Driver has remained in that industry and it seems that his future lies there. His father's influence extended well beyond the choice of the first job; it was his injunction 'to get myself qualified' (18a) which has become one of the driving forces of his son's life (50b). Mr. Driver also leaves the strong impression that he has used his father as a model and a point of reference (1b, 17b) and that his father, in his turn, also makes comparisons with his son (1b). Indeed, the relationship between them in the present seems clouded by such comparisons so that the father, now retired, is 'on the defensive' about his son's achievements and Mr. Driver seems anxious to play down any suggestions of his own success (301b).

Mr. Hampden's father has also played a continuing part in his son's 'career'. Initially (3b), he postponed his signature on the documents giving his permission for the 15-year old boy to enlist until they were at the railway station for the departure. Since that time, however, his friendly advice has been listened to (13b) and his example as a person who has made a 'mid-career change' (126b) has been noted by his son. There is also the hint that Mr. Baldwin compares himself unfavourably with his father, who surpassed his son's rank in the army.

These examples tentatively suggest that the father's influence over the son, strongly felt in the boy's youth, still exists in his 'middle age'.

### c. The early stirring of the self concept

Mr. Stephens, it will be recalled, was sent into the army rather than into teaching after his father died. He comments

'I never regret being in the army, but I still think that the army trained me for just what they wanted (...) I probably was in the unfortunate situation of the war and the aftermath of war - but I don't think I developed my full potential. (...) people kind of mentally adjust themselves to the situation (...) it's up to the individual to take advantage of the (army) system (...) I've been made aware of life and the potential simply because of my particular (...) job'.

Like Mr. Dickens (218a,b ff.) he apparently did not 'look across over the horizon' as a boy but, also like Mr. Dickens, he has since discovered that he has unexplored potential. This experience contrasts with that reported by others, in whose early reactions to their opportunity structure or to their father's pressures the stirring of their self concept is already felt. Mr. Hampden's story suggests that he resisted his father's moral pressure and made the 'traumatic' break from home (5a) because 'I didn't fancy myself as a farmer's boy' (3-4a). Mr. and Mrs. Jackaman took living-in jobs in their teens to escape unhappiness at home (45b). Despite the pressure of school and, indeed, of objective examination results, Mr. Bolton (9b) still clung to his early concept of himself (5b) and persisted (with perhaps some modification towards greater realism, 243b) until he finally achieved professional status.

Super (1957) notes that in the maintenance stage of 'career' achievements have to be carefully preserved; where there is no achievement the self concept 'nags'. 'Nagging' seems an appropriate expression for the early stirrings of the self concept which prised some of these men out of uncongenial situations formed by exogenous pressures in their youth. Others, like Mr. Dickens and Mr. Stephens, seem to have repressed their early need to discover and express themselves: this is now emerging vigorously in 'mid-life' (Mr. Dickens, 96b). It is almost as if they developed an underground resistance to the constraints of their life which awaited the time when it could erupt and allow them to escape. For some, this time came earlier than for others; perhaps the precipitating circumstances arose earlier (Mr. Roberts) or the self concept was sturdier (Mr. Jackaman)? It is clear, though, that considerable energy is needed to achieve this expression of self (see Mr. Dickens, 96b): the generation of that energy suggests that the task is of crucial importance to the integrity of the individual.

### 3. The early working-life

This section discusses what the interviews suggest are the salient issues in the men's 'career' during their early working years. The exogenous factors of the opportunity structure and the other domains of life appear to have continued to exert a strong influence upon it, while some interviews suggest further instances of the nagging of the self concept during this period.



a. The opportunity structure

The interviews suggest that rapid movement between jobs during these early years was common (see Mr. Southwell, 5a,b). This is to some extent explained by a factor now mentioned which adds to the original pressures: the need to earn more money. Even some who had not mentioned financial problems during childhood now focus upon them as they look back upon their early adult years when they married and started a family.

Mr. Jordan had known poverty from childhood. He relates some of the humiliations it made him suffer during his early working and courting years: he felt some were so degrading that he waived his National Service exemption and joined the army. On its completion he married and again desperately needed money. His only interest in his job, he says, was in making money: 'when they took that away (because of a union dispute over piece-work), there was no longer interest'. He could not persuade his wife to agree to him enlisting as a regular soldier: it took over five years of financial struggle to overcome her resistance.

Mr. Bedford, struggling to maintain his family, borrowed to buy himself, though reluctantly, out of the services early. Thereafter 'I always went for jobs with more money': as a milkman ('all I was doing was chasing money everywhere'), as a labourer ('not doing what you wanted to do, but just doing wherever the money ...'). Eventually, he found a job he enjoyed, but still did as much overtime as possible, earning himself the nick-name 'the seven day man'. He left that after a dispute over a promised pay increase.

Mr. Dickens enjoyed (58-60a, 59b) one job during this period but

'... left that because I went for more money again, which has always been the crock at the end of the rainbow'.

Mr. Southwell says (23a,b ff.) of the same period

'... all we thought of was - we had no money - (...) to keep warm. (...) always poor (...) up to here in hire purchase'.

Another factor which the men seem to have perceived as a constraint during these early years was the lack of educational qualifications. While this is discussed later when examining the nagging of the self concept, it is noted here as further illustration of the effect of the

opportunity structure and of one response to it. The pursuit of education, qualifications and appropriate occupational experience can be interpreted as the desire to escape some of the constraints of the opportunity structure or to achieve goals, such as professional status, which fall outside it. The effort, at times fanatical, which some must have exerted in this pursuit suggests that the limitations or barriers were perceived as very real and very strong and that the need to overcome them was very significant to them; it also highlights the expenditure of energy in the implementation of the self concept. Thus it can be interpreted as confirming both the 'reality' of the opportunity structure for those men and the strengthening of their self concept.

Compared with the interest and pleasure in their more recent jobs which many men express (see Mr. Southwell, 100b), during this period is apparent in the interviews. The pressures which pushed them into their first jobs and drove them between subsequent jobs may have developed in them an instrumental attitude to work at that time, as was noted by LaBuda (1974), Neapolitan (1980) and Robbins (1977); or for some reason they may not have referred to such satisfaction in the interview.

Many of the motives for job change during this period can, thus, be interpreted as influenced by the opportunity structure, so that this study seems to support Roberts (1977, p.3) in his assertion that

'neither school-leavers nor adults typically choose their jobs in any meaningful sense: they simply take what is available'.

#### b. The demands of the other domains of life

In remembering their jobs during this period, many men tell how their new family responsibilities influenced their work-life and introduced pressures from outside their occupation. There are several references, for example, to the way a wife's needs or her demands upon her husband influenced the decisions he made about his job. Mr. Jordan's wife (7b, 9a) did not want him to re-join the army and he thus postponed doing this but continued to 'blame' her (12a, ff., 116a); Mr. Bedford bought himself out of the services because his wife was unable to manage the family on his wages; Mr. Bolton (79b) could not accommodate the demands of job, family life and evening study and so left his job.



At the same time there are instances of the demands of the occupation influencing the personal life: Mr. Gilbert says

'... if you're serious about your service career, marriage is not going to be any help (...) more or less dismissing marriage as a serious option entirely as a 20- to 30-year old.'

This meant that he did not marry until he was in his late 30s and his children were born when he was in his 40s, just before the present phase of change began. He thus now faces a heavier financial burden than that of Mr. Dickens (128b) and Mr. Jordan (119b), who mention the lessening of the financial pressures from the family in the coming years.

At times some of the men apparently judged the demands of the occupational domain as of lesser importance than other demands. Despite struggling to enter a profession, at this stage of his working-life (62b) Mr. Bolton nevertheless moved jobs to be near his fiancée: 'it was of little consequence where I was: anywhere would have done.'

The cumulative effects of the opportunity structure and the various domains of life may have placed some of the men under stress. Certainly, Mr. Bolton speaks (79a,b) as though he was under great pressure at this time. Some, like him and Mr. Bedford, moved jobs to cope. This adjustment seems to have achieved a balance between the various domains of their life. Mr. Bolton epitomises (72a ff.) the striving for this balance during these years, while Mr. Driver (see 120a,b ff.) exemplifies it during his 30s. The degree of personal satisfaction they achieved then, however, is not known: this will be referred to again below. The interviews do not show whether other men made other adjustments and, if so, of what kind. Certainly some were later to experience marital problems, for six of the men interviewed were divorced or separated. Others had persistent or considerable health problems during these early years.

### c. The nagging of the self concept.

Although, as suggested above many of the men apparently achieved an

acceptable balance in their life during these years it was, perhaps, at the cost of suppressing their own personal needs and making 'satisficing' or 'good enough' decisions. Mr. Jordan long blamed (7b) his wife for preventing him from doing what he wanted. Mr. Bedford talks of 'not doing what you wanted to do, but just doing wherever the money ...', '... then marriage comes along', says Mr. Dickens more wistfully still (112-3a). 'So you put the dreams to the background, carry on with reality'.

However, just as some of the boys had listened to the nagging of their self concept when they left school, so also during the early working years its voice is heard and heeded by some. Mr. Scott made his escape through war service. Mr. Luke, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Roberts who had initially bowed to their father's authority escaped through National Service from a situation which jarred with their sense of self (see Mr. Dickens, 30b), though apparently not without cost to their family relationships. Since their father's plans for them were perhaps intended to liberate them from the opportunity structure, their evasion of those plans perhaps demonstrates that their need for autonomy was felt to be greater at that time than their need for such liberation. Perhaps the shackles have to be worn in order to be understood?

The nagging of the self concept perhaps also fuelled the desire for education during these years which some of them mention. Mr. Southwell, for example, whose grave financial exigencies have already been noted, talks of his strong desire to learn (11a,b; 31-2a). As a young adult, he says (27-8a), 'I was willing to accept apprentice wages to learn a trade'. Mr. Bolton and Mr. Driver both pursued professional qualifications fanatically. Mr. Bolton's concern for them and for appropriate experience dictated several of his occupational moves (83b); one such change proved advantageous to him (118b) whereas another had unhappy results (191b). Mr. Driver (50b) studied tenaciously over a period of about 13 years; he saw qualifications as a means of overcoming 'limitations' (251b). This behaviour seems to have demanded unflagging expenditure of energy and, as already noted, this seems to suggest the crucial nature of this task for these men: its centrality to their sense of self.



#### 4. The subsequent working-life

In this section the discussion of the influence of the exogenous and endogenous factors upon the men's 'career' is interrupted in order to focus upon some of the changes and turning-points in their working-life before an examination is made of the present phase of change. The section is supplemented by an outline in Chapter Fourteen of some of the factors which contributed to these changes. The earlier discussion is resumed in Chapter Fifteen, where several cases are noted in which the men seem to have strengthened their self concept and, through this, revised their response to the environment. A typology of such responses is also proposed there.

##### a. Changes in their working-life

While many men report initial rapid movement between jobs, most tell how they subsequently settled down into some kind of steady occupational progression (the soldiers can chart it in some detail) and started to construct for themselves a future which released them from their early pressures or provided their children with a passport to escape from the toils of the opportunity structure. A few had made a steady progression from the very beginning, while others, to the time of the interview, apparently none. All of them, however, report changes of various kinds and in the several domains of life over the years: some moved abroad, for a period or permanently; some experienced marital problems and divorce; ill health or accident; family tragedies like the death of a wife or daughter. At times they note the effect of such experiences upon their occupational life: divorce influenced one man's decision to leave the army; another says of his accident

'I was going up that particular ladder (...) what I've done is transferred to another ladder and for a time I stayed level or slightly below what I was before ... but in time I have opened up an even higher ladder'.

Many men also experienced considerable changes within their occupations. Those who joined (or re-joined) the army in their later 20s or left the regular forces before the present transition (there were such men among

the mature students and ... PER trainees) experienced a major change of industrial and often occupational field. In his 30s Mr. Luke moved to a field which called for lengthy and demanding training. Mr. Bolton and Mr. Dickens were made redundant; others found their jobs affected by major organisational changes; Mr. Homer was affected by a company take-over; Mr. Bolton by major re-organisation. Many changed jobs and others, like Mr. Driver, employers.

Even within the same organisation they experienced changes, such as the gradual promotion through the army hierarchy (Mr. Scott, 10b) through established and recognisable stages (Mr. Baldwin, 20b). Other men describe lateral as well as vertical movement. Mr. Stephen's promotion was 'a complete change of job'; Mr. Jackaman (67a,b) tells how he chose to move from a trade to an administrative job. Mr. Hampden was posted into a new job

'I didn't want to go into that job (...) I kept thinking I'll get out of doing this because I don't think I can tolerate it (...) After about a month I quite enjoyed it.'

Mr. Morgan had a similar experience

'... it would be an effort to get into the frame of mind to do it and it did take me a long time (...) two or three years (...) I was able to adopt the attitude "well, it won't last forever; I'll soon enter another phase" (...) you take on so many different walks of life in the army that you are not bored for long'.

Of a new job Mr. McMillan says 'A whole new world was opened up to me and it was fantastic.' Mr. Lipton's job changed as the industry in which he worked was computerised.

With these objective changes in their occupational life, it could be supposed that the men also experienced a gradual modification of their perception of their environment and of themselves and perhaps also a strengthening of the self concept: they experienced change subjectively. At the same time they would have developed expectations about their future self and circumstances; some of the decisions about the other



domains of their life, such as marriage, house and children's education, would have been taken on the basis of these expectations.

This is largely conjecture but, nevertheless, supported by the accounts of some of the men such as Mr. Scott's (10a,b ff.). It is also clear that some of the soldiers developed expectations about their future: while for some, such as Mr. Jordan, it seems that future promotion was largely a dream (38a ff.), it was firmly expected by Mr. Baldwin (160a ff.) and Mr. Hampden (139a). They had known no other work-life outside the army and saw every evidence of future progress within it. Others, aware that major changes had to come in the future, started to develop plans - or expectations - for that future. Mr. Jackaman says (28a, b) 'the seed had already been planted'.

#### b. Turning-points in their working-life

While the men had experienced major changes in both their occupation and their life during the years which preceded the present transition, they wasted little colourful description upon many of those past events and apparently did not wish to convey them as traumas. For example, of his return into the army Mr. Jordan remarks that it was 'a nice sort of change' and that he had 'a nice modern house, loads of friends'.

There were, however, other changes of which they spoke as though they had been significant events or turning-points in their life. Unlike Musgrove and Middleton (1981, of whose study I was unaware at the time), I did not ask the men to identify such turning-points. I have thus to infer from the language and imagery of their stories whether they construe certain changes as turning-points: the colour, clarity and impact of some of the memories recorded below suggest that in these cases they are talking of critical incidents.

Some of the men refer to certain events in what are perhaps only clichés, but they nevertheless apparently use them to convey sudden and traumatic change. Mr. Bedford refers to an incident at work which opened the way for new prospects as 'the turn of the tide'; Mr. Paddington says of his exploration of possible jobs that 'suddenly things came together'; Mr. Roberts calls a promotion 'an incredible turning-point - my life hinged on it'; of his return to the army, Mr. Southwell

says that 'it was like starting again at 30'. Other memories are related as dramatic events and recalled with immediacy. Mr. Lipton's '... until we had a young man come ...' marks the end of an era in his job and the onset of problems for him. Mr. Thomas recalls

'I can honestly remember - it's as true as I'm sitting here - of the straw that broke the camel's back. I was driving the early morning van - on a Tuesday morning - I remember so well (...) made an appointment to go that evening at six o'clock - I remember it so well.'

So it was that, 18 years, before he had given up his job and enlisted in the army.

Sometimes such turning-points they attribute to chance. 'I will tell you a story which is perfectly true', says Mr. Bolton (24a ff.) of a chance event which opened a new occupational direction for him. He is echoed by Mr. McMillan speaking of a chance meeting with a friend

'...it was quite, quite fortuitous ... If I am absolutely honest, I don't think I'd even thought about (that sort of work). It was a surprise and a joy ...'

Some of these turning-points, though dramatic, no doubt evolved from a gradual accumulation of change and were, as in Mr. Thomas's case, precipitated by some 'straw'. Whereas gradual change allows a gradual modification of perception of self and the environment, it might be expected that the abrupt change sometimes implied would require either rapid re-adjustment or a period of reorientation, a transformation of identity in Strauss's term (1969, pp. 93-100). Only Mr. Roberts indicated that he had experienced this: speaking of his accident he says 'I got myself into a fantastic depression' and 'I suddenly matured'. Many men, however, as Chapter Thirteen shows, experience problems of adjustment in the present phase of change.

### c. The start of the present phase

This section examines the start of the present sequence of change which, it was suggested earlier, often preceded the present transition.



Having so far examined the process of 'career' as the context of the present change, this chapter is thus now focussing upon the topic of this study, 'mid-career change'.

As has just been shown, life for most of the men continued in 'troughs and waves' (Mr. Dickens, 277a). After the experience of many changes and some turning-points, the present sequence seems to have opened in a similar way: the natural ending of an organisational 'career'; accident or illness; redundancy or imminent redundancy. Some relinquished their job because they no longer wanted to continue along its particular path; others because they wanted to gain new experiences or to invest in education. One man relates his decision to make such a change as though it were a turning-point 'One day I was coming to work (...) and I suddenly thought ...'

These changes, objectively, do not seem to be markedly different in kind from those reported in earlier periods. However, the subjective experience which some of the men now relate suggests that they have experienced or are experiencing a major change and have thus entered a new phase in their 'career'. As Chapter Thirteen demonstrates, these men are experiencing a major dislocation in their assumptive world, for the predominant characteristics of their present seem to be ontological insecurity and a struggle to achieve a new sense of self and their environment.

For example, Mr. Dickens's response to his illness is more than a struggle to regain occupational and economic viability: he speaks (96b, 136/2b) as though he is also struggling to hold on to his sense of self and to express it in his dealings with his environment. As the next chapter will show, the change in Mr. McMillan's job is undermining his confidence while making him perceive his environment in a new way. Mr. Jordan describes how he recognised the approach of the date for him to leave the army with shock and disbelief; his scheduled and, one might have thought, expected leaving date prompted a crisis. Unaware of the passage of time (89b), he was unprepared for thoughts of leaving (26a,b ff.) until he 'suddenly realised'. As the commentary on Mr. Baldwin's interview shows (79b), he, Mr. Ellis and Mr. Hampden had woven for themselves (apparently abetted by the army, 138b) a web of future expectations well beyond their scheduled leaving

date. The recognition that such a future would never materialise came as the 'thunderbolt' (37a) described in the next chapter: Mr. Baldwin is left struggling to establish a new and coherent view of himself and his world (73b, 106b, 165a).

The man who perceives himself as virtually drafted into the present transition describes his experience of it in a way that suggests that he may not be experiencing major change. The transitional state has been imposed on the course of his life and does not reflect his subjective experience. The apparent absence of trauma in his account highlights the painful and confusing experiences of others. As Chapter Thirteen and to some extent Chapter Fifteen will show, the present pre-occupations of some of the men are not primarily or exclusively concerned with jobs, though they clearly affect the achievement of occupational change. Their experience of dislocation, their struggle to achieve a new sense of self, a new and coherent perception of the environment and hence a new transaction between the two, points to the passing of a phase in which they had known some stability and coherence. While it is impossible in this study to elaborate upon that earlier experience of coherence or to identify the earlier phases of their 'career' (which may well have been inaugurated by some of the changes outlined in the last section), the reported experiences of the present suggest that some of the men have undergone a critical change. According to the definition stipulated at the start of the chapter, a new phase of their 'career' has begun.

#### 'Mid-career change' viewed as a phase in the process of 'career'

##### 1. Insights into the present phase of the 'career'

Much of the research reviewed in Chapter Seven adopted a snapshot approach to 'career change', seeing it as an objectively identifiable event, describable in terms of the degree of or the reasons for the change. By contrast, I have sought to locate the men's present experiences within a dynamic and holistic model of 'career'. The emphasis of this study is thus upon continuity rather than upon disjunction although this, as the topic of Chapter Thirteen, is not neglected. The focus of the study, as the sections above and Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen show, is upon the context of the evolving 'career':



however significant the changes experienced, the 'career' continues into the future. Emphasis is also placed upon the interaction of exogenous and endogenous factors. It is thus accepted that the pattern of each 'career' is necessarily idiosyncratic and that the individual seeks a satisfactory balance between the pressures of self and of the world rather than, as postulated in other research, some normative state. Chapter Fourteen examines this interaction and traces the intertwining of the several 'careers' (domains) of the individual's life. Finally, this research has paid particular attention to the men's subjective experience; this allows the identification of the ontological insecurity examined in Chapter Thirteen which is taken to indicate the measure of the significance of the experiences of some of the men.

The difference between the approaches of the other 'career change' research and this study parallels Johnson's (1977, pp. 77-8) distinction between research concerned with 'problems' and 'significant transitions and climacterics' and his preferred biographical approach which emphasises subjectivity and uncovers 'the conditions of change as opposed to objectivity and causality'. The results of each approach have to be recognised as the artefacts of that approach and of the methods it requires.

What insights, then, does the particular perspective of this study offer into the present sequence of the men's 'career'? The subjective experiences of some appear to be those of dislocation and so mark the beginning of a new phase in their 'career'. Many of their pre-occupations reported in Chapter Thirteen are not solely concerned with the objective realities of their occupational life, but with their search for a new interpretation of self and the world. This opens the door for new directions in their 'career' and influences how they make the occupational change.

Secondly, this study suggests that the dislocation results from the breakdown of the earlier transaction between exogenous and endogenous factors; many of their concerns discussed in Chapter Thirteen can be interpreted as their attempt to negotiate a new transaction. This present chapter has noted the tension and transactions between self and the environment in all the earlier periods of the 'career' of some of

the men. Indeed, the origin, nature and direction of their 'career' seems to have been powerfully influenced by their socio-economic background and opportunity structure. As Chapter Fourteen also shows, these initial pressures, augmented later by those from newly-acquired domains, continue through their early working years until the present. Nevertheless, even from the start of their 'career' or at various points along it, some of the men demonstrate that their self concept has so nagged them that they questioned, modified, re-defined or rejected those pressures. In each succeeding period the constraints and their responses to them appear in somewhat different configurations, leaving in Chapter Fifteen the overall impression of the strengthening of the self concept over time and the lessening of the power of the opportunity structure over the individual. (Because the process is examined within the imposed framework of the periods, it might appear to move in a uniform manner and at a constant rate. As the transcripts of the interviews show, however, these issues are interwoven like threads whose tension and texture change over time so that the resulting pattern is individual to each man.) Many of the present experiences, however, demonstrate a collapse of the transaction between self and the world and a struggle to negotiate another.

There is a further insight into the start of the present phase of change. It cannot be adequately defined as the movement from one occupation to another. It is rather the movement from one occupation through a phase of dislocation and re-adjustment into another occupation; from one stable state through dislocation into another stable state. It is not a single, unitary event. The start of the phase is a transition with its own sub-phases: first the ending of the earlier transaction, then re-adjustment and negotiation and finally the establishment of a new and comfortable balance between exogenous and endogenous pressures. Chapter Thirteen identifies these sub-phases as severance from the past and activity in the present; none of the men interviewed has yet fully achieved the new balance. (None of the sub-phases is co-terminous with the objective transition in which the interview took place; they are identifiable only in terms of subjective experience.) The nature of this transition suggests that it would be effectively examined in terms of a status passage (Turner, 1974; see Chapter Thirteen).



With this recognition of the nature of the start of the phase comes the awareness of the different degrees of significance that occupational change can have and of the different roles it can play. It can precipitate the breakdown of the transaction (as in the cases of Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Hampden) or it can result from that breakdown (Mr. Dickens's world was shattered by illness). This distinction between causal change and consequential could probably be elaborated further, though not on the basis of these interviews drawn from primarily occupational populations. For example, even where occupational change may have precipitated the breakdown, the focal area of dislocation may be in another domain, the occupational change having only a secondary significance. This could be the case when an occupational change involves geographical mobility resulting in marital problems which become the focus of the experience of dislocation. The particular significance of the change for any individual will influence the way it is handled.

It can thus be concluded that the reasons for leaving the former job can be independent of those for entering the new. The recognition of these two factors (cf. Herzberg, 1966) contributes another dimension to the complexity of 'career change' recognised by researchers who identified other independent factors ('push'/'pull', Haug and Sussman, 1970; pressures from self and environment, Murray, Powers and Havighurst, 1971).

This is an exploratory study. Because of the nature of its topic and the methods available to it in its particular circumstances, the conclusions of this and the other chapters of Phase Three must be regarded as tentative. Yet the insights they yield, very different from those of the research outlined in Chapter Seven, seem to have considerable intrinsic interest and major implications for research, theory and counselling.

## 2. The 'broken truce' hypothesis of 'career'

One particular outcome of the insights derived from this processual perspective is a hypothesis concerning the nature of 'career': that it results from the individual's negotiation of a precarious truce between self and the world. When changes emanating from either self or the environment cause that truce to be broken, the individual experiences a sense of dislocation. To reduce the discomfort and retrieve

the lost balance between exogenous and endogenous factors, the individual has to make various adjustments to self and/or environment and so negotiate a new truce. This might involve a revision of the interpretation of self and/or the environment in the light of the changed circumstances as well as a possible change to self and/or the world. Where occupational change is involved, either in the breaking of the truce or in establishing a new agreement, then a new phase opens in the process of 'career' and with it the possibility of a new direction. Hence 'career' is a sequence of transitional and relatively stable phases created by the individual's response to the interaction of exogenous and endogenous factors.

According to this hypothesis, it is impossible to frame a normative pattern of 'career' development or to calibrate it with age or social roles. It is influenced by a wide range of factors so that a comprehensive theoretical model (which will be necessarily general and abstract) is needed to explain it. This will be noted again at the end of this chapter and discussed fully in Chapter Eighteen.

The experiences of some of the men, as outlined in the next chapter, suggests that, the earlier truce having failed, they have entered a new phase of their 'career' and are negotiating a new agreement. The ending of the army 'career' (Mr. Baldwin), accident (Mr. Bedford), illness (Mr. Dickens) or the desire 'to prove something' (Mr. Driver): the breakdown occurred because exogenous or endogenous changes disturbed the balance between self and the environment. The degree to which they experience dislocation depends perhaps upon the strength and coherence of their sense of self. Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Dickens with a somewhat fragile sense of self (for whatever reason) may be suffering greater threat from the disequilibrium than Mr. Driver and Mr. Jackaman, who appear to have a more robust sense of self. Some seem to be trying to negotiate a new truce which will lead to a new occupation. Mr. Baldwin strives for a new interpretation of his world which will restore a coherent sense of self; Mr. Dickens struggles to ensure that his emerging sense of self is unconfined by the definitions of others.

This hypothesis, it must be conceded, is grounded in the experiences of only a few of the men interviewed, though it offers a coherent interpretation of them. It suggests that the dislocation they suffer has



been experienced by all in varying degrees in the past, though the interviews offer little or no evidence of this. Perhaps such experiences have been forgotten, or blocked out by the present painful experience; or perhaps my questions did not elicit this information. The hypothesis (or hypothetical notion) has clearly to be examined in other research. Meanwhile, the experience of dislocation is captured in Chapter Thirteen before it vanishes from memory and the negotiation of change in Chapter Sixteen.

### 3. The value of the concepts of 'career change' and 'mid-career change'

To what extent are the concepts of 'career change' and 'mid-career change' of use in the understanding of the experiences of the men interviewed? This study does not conform to the conventional view of a linear occupational 'career' in which 'career change' is perceived as a deviation from the established path into a new direction. Rather it sees the 'career' as the result of continuing and perhaps often minor adjustments within the several domains of life to changing exogenous and endogenous pressures. While it agrees with the research reviewed in Chapter Seven in recognising the considerable significance of such experiences of change, it has to conclude that the terms 'career change' and 'mid-career change' are powerless to indicate the nature of that significance. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, it is difficult to make an objective identification of 'career change' for even when objective criteria are used they may not ensure that the people they identify undergo the same experience. Furthermore, this chapter shows that the experiences which mark the significant changes for the individual are subjective rather than objective. It is thus impossible to categorise people as 'career changers' for any purpose other than a very superficial one. It is also arbitrary, the study suggests, to restrict the view of 'career change' to the occupational domain. As in Mr. Driver's case (120a,b), occupational considerations are closely intertwined with others. The term 'career change', therefore has little value for description or explanation. 'Mid-career change' has no greater value, although, as Chapter Seventeen shows, the expectations and experience of being 'middle-aged' contribute to some of the anxieties of the present.

Instead of approaching adult 'careers' in a rapidly changing world through

the concept of 'mid-career change', therefore, this chapter concludes that greater understanding would be obtained by regarding any change in the individual's life, whether in the occupational or other domains, which breaks the truce between exogenous and endogenous factors as likely to lead to a new phase of the occupational 'career'. As Chapter Thirteen shows, this can be effectively conceived in terms of a psychosocial transition or a status passage, so that a struggle to refine the concept of 'career change' becomes unnecessary.

### Implications for research, theory and counselling

#### 1. Research

Despite the in-built constraints noted in Chapter Ten upon the attempt to examine the process of 'career' and the men's subjective experience of change, this study, nevertheless, yields many insights into the nature and negotiation of occupational change and offers substantial comments upon existing theoretical approaches. It would, therefore, be valuable for future research to examine the issues raised in this and the later chapters, using appropriate methods, with perhaps different populations (including women) and perhaps larger numbers. This section will, therefore, note some of the implications for both the method and the content of future research indicated by this chapter. Some of the points made are not only relevant to research sharing the same epistemological base as that of this study but also to studies which might adopt different assumptions like many of those reviewed in Chapter Seven.

This chapter suggests that enormous value would accrue to the development and use of an appropriate method for the study of process, that is, without employing the normative framework implicit in the concept of development. Appropriate means to study subjective experience must also be explored if it is intended to account for the endogenous factors such as changes in the self concept and if there is to be any understanding of the phenomenal or transcendental 'career' and its relationship with the substantive 'career'.

Notwithstanding the problems which were outlined in Chapter Five, longitudinal research seems to be the most appropriate for the study of



changes over time, whether or not it is intended to seek the subjective dimension of change. To follow some of the leads offered by this chapter, a longitudinal study could attempt to trace the process of the individual's 'career' in terms of the changing transaction between self and the environment; to examine the power of the original opportunity structure over the individual and its change over time; changes in the self concept; and changes in the individual's response. It could examine the value of the broken truce hypothesis, whether recurrent dislocations occur and, if so, what their effect is upon the individual's 'career'. This approach would also be able to encompass a study of the many issues identified by Chapters Thirteen and Sixteen concerning the experience and management of change.

The study of subjective experience poses a different set of problems for research method. The form of textual analysis adopted in this study, which is based on a model of literary criticism is, though effective, very time-consuming. It may, therefore, not be feasible in other research studies. Kelly's personal construct theory (1955) offers a sound theoretical framework for future research and repertory grid (when used according to the principles of that theory) a useful and acceptable method. This could be incorporated into a longitudinal study.

Future research specifically into 'career change' will have to grapple with the problems of its definition and identification. This chapter points to the virtual impossibility of making an objective identification. Objective criteria may be unable to identify a homogeneous population whose members are undergoing the same stage or degree of occupational change; the observer may not be able to locate individuals undergoing significant change, for the nature and start of that change are largely defined in subjective terms. Moreover, there can be a discrepancy between the observer's and the actor's perception of job change. For example, while to the observer Mr. Bolton's many job changes may have appeared, if not 'floundering', then largely unsystematic, to him (112a,b) they were purposive: to get qualifications and to maintain his professional experience. However, although his intention, may have been later subjectively valid, his decisions and thus the moves he made were poor. Mr. Luke and Mr. Morgan left 'good' jobs, probably secure and upwardly mobile jobs, because of their need to flee from a job and a situation which was inconsistent with their self concept.

This chapter raises a further question about the validity of the concept of 'career change'. The earlier research studies assumed that the putative 'career change' was qualitatively different from 'job change' (for example, Murray, Powers and Havighurst, 1971, p. 5, quoted in Chapter Three). Although many of the changes the men of this study had experienced would have been defined as 'career change' according to the criteria of other researchers listed in Chapter Three, the term 'career change' is only used twice in the interviews. The reasons for this may well stem from the nature of my questions rather than from the men's perceptions but, until the matter is elucidated, it must be the conclusion of this chapter that the supposed phenomenon of 'career change' is problematical. The recognition and articulation of these doubts stem from the exploratory stance adopted by this study and must influence the nature of future research: the definition of the topic area, its research population, the sample therefrom and the research method.

The many issues raised in this chapter but not mentioned or not fully discussed in other 'career change' studies need further investigation in future research. Of particular interest would be an investigation of the significance of exogenous factors upon the 'career': social, political and economic contingencies, the constraints and opportunities raised by the opportunity structure and by the other domains of life; the way people strike a balance between the several domains through, perhaps, a more general study than that of Evans and Bartolomé (1980) who focussed on managers. The apparently strong initial and continuing influence of the father would also be of interest. It could be supposed that such social changes as those in employment and education, in attitudes to authority and discipline, in the roles of the sexes, in child-rearing practices and in the increased availability of 'career' guidance would have moderated the father's influence. However, the influence of both parents upon girls and boys, their influence in a dual 'career' family and the influences upon the children of a family headed by a woman would now be of considerable interest.

Other topics raised by this chapter which call for further research are the broken truce hypothesis and the proposed distinctions between causal and consequential, focal and secondary occupational change. In particular, it would be of value to study the means whereby the



individual deals with the experience of dislocation, makes adjustments in the various domains and, as explored in Chapter Sixteen, negotiates the new truce.

## 2. Theory

In assessing the value of the theories of 'career' for an understanding of the experience of the men interviewed, this chapter reiterates the conclusions reached when reviewing those theories in Chapter Eight. Although many illuminate some aspect of the men's 'career', each tends to have a limited focus and none conceptualises the nature of 'career' in a manner which is adequate to explain the issues discussed in this chapter. In particular, they are unable to conceptualise the range and force and dynamics of the exogenous factors, the social, political and economic contingencies (though some may give recognition to their existence) and they do not embrace the actor's view.

The consonance between this chapter and Chapter Eight on this matter is not remarkable since the nature of the fieldwork was, indeed, partly formed by my earlier evaluation of the literature. The value of this section, therefore, lies not in its support for that evaluation but in its commentary upon the usefulness and limitations of those theories in terms of this British study and its consequent identification of the implications for the further development of 'career' theory.

Those (mainly sociological) theories which assume and investigate the existence of socio-economic and situational constraints upon individual behaviour are valuable to the understanding of this chapter's topic. However, their usefulness is limited by their disregard for the effect of the wider social, political and economic contingencies upon the individual and for the significance of the self concept and by their adoption of the observer's construct alone. The recognition in Super's (1980) 'Life-Career Rainbow' of the pressures from the several domains and the interaction between them evokes the same comment.

Considerable value is also found in the self concept approach to 'career', but its limitation for the purpose of this study lies in its focus on the individual and its consequent inability to conceptualise the exogenous factors except in terms of the individual's response to them.

There is also a tendency at times, noted in both Chapters Eight and Fourteen, to adopt the observer's view of the self concept. It would seem, therefore, that there is a need for a comprehensive theory which would accommodate some aspects of both the situational and the self concept approaches, though as presently formulated these are virtually mutually exclusive.

Perhaps the nature of the study and its focus on subjective experience lessens the potential contribution of many other 'career' theories. They, nevertheless, have some relevance to the men's experience.

The organisational theories and literature particularly illuminate aspects of the soldiers' 'career' such as the nature of the 'total institution' (Goffman, 1968), of organisational timetables (Roth, 1963) and of commitment and the expectation of advancement (Becker, 1960).

The psycho-analytical approach has a particular competence to explain issues such as the generation of energy to initiate and sustain the process, the influence of the father on the son's choice of 'career', the experience of dislocation and the individual's response to it. However, not only does this approach ignore the exogenous factors and the actor's view, but the phenomena can be adequately explained by self concept theory, which perhaps has greater value to the study overall.

The life-span development theories, with their normative approach, appear to offer little insight into the men's experiences. For example, their early working-life is not adequately explained in terms of Super's exploration through systematic trial or random 'floundering' in the attempt to implement the self concept; nor of Havighurst's task to acquire the 'identity as a worker'. They did not appear to explore intentionally: whatever most of them learned about themselves, the occupational world and the demands of working-life was probably largely a by-product of their response to the opportunity structure. For many, the prime activity seems to have been concerned with the struggle to become economically independent and then viable as a family unit. Jordaan's (1963) recognition of several dimensions of 'exploration', such as the 'environment-orientated' and the 'other-initiated', seems of greater value.



Because the study did not use a psychometric approach it is limited in the comments it can make about Holland's matching theory. However, it can point again to the adoption of the observer's construct and the neglect of the wider environmental changes and their pressures on the individual as indications of the limitations of this approach and suggest that the men's 'career' is more satisfactorily explained by self concept theory.

The theories concerned with the interaction of exogenous and endogenous factors seem to offer limited insight into the men's experiences as recorded in this study, again because they focus upon that interaction rather than upon the range and nature of the exogenous factors and because they do not encompass the actor's view. Chapter Sixteen notes the relevance of the decision-making approach to the negotiation of change; however, this explains little of the nature and direction of the men's 'career'.

Social learning theory seems to have more to offer to this study, such as an explanation of the father's influence and of the first and subsequent choices of job. Nevertheless, the men's experiences are not completely explicable in its terms. It proposes that a person learns what behaviour to repeat from the effects of previous behaviour. This suggests that those who have already experienced major occupational changes in the past might have learned effective ways of negotiating new changes in the present. This was, indeed, the experience of some of the men interviewed. Mr. Dickens (304a ff.), Mr. Roberts, Mr. Scott and Mr. Southwell (115a,b) have all undergone major changes in the past and are now coping fairly effectively and realistically, though not without some degree of pain or struggle. Similarly, as might be expected from this theory, Mr. Baldwin, who had known no other organisation nor way of life from the age of 16, was finding it difficult to handle the present change (206a,b).

However, contrary to the expectations generated by the theory, so also were Mr. Bolton, who reported nine jobs between National Service and the present interview (302a,b ff.) and Mr. Townley (56a,b), who has worked in several countries overseas and revels (108a,b) in change. At the same time there are others without such a history of change who seem to be managing the present well: Mr. Hampden has worked in the

same organisation (though in different jobs) from the age of 15 (121a ff.); Mr. Jackaman from 21 (110a ff.) and Mr. Stephens from 14. (I have not established criteria for 'coping' or 'not coping', preferring to construe them as cumulative and complex rather than discrete and simple responses. The references given allow the reader to peruse the passages in the interviews upon which my assessments above are based.)

This analysis suggests that, at the level of such gross changes in their working-lives, social learning theory cannot explain their current behaviour. It may, of course, be more illuminating at a more detailed level of investigation than that adopted in these interviews.

The broken truce hypothesis, which emerges from the men's experiences, echoes several other theoretical approaches: those of Festinger (1957), Levinson et al. (1978) and Parkes (1971). (To what extent it emerges directly from the interviews or from my interpretation of the interviews filtered through those approaches cannot be ascertained. What is certain is that it offers a more powerful and coherent interpretation of the men's experiences than either of the former two.)

The experience of the hypothetical breakdown of the truce is similar to the experience of cognitive dissonance as formulated by Festinger, whose concept, as Chapter Eight notes, has been called into use in other 'career' theories. The similarity perhaps ends with the emphasis placed by the hypothesis upon affective and subjective experience, but should nevertheless be investigated further.

The hypothesis is also apparently consistent with the framework of alternating stable and transitional periods constructed by Levinson et al.. Thus, despite the strong reservations expressed in Appendix Three and elsewhere concerning their normative assumptions and their anchoring of those periods to chronological age, the similarities could repay further exploration.

This chapter and the next find the concepts of the psycho-social transition (Parkes) and of the status passage (for example Glaser and Strauss, 1971) of considerable value. On the basis of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), the similarities between the broken truce and the psycho-social transition and between the start of a phase and



status passage suggest that these theories from different substantive areas may be pointing towards a formal theory.

Overall, none of the established theories of 'career' meets the demands which this chapter indicates for a comprehensive and general theory which recognises the contingencies of society, politics and the economy, the nature of the social structure as well as the dynamics of the self concept. The ideal theory, according to this chapter would also take into account the subjective experiences of the actor. Ironically, 'career' theory has perhaps moved away from a more comprehensive to the present narrow-band ('segmental') approach: Super (1981, p. 18) appears to suggest that he has over the years narrowed his earlier broad view of the influences upon the 'career'. In the light of the need identified in this chapter, Chapter Eighteen proposes a new comprehensive theory of 'career'.

### 3. Counselling

The insights of this chapter into the experience of occupational change also have considerable implications for counselling (as defined in the Introduction to Phase Three).

The study's emphasis upon continuity draws attention to the significance of the way in which the individual handles change (examined in Chapter Sixteen). The implications of the broken truce hypothesis for counselling lie in the need to facilitate the development and use of adaptive modes of negotiation.

The recognition of the subjective dimension of 'career' underlines the counsellor's need to be aware of, to respect and if possible (and necessary) gain access to the individual's subjective experience. Moreover, it forces the acknowledgement that the same objective transition may embrace people undergoing very different experiences (such as causal, consequential, focal or secondary occupational changes), who will, therefore, not have identical needs. With a potential discrepancy between their objective and their subjective experiences, the counsellor has to deal with both the making of an objective occupational change and their subjective negotiation of a new truce. As Chapter Fifteen argues, this calls for the improved provision of information about

occupations and the world of work, non-work or unemployment and the availability of counselling to facilitate the strengthening of the fragile and tentative self concept of the school-leaver, and throughout the subsequent 'career'. This may be particularly difficult for the counsellor employed in the setting of an institutional transition, the objective of which is to coach individuals in the skills of rational job-seeking and decision-making.

The counsellor has to recognise and deal with the tensions between exogenous and endogenous factors throughout occupational life and in the various domains; and, further, has to deal with the father's or others' influence. With the increase in the significance of women's 'careers' and in the incidence of 'dual career' couples these tensions and influences become greater.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### The experience of change in 'mid-life'

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### The experience of change in 'mid-life'

#### Introduction

Having examined the process of 'career', the last chapter suggests that some of the men interviewed have entered a new phase. The indications it cites for this are the experiences they are now having of dislocation, of the breakdown of the truce between exogenous and endogenous factors and the negotiation of another. Their present experiences form the topic of this chapter, which also notes the current activities of all the men. It reports upon what they tell of their present and immediate past; their pre-occupations and some of their raw feelings, not yet forgotten nor completely rationalised by the passing of time, though no doubt monitored because told to a stranger. Their accounts give access to what it feels like to be experiencing change in 'mid-life'.

The material upon which this chapter is based is grounded (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in their reported experiences and seen from their, the actors', perspective. That perspective can be seen in full in the transcripts and the commentaries: here their experience of the broken truce will be examined within established conceptual frameworks, the psycho-social transition and the status passage. These have been applied to the presentation of the material, not to its collection for, as Chapter Ten indicates, the study was undertaken in exploratory fashion. These particular frameworks have been used here not only for the structure they afford for the chapter but because they indeed offer considerable insight into the reported experiences. All conceptual structures to some extent 'bruise the reality they seek to represent' (Law, 1981, p. 333). In this instance, the degree of bruising seems slight, for the material seems to lend itself easily to this analysis and, in any case, remains uncontaminated (except by editing) in the transcripts.

There are some features of the frameworks which were not manifested in the interviews as well as some apparently significant points which emerged from them (such as the expenditure of energy) which fall outside the frameworks. These discrepancies do not of themselves invalidate the framework but point to the need for further research into the broken truce

hypothesis. The chapter thus uses the framework loosely and in response to the interview material elaborating, adding to or omitting from it as seems appropriate. By no means did all the men share all of these experiences, but the experience of any man is respected: if it seems significant to him it is noted, for it is thus potentially significant to others.

This chapter will, therefore, first examine the men's experiences as a psycho-social transition and then, briefly, as a status passage. It concludes by noting the implications for research, theory and counselling (the latter term again used as in the Introduction to Volume Two).

#### The broken truce as a psycho-social transition

The last chapter suggests that some of the men are experiencing more than a change of occupation. Their experience of the broken truce appears to be more than the identity strain, the inability to implement the self concept in work discussed by Hayes and Hough (1976, see Chapter Nine). They are undergoing a psycho-social transition, a major dislocation in their assumptive world (Parkes, 1971, pp. 103-4). The assumptive world, as Chapter Nine noted, 'includes our interpretation of the past and our expectations of the future'. As this section shows, this world has been badly shaken. It is for this reason that they have been defined as being in a new phase of the process.

Through the language and imagery they use, many of the men communicate that they feel cut off from their past, uneasy in their present and uncertain of their future. This chapter will convey how they experience the present as an interregnum (a 'vacuum' is how Mr. Bolton describes it, 248a, 'limbo' Mr. Dickens, 127a,b) and will examine the various aspects of their discomfort.

For some of the men, this disjunction from their past and the dislocation of their assumptive world resulted from a change imposed upon them, like redundancy or illness. To such experiences the notion of the psycho-social transition has frequently been applied (Hayes, 1976, pp. 103-17; Parkes, 1971). Here it will also be used of the experiences of some who have experienced a scheduled but unwelcome disjunction. Some like Mr. Bowers and Mr. Driver, who chose to change, do not report such crippling experiences.



Mr. Dickens has experienced both redundancy and an incapacitating physical ailment. He describes (252a ff.) his distress and disorientation

'... getting knocked back with unemployment (...) I went into a bad decline (...) I knew I couldn't keep the job, I was going to lose it (...) everything started to crumble around me then. I thought "I'm in a mess here". (...) It made me very ill (...) in real pain, miserable and depressed.'

In another passage (153-4a,b) he makes it clear that it was his sense of self as well as his world that was under attack; that he has to piece them both together again

'... to re-build my own ego (...), because it's got a bit shattered over the last few years.'

The realisation that, despite the most encouraging signals from his annual reports for several years (47a,b, 153a ff.), he was not going to be promoted further came as a tremendous shock to Mr. Baldwin (32a ff., 79a ff.) He is thus leaving the army on his scheduled leaving-date.

'... at all stages of my promotion; I thought I had it cracked. (...) Then the thunderbolt came (...) my career prospects were strangled (...) like a slap in the face (...) it took about two years to sink in.'

He speaks as though this experience has dislocated his perception of his world; it (the army) no longer seems as predictable and equitable as he has always assumed (4a ff.)

'... I feel that I should have done better than I have (...) They haven't rewarded me in the manner that I feel that I deserve by them.'

Like Mr. Dickens, his sense of self is also fractured (152a ff.)

'Maybe I'm not good enough. (...) that report (...) it was absolutely brilliant. (...) In fact, it wasn't true ... (pause, rather slowly) it's better than I am.'

Mr. Ellis suffered a similar experience and for a similar reason: 'like pulling the ground from underneath you (...) My heart bled.' Although Mr. Hampden does not speak (68a) of a shattered world on reading 'the writing on the wall', the feelings he does express (94a ff.) suggest that this is what he has experienced. Mr. Bolton describes (31b, 103b) several occasions on which he has found that the world is not as he has expected: 'nice promises', 'turned out to be quite different from what was suggested'. This suggests that he has to revise his perception of the world constantly, though he does not speak (129a) of this in dramatic terms, but as 'disappointment' and 'getting very disillusioned'.

One of the experiences of the present phase for these men is, therefore, the dislocation of their assumptive world and the disorientation of themselves in it.

#### Negotiating the new truce: re-structuring their assumptive world

Parkes (1971, p. 102) writes of the individual's need 'to restructure' the assumptive world which has been overturned by the psycho-social transition. 'Old patterns of thought and activity must be given up and fresh ones developed.' Earlier assumptions which are redundant are now reviewed, perhaps abandoned; new assumptions evolve, are tried out and are eventually incorporated into a new picture of the world.

This section examines some aspects of this restructuring, the negotiation of a new truce looking first at the men's severance from their past, their view of the future, changes in their sense of self and their dealings in the present. Chapter Sixteen outlines some of the means whereby the negotiation is conducted.

#### 1. Severance from their past

Much of the distress and discomfort which the men say they experience in the present may be caused by the painful process of severance from their past. Once again, Parkes's (1971) ideas seem appropriate to explain their feelings, for these can be interpreted as an expression of their response to loss: they are grieving (or grieving in anticipation) for their lost past and for their lost future. The present phase of change involves far more than the mere search for a new occupation.



In discussing the broken truce between the exogenous and endogenous factors, the last chapter identified that several sub-phases could be recognised in the process of severance from the past: that the start of the new phase of the 'career' could itself be regarded as a transition with its own sub-phases. The following section examines one form of conceptualising this transition, while a later section will note the relevance of the (sociological) concept of status passage, which also recognises the sub-phases of transition.

#### a. The grief cycle

Parkes (1971) and others (see Adam, Hayes and Hopson, 1976) have identified a cycle of responses to the experience of loss; its phases seem to follow a sequence from shock and denial through anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, letting go the past, a development of new assumptions about the world and self and a search for the meaning of the experience. Mentioned in Chapter Five this cycle is portrayed in Figure Twelve and discussed in Chapter Nine.

There are indications in the interviews that some of the men have passed, or are still passing, through this cycle of grief. The initial shock has been described in the last section: 'thunderbolt', 'pulling the ground ...' The anger is expressed as 'furious underneath' (Mr. Gilbert); the depression in Mr. Dickens's (263a) 'in real pain, miserable and depressed'. However, it is clear that by the time of the interview he and some of the others are reaching the end of the cycle. He describes (263a ff.) how he 'soon shook out of it' and, though the experience is painful and demanding (96b), he is redefining both himself and his world. Mr. Jordan, too, has accepted the changes in his world and is finding (127a ff.) new interpretations of what has happened.

'And then I thought, well, (...) it's a luck that everything's balanced. (...) I'm working it out pretty well in my own mind.'

Mr. Hampden illustrates (96a ff.) his passage through the cycle

'Cold rage. I was very angry (...) I complained quite bitterly (...) 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 ...'

At times, Mr. Baldwin speaks (87a) as though he, too, has passed through the cycle and let go his past: 'I've got over that now. I'm looking forward to getting out.' At others, his emphatic language and the continuing expression of anger and depression (88-90a, 100a ff.) perhaps betray his regression to some of the earlier phases of the cycle. Perhaps, indeed, the progress of the individual through the sequence of grief responses should be conceived of as a spiral?

#### b. The loss of their past

##### i) loss of their jobs

~~X~~

The men (see Mr. Jackaman, 158b; Mr. Southwell, 100b) talk with warmth or enthusiasm about their jobs: they are about to lose them. Apart from the intrinsic interests of their work, they are losing colleagues, a known organisational structure, mores and system of promotion. In addition, the soldiers are losing their entire way of life as they leave the 'total institution' (Goffman, 1968) of the army. Mr. Baldwin expresses (88-90a; 217a ff.) his imminent loss in this way

'Frankly, without any false modesty, I think they're losing a good bloke. It's as simple as that. A bloke who's dedicated all his life to the army and who's capable of going on (...) (...) you're not talking (of possible future jobs) as enthusiastically as you have done of some of your jobs in the past. (...) because I don't think I'm ever going to find a job that's as good as the one that I've done.'

It is perhaps in response to this sense of loss that some (Mr. Morgan, Mr. Southwell) wish to remain in the army (could a suitable arrangement



be made) and others display anxiety about the need to start afresh in another job (see, for example, Mr. Bolton, 292b; also Mr. Dickens, 92b).

## ii) loss of their identity

Apart from the tangible loss of their job, some may also be grieving for the identity which accompanied it, their former, comfortable selves. This is suggested by the references they make to possible new identities. Mr. Baldwin, as shown earlier in this chapter, seems (152a ff.) aware that his earlier social identity is no longer valid and, as the following section will show, he is now questioning (108-9a) who he is. Mr. Dickens seems also to be aware of the passing of his former identity and the availability of some new ones. He is fearful (169-70a,b) that he will have foisted upon him by the staff of the Rehabilitation Centre an identity which he cannot accept.

'I don't want them to pigeon-hole me because of (his poor command of) Maths. Because I'm not stupid (...) It's just something I've neglected ...' #1

He also rejects (182-3a) another negative identity available to him

'I'm not going into an old cap and pipe. I feel a young man'.  
'too young ... to go cleaning lavatories' (not in transcript)

His responses to such possible new identities suggest that he now has a self concept strong enough to demand appropriate recognition in the world. By contrast, some of the others who also seem to be playing with potential new identities seem to be deliberately abasing themselves by parading jobs and hence new identities which are symbolically degrading and which they would find it demeaning to have. For example, Mr. Morgan refers to the possibility of becoming a postman, Mr. Southwell (91a,b) a dustman and Mr. Baldwin says (101a,b)

'... mentally, I've already started talking about being a postman - I feel like just sitting back and saying to hell with it ...'

It could be that they are punishing themselves and, particularly in

Mr. Baldwin's case, the system which has brought them to this stage. Note his 'mentally': in fact, this is an affective rather than a cognitive response. Another interpretation is offered when their experience is construed as a status passage (see the appropriate section in this chapter), for abasement is observed as an aspect of the liminal phase of some status passages.

### c. The loss of their future

Another loss for which they may be grieving is that of their future: their expectations of the future in their organisation seen from the perspective of their past. This section will also examine some of their other dreams of this future.

#### i) loss of future expectations

Just as in many organisations there may be perceived a predictable sequence of jobs, so for many individuals there may be a parallel sequence of expectations, like those of Mr. Bolton's (31b) 'nice promises'. On the one hand they inspire effort and commitment to the organisation (Becker, 1960) and on the other, as the interview with Mr. Scott suggests (10a ff.), they help frame a future concept of self and hence a sense of continuity from the present to the future; the timetables of Chapter Four.

All the men who suffered major disappointment in promotion (Mr. Ellis, Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Hampden) point to this powerful web of expectations, but its loss is made most explicit by Mr. Baldwin. He reflects (132a ff., 136b, 138b) upon the army's need to maintain a sense of future expectations in the soldier so that he remains effective and enthusiastic ('loyalty', 119a) until the end of his contract. The annual report plays a part in this (47b). In his case, he has long been encouraged by excellent reports ('absolutely brilliant', 159a), which he concludes (165a) must have been fictional: 'it's better than I am'. Now that the true position is revealed, he has lost his future expectations and with them the thread of the continuity of his self into the future is severed. He demonstrates (107a ff.) what painful and vulnerable position this loss leaves him in

'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?'



ii) dreams fulfilled, faded or destroyed

I asked the men about their dreams and ambitions at various points in their life, such as when leaving school or a particular job (see Mr. Dickens, 79-80a). Such questions relate to a very private experience for dreams, like the organisational expectations noted above, reflect the nature of the individual's sense of future self: they project a wished-for self in a wished-for world. The dreams of which they speak have exerted differing degrees of power over them and, not surprisingly, not all the men express or even hint at their most deeply-felt experiences. They speak also of differing degrees of fulfilment; many have felt the fading of their dreams long before the present phase.

'without goals and dreams and hopes there is no longer a sense of future, nothing to work towards, to struggle for.'

Mr. Lipton would agree with Schultz's (1974, p. 10) statement. He dreams of winning the pools.

'I suppose actually a dream is always there. When you realise what life is all about, it's tomorrow that keeps you going.'

He had once told his father that he had everything

' "Have you, son? Well", he said, "you better go up to the undertakers and get a coffin made. (...) If you're contented", he said, "you've got nothing to live for. (...) that is life: you'll always want something better. Your motivation in life is to strive for something better." '

Another man speaks of this renewed striving. He has fulfilled the dream of his early adulthood

'... a small cottage in the country with a small family to people it - and that was a very, very central notion (...) I've got it but there are still other things that I want ... Yes, I would feel that it was a waste of time to have got to this (...) the domestic side of things was the other half.'

The 'domestic side' does not completely express or implement his self concept and he is in conflict because he now has a new dream which concerns

his occupation and the old and the new 'are not entirely compatible as lives'. Now in his 50s, he does not mention that there may not be enough time to realise the new dream.

Another man had the same dream of love in a country cottage. He, too, fulfilled it and it was 'idyllic' until his marriage failed and 'the totality of dreams collapsed'. Later, he says that whereas he once had a long list of things he wanted to do he has done them all and 'there is nothing to put on a new list'. He appears to live very much in the present.

Others describe the dashing of their dreams by the realities of their lives. In childhood, Mr. Dickens had no hope of their fulfilment (81-5a, 103-11a) and in early adulthood (112-3a)

'... marriage comes along (...) So you put the dreams to the background, carry on with reality.'

Mr. Jordan speaks (75b, 108-10a) of his recent hopes of promotion as dreams rather than, as with Mr. Baldwin, expectations. They have gradually faded, 'slipping away' until, he says (75a), 'it's too late for dreams and ambitions now.'

While Mr. Dickens and Mr. Jordan poignantly convey their experiences in terms reminiscent of those used by Brim (1976) and Schultz (1974) and quoted in Chapter Six ('a pervading sense of sadness'), they also indicate that, unlike Mr. Baldwin so far, they have moved on. Mr. Dickens is struggling (96b) to break free of his constraints so that the moratorium on his dreams is perhaps drawing to an end and, even during the course of the interview (117b), Mr. Jordan modulates his approach to end in a more positive vein: 'things worked out right in time.' (127a)

Mr. Baldwin now laughs (15b) at his adolescent ambition. As an adult he dreams (251a ff.) of 'dropping-out' but, compared with his expectations in the army, this seems to be little more than a day-dream and exerts little power over him: it is a refuge rather than a driving-force.

Chapters Five and Six referred to the significance the literature places on the relinquishing of long-held dreams in 'middle age', epitomised by



'the Dream' of Levinson et al. (1978, pp. 245-51). This is a man's

'... personal myth, an imagined drama in which he is the central character ... (it has) intensity ... inspirational qualities.'

The reduction of its tyranny, they write, is a major task of 'mid-life'.

The only experiences related in the interviews which can be interpreted in this way are those of Mr. Bolton and Mr. Driver, both of whom describe long years of fanatical struggle and pursuit, for both were driven by their hunger for professional qualifications and status. In Mr. Bolton's case these seem to have been associated with a desire for social mobility. He wanted to be a doctor when he left school (9b) but later identified a more appropriate profession for himself. His pursuit of the necessary qualifications (83b) seems to have dominated his early adulthood. He speaks (267a ff.) of his present fantasies in very different terms: he seems to have fulfilled 'the Dream' so that it no longer goads him. Mr. Driver's 'Dream' has connotations of autonomy and security (251b). It also dogged his early life (50b) and perhaps has not even yet relinquished its hold upon him (275a ff.).

## 2. Their view of the future

While shaking off their past the men are also exploring their future. Its uncertainty, the awareness of their ignorance, the rapid passage of time and the negative stereotypes of 'middle age' with which they expect to content make this another painful task. The necessity to make a choice adds to the discomfort, to end which some may be tempted to precipitate the end of the phase. This section examines these experiences.

### a. Uncertainty and ignorance about the future

Many articulate the uncomfortable experience of uncertainty about the future, even when the change was expected and scheduled. 'I'm still studying it, working it out', says Mr. Thomas of his future. The discomfort felt spurs some people to action, as will be seen later.

The uncertainty is the greater where there are major issues of self and environment to be resolved: until the individual has a coherent sense

of self and of his changed environment he cannot project himself forward into the future. 'Everything's up in the air', says Mr. Dickens (159a,b ff.), so that he cannot make 'concrete plans' for his future: that is, he cannot act in the present until he has a clearer view of his future. All he can now do is to 'struggle' (178a) to ensure that people do not 'pigeon-hole' him (169a) and so constrain his future.

Ignorance of the future roles they will play and the behaviour required of them therein contributes to this feeling of uncertainty. This is mentioned most forcibly by the soldiers, who face not only occupational change but change in their total life-style. Mr. Stephens speaks of this change as 'one that we'll cope with, no doubt', but others are less sanguine.

Mr. Thomas says that he can 'equate' various jobs within the army structure but lacks the knowledge to do this with civilian jobs. Mr. Hampden expands on this (113a ff.)

'I just can't relate (...) I have done a second careers course (...) 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 future. I don't know their structure.'

As noted earlier in this chapter, Mr. Baldwin (105a ff.) also does not know how to compare himself with civilians ('am I better (...) ?')

'I've never been in Civvy Street, you see, I really don't know what it's like (...) I am frightened (...) Because I don't know what people are going to expect of me ...'

These are the anxieties of men who have spent a life-time in the army, but are probably shared to some extent by all who face an unknown future. (Goffman, 1968, p. 71 writes of 'release anxiety', which he suggests may be explained by a reluctance to re-assume responsibilities in the outside world, by 'disculturation', stigmatisation, or the reluctance to give up inside privileges to start again at the bottom outside. Such explanations seem applicable to several of the soldiers interviewed.)



This section points to the possible discrepancy between the individual's cognitive approach to the future (gaining information) and the affective (feeling unable to evaluate it). The significance of this for counseling will be noted later.

b. Facing choice

I met these men in an institutional transition where, despite such uncertainty and ignorance about the future, they are still faced with choice. Indeed, the provision of information and the teaching of skills to enable them to make an effective choice are the major functions of some of the transitions.

Mr. Stephens speaks positively of the opportunities he perceives and between which he will have to choose

'I'm the fire officer, so I've done fire training; I'm the security officer, so I've done security training (...) I'll use this to my advantage (...) another string to my bow when I do leave'.

Mr. Townley sees (87-8a) the possibility of going on a training course as

'a bridge into my past ... that I could use as a springboard into the future.'

He perceives himself (150-1a,b) as being 'into the branching area (of a tree) (...) I have so many options now.' However, he seems unable to choose between them (155b).

Not all relish this sense of opportunity and choice. Mr. Dickens speaks (160-1a) of being 'between the Devil ...' (without explaining his dilemma). Mr. Baldwin is anguished. He feels he is facing 'a big cross-roads' (12a) which is 'like Spaghetti Junction' (195a). Although 'I have the opportunity for the first time in my life to do something entirely different' (12-13a), 'I haven't got a clue what I want to do' (11a). He is thus unable to evaluate these ambiguous opportunities: he has not yet re-established a coherent view of his world and of himself in it since its recent dislocation. How then can he choose between these many paths? Yet this is what the institution is urging upon him.

c. Awareness of the passage of time and the stereotypes of 'middle age'

Mr. Jordan describes (66-7a, 89a,b) how he was forced to face his future with a jolt

'Then you suddenly realise that he's not young: you're old.'

There is some suggestion that Mr. Dickens (136/1b) and Mr. McMillan are also experiencing a shift in their time perspective. For others, an awareness of the rapid passage of time adds to their difficulties in negotiating a major change in 'mid-life', as Mr. Baldwin shows (201-8a,b)

'...(the Resettlement Officer) he's not talking to a young man any more. (...) I've got 25 years' working-life maximum left (...) I can't afford to mess about with choice (...) the first job I get has got to be the right one. And that's a murderous choice to make.'

Thus the advice 'to work for a firm two or three years and then advance yourself in another company' (200-1a), though sound as a job search strategy in cognitive terms, conflicts with his sense of the fleeting nature of time and his awareness that there are penalties to be paid in job-seeking after a certain age is reached. Others also refer to the negative stereotypes of 'middle age' (some of which will be discussed in a later chapter). They seem to be expressing fear that not only will employers discriminate against them but that they might indeed conform to such stereotypes. Mr. Baldwin (185a) says 'it's a hard business at 40 - starting again'. However, some (Mr. Driver, 268b; Mr. Jackaman, 154b) dismiss these stereotypes and others (Mr. Dickens, 178-9a,b; Mr. Southwell, 107a,b) distinguish between them and their own experience.

d. Discomfort and the desire to hasten its end

As they face the future many of the men convey their sense of the discomfort of the present phase. 'There may be something out there waiting for me - I don't know', says Mr. Thomas, who is 'apprehensive'. Mr. Morgan concludes that



'... it would be unusual if I wasn't anxious (...) I would be foolish if I wasn't that little bit cautious about it.'

Mr. Baldwin is 'frightened (...) trembling' and Mr. Portman 'worried' and 'apprehensive': 'I won't be happy until I've gone through what I think is going to be an agonising time'.

Such discomfort is clearly not conducive to calm and rational decision-making and some of the men perhaps feel a strong inclination to bring the present phase to an end, even though that may be premature. For example, Mr. Jordan says (110b): 'I'd rather say this is it, I've got to go out sometime and make a date of it'. There is some suggestion (204b) that this was once Mr. Bolton's response when he changed a job.

Once Mr. Hampden knew that he would not achieve further promotion (75-6a), he seems to have committed himself to leaving on the scheduled date, even though there is a possibility of the extension of his contract in his present rank (124-7a,b). Like his father in a similar situation (126b), he is 'mentally committed to leaving and planning for the future (...) I've got to go out and I'm going out'. He concludes (133-5a) that it is better to make a start on a civilian ladder.

This inclination to conclude the present phase, perhaps experienced by people who have a short time perspective, may either impair decision-making, for the long-term benefits of staying may be overlooked, or it may precipitate effective action.

### 3. Their changing self concept

It was suggested above that some of the men may be mourning their past selves. The interviews also indicate that some perceive that they have changed in the past and that some seem to be changing now in response to their changed assumptive world. This section examines these aspects of change and notes the importance of a positive self concept in the negotiation of environmental change. It concludes by relating the expenditure of energy noted in the interviews to changes in the self concept.

a. Past changes in their self concept

Some of the men speak of the changes they have seen in themselves in response to their past situations. Both Mr. Stephens (whose awakening awareness of his potential was noted in the last chapter) and Mr. Thomas attribute their change to their jobs. Mr. Thomas says that he has mellowed

'I think your development (...) I know mine personally has - changes because you have to adapt yourself to situations (...) when you get there your personality changes completely (...) The job changes you.'

Mr. Bolton seems to have developed a self concept more compatible with his experiences of life. Starting with what was perhaps an unrealistic assessment of himself when he left school (9b), he has grown to recognise himself (243b) as 'an ordinary sort of engineer'. (However, Mr. Driver may have persisted in underestimating himself: 301b). There is some suggestion (117b) that Mr. Jordan may be developing a more positive self concept, no longer believing that events lie outside his control (44b) but able to accept and use them (128a).

b. Present changes in their self concept

Some of the men speak as though, having experienced a psycho-social transition, they are now changing their perception of themselves. Having for so many years repressed parts of himself and therefore lived with a negative self concept (22b), Mr. Dickens is responding (96b, 136/2b, 261b) to his shattered world by summoning all his resources and energies 'to re-build my own ego' (153a,b). He is in the process of becoming. He is clarifying and strengthening his self concept which is now sturdy enough to be projected into the future (242-3a). He is also trying to present his new self to the world (169a). In achieving this changed self, he will also change his world.

Mr. Baldwin's present sense of self is perhaps confused. Facing (164-5a,b) the realisation that he may not be the person his long-held promotion prospects had portrayed him as ('it wasn't true (...) it's better than I am.'), he is now having to square his objective and subjective realities.



c. Past changes reversed in the present

Mr. McMillan illustrates how perceptions of the environment and of self are related, change over time and can be reversed by the dislocation of the assumptive world.

Through to his early adulthood all the comparisons he made between himself and others told him that he was a 'plodder' and a 'grafter', 'not really a very bright boy'. He speaks as though he then had a narrow and blinkered view of his world: he uses the word 'luck' several times ('lucky enough to be appointed') and talks of the 'ladder' of promotion beyond which, he says, he did not look until a chance event opened his eyes.

Over the years his professional experience and relationships raised that assessment of himself

'(his employer) had great respect for me (...) that gave me a tremendous amount of self confidence (...) He gave me a tremendous boost. I began to feel not quite such a plodder ...'

In his later jobs he was 'now brimming over with confidence', but his recent experience of redundancy has undermined that

'I felt very, very bitter (...) It destroys your confidence a lot (...) I'd become really confident in myself - having been a person who lacked confidence - it had built up - and you begin to doubt yourself.'

At the same time, his perception of his environment has changed. His job search activities 'open up new opportunities' for him; 'I'm just staggered to find how open life is.' He appears to be taking advantage of them: perhaps his sense of self has not been completely undermined?

d. Self-confidence: a positive self concept

Several of the men interviewed display self confidence or recognise its importance. Having made a realistic assessment of themselves in relation to the demands of their environment, the Jackamans (214b) speak of

their confidence in themselves. Mr. Driver became aware of the importance of having confidence at an early stage in his life (315a,b); Mr. Dickens (136/2b) is struggling to achieve it.

There is some indication that in order to make a realistic assessment of the environment or of the future, the individual needs a positive self concept which the successful outcome of such an assessment is likely to reinforce. The Jackamans are perhaps able to be realistic because they already have confidence: their realism will enable them to make decisions whose outcomes will boost it even further. On the other hand, Mr. Baldwin has a confused or negative self concept and is thus contemplating becoming a postman (101b), which would lower his self regard even further. Thus a positive and realistic self concept is perhaps essential for the successful negotiation of change: those who lack this may compound their problems.

#### e. The expenditure of energy

The expenditure of energy to initiate and to maintain the process was mentioned in the last chapter. In the commentaries upon the interviews, I draw attention to instances where there seems to be a remarkable display of energy and refer to it there as 'libidinal' or 'psychic' energy. Outside this psycho-analytic framework it is difficult to conceptualise it and identify whence it derives or what fuels it. Can it be conjured up at will or is it generated only in the service of a task crucial to the integrity of the self, when the deepest resources have to be drawn upon to face a major threat?

The instances in which the men reveal exceptional expenditure of energy all seem to concern the implementation of the self concept (Mr. Bolton, 83b) or the overcoming of environmental constraints which impinge upon the self concept (Mr. Driver, 50b, 251b, 293b). Mr. McMillan's tireless energy in physical, academic, cultural and community pursuits, his 'great tenacity of purpose', may have been essential to find expression for what the boy who acknowledged himself as a 'plodder' felt his inner self to be.

In the present phase, faced with the task of keeping his known world from falling apart and of imagining a new self, Mr. Dickens re-iterates



his striving and demonstrates his energy: 'plugging away', 'struggle', 'keep fighting through' (96b). On the other hand, Mr. Townley's apparent passivity (2b) could reflect the depletion of his energy.

Perhaps the dreams of the future they have are a form of fuel for this energy: the projected sense of self which activates the individual in the present?

#### 4. The present

This section examines first the men's activities in their occupational domain and then looks at the other domains of their life in the present phase.

##### a. Their activity in the occupational domain

While the present phase is very uncomfortable for many, it is also a time for activity, which is, indeed, the objective of the institutional transitions. Most of the men are active to some degree, even those who are uncertain of their future; the passive, like Mr. Luke or Mr. Townley, stand out from the rest. Their activities may be classified as exploration, preparation and investment. Some of the men engage in all three.

##### i) exploration

Some of the men are exploring possible occupations, jobs and identities. All four ~~institutional~~ transitions allow for some degree of exploration: the army's 'second careers' courses or the testing and training at the Rehabilitation Centre, for example. Mr. Dickens is exploring his numeracy (169a,b). Mr. Baldwin says (211a ff.) that he hopes his attendance on the Resettlement courses will enable him to 'pick up the thread of something that excites (...) or (...) horrifies' him so that he can start to eliminate possibilities.

Such activities will remove some of the ambiguity and uncertainty experienced but, where their goals still remain unformulated, they will be random and thus possibly ineffectual, augmenting rather than lessening anxiety.

ii) preparation

For those with a thought-out future, the present is largely preparation, acquiring the right information, skills and contacts. The Jackamans (200a,b), Mr. Paddington and Mr. Scott exemplify this. They know what they want to do and need help in getting there. This is largely a cognitive and not an affective problem for them and they express no anguish.

iii) investment

Some of the men have been investing in educational qualifications for several years against their needs in this present phase (Mr. Portman, Mr. Roberts). Some are working for such qualifications now as an investment for the future (the mature students and Mr. Dickens, who has taken an O-level, 91-2a,b).

Mr. Driver is investing in education to get 'a certain polish' (172a) which he feels he will need to reach the upper échelons of management and so overcome the 'limitations' he fears (171a, 251b). Mr. Stephens sees his job experience as an investment which will reward him later

'I have looked ahead (...) I'll use this to my advantage (...) another string to my bow when I do leave (...) all good stuff for civilian life'.

iv) effective activity

Activity demands energy: this has been discussed in the section above. Not all activity is necessarily appropriate nor effective. Activity without planning (Mr. Bolton, 167b), without realism (Mr. Bolton, 243b), without self confidence (Mr. Baldwin, 106a ff.) or a belief that there are opportunities available (Mr. Baldwin, 10b) may be to no good effect. Indeed, there are indications that Mr. Bolton (316b) and Mr. Homer may have chosen to enter the present transition to postpone grappling with their problems; that Mr. Baldwin has to resolve the conflict between the conformist soldier and the 'latter-day hippie' (245b); that he will have to deal with his inability to perceive opportunities (46a) and his very great anger (96-8a)

'I might become so damn cynical that I'd just throw my arms up and become (...) live on the dole ...'



The ways in which these men are negotiating this change in 'mid-life' are discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

b. The other domains of life

i) the demands of the other domains

In the earlier periods of the working-life, the demands of the various domains and their effects upon the men's occupations received frequent mention: they seem to feature less in the present. It is the needs of children's education or well-being which receive greatest attention (see Mr. Baldwin, 53b). These influence or determine the date of leaving the army (Mr. Jordan, 35b; Mr. Southwell, 80a ff.) or a job (Mr. Driver 120a,b ff.), the choice of a place to live or a new job (Mr. Jackaman, 177-81a).

At the same time a few mention the lessening degree of financial pressure upon them from the other domains ('maybe there is a change coming', Mr. Dickens, 128a,b; Mr. Jordan, 119a,b).

ii) support, compensation and relaxation in the other domains

Many of the men refer to the several domains of their life as significant sources of comfort, support and refreshment. For many of them, their wife and family are most important in this respect (though six are divorced or separated from both wife and children). Some, like Mr. Bolton (358a), Mr. Lipton and Mr. Southwell (42a ff.) treat their wife's comments upon and attitudes to their present situation as important. Several (Mr. Ellis, Mr. Jackaman, Mr. Scott and possibly Mr. Paddington and Mr. Thomas) receive special help from their wives, since they intend to take up an occupation in which they will work as partners.

Some leave the impression that they seek compensation from these other domains for the limitations or the stresses of their occupational life or turn there for relaxation ('therapy' is Mr. Driver's term, 34a,b). Mr. Flint has his art; Mr. Luke his photography, self-sufficiency and Zen; Mr. Morgan his music and theatre-going; Mr. McMillan music and many other cultural and community activities. Mr. Homer speaks at great length of the place in his life of such activities as model-making, music, reading and the theatre. He describes them as 'outlets' during the 'years of all this unhappiness' (occupational and otherwise). Music gives him 'solace', his daughter is a 'comfort' and he derives 'a feeling

of calm out of religion'.

### iii) symbolic value

There are a few references which suggest that certain aspects of the other domains, particularly a house, may have a special meaning for the man concerned. Mr. Dickens refers (266a,b) to physical activity ('fitness') as the means by which he calmed his mind and apparently mended his body: it seems to reflect his driving will-power, his concern for the 'ego' (153a) and the 'intellect' (25b).-- The house that Mr. Driver bought in early adulthood (70a,b ff.) seems to represent security and, like the qualifications he then sought, a means of overcoming the 'limitations' of his environment (50a,b; 251a). Mr. Townley, who says (108a) 'I look for change', also tells (125-6a) of 'longing for a place to call our own.' This dream of home among constant change may have some kind of symbolic meaning for him.

However, it is Mr. Bolton's references (355b) to his house that suggest most strongly the possible influence of such symbolism upon present decision-making. Its meaning to him seems to transcend its objective value and he declares himself unwilling to part with it in virtually any circumstances (this passage of the interview is not in the transcript). Perhaps it symbolises his upward social mobility, his achievement, his implementation of an earlier tentative self-concept in a material medium.

### c. Relationships between the domains in a phase of change

One of the objectives of this study, as Chapter Ten explained, was to take a holistic view of the process of 'career' and to see it within the context of the whole life. Although, as also explained there, this has scarcely been achieved, some interpretation can nevertheless be made of the sketchy material outlined above. In a phase of change in one domain, the other domains offer stability zones, vehicles for the expression of the self and a means of adjustment.

#### i) stability zones

Chapter Nine mentioned Toffler's (1971, p. 373) notion of the stability zone

'... certain enduring relationships which are carefully maintained despite all other changes.'



It is possible to interpret some of the men's activity in the several domains (as is done in the commentaries on the interviews) as oases of calm, continuity and refreshment throughout the other changes of life. Thus amidst the changes of their life Mr. Bolton is playing his piano (280a), Mr. Driver the violin (32-4a) and Mr. Portman is gardening. Mr. Lipton says that in adversity

'The wife and I, we knitted closer. (...) Out of our troubles I think we are more happy really than some people that have got everything.'

During the interview he wept for, until he attended the present course, he had not been parted from her.

## ii) vehicles for the expression of identity

The relationship between such activities and the sense of self is probably a very close one. (Robbins, 1977, it will be recalled from Chapter Eight, suggests that hobbies and other non-work activities be examined in terms of Holland's personality categories.) Through them the individual may have a means of self-expression denied, say, at work or at home. Mr. McMillan, for example, the 'plodder', has found a way of demonstrating his many abilities through these outlets. Mr. Morgan expresses his individuality through his music and theatre-going but is compliant and conformist in his occupation

'I just liked being a soldier (...) the frame of mind that you go where you are put and if you don't like it, then you make it so you do like it ...'

During changing circumstances they permit the continuity (perhaps the quarantine?) of the identity, a little corner of life where individuality can survive and flourish.

## iii) means of adjustment

It is possible that such activities build into each life a little slack so that in the complex and shifting relationships between the domains the individuals have some small area under their own control which can be adjusted to restore equilibrium throughout life as a whole if this becomes unbalanced. This is an inference, not an observation, from the

interviews, but would be of great value in such changing circumstances as the men are experiencing.

#### Status passage

Chapter Twelve identifies the transitional nature of the start of the present phase of 'career' for some of the men interviewed. This would appear to be a fruitful mode of studying some of the experiences discussed in this chapter, some of which seems to have the characteristics of an institutional status passage. Chapter Four referred to some of the literature on this, the rituals whereof have been analysed by Van Gennep (1960). Having examined scheduled and prescribed passages, he observes that ritual tends to accompany the various phases of separation, marginality (or liminality) and incorporation. This conceptual framework has been effectively applied, for example, to retirement (Crawford, 1973), 'marginal groups' (Musgrove, 1977) and transitions generally (Adams, Hayes and Hopson, 1976).

Glaser and Strauss (1971) have propounded a formal theory of scheduled and non-scheduled passages. They note the significance of the time scheduling, the normative prescription and the frequency of the passage (its institutional characteristics) as well as the degree of control, choice and flexibility for the individual undergoing it. Their framework has been drawn upon to illuminate the study of marital breakdown (Hart, 1976).

Some of the subjective experiences echo those observed in the marginal stage of certain passages (for example, see Turner, 1974): the sense of uncertainty and ambiguity (normlessness), the abasement of the individual, (indicated in earlier sections) possibly a distorted sense of time (the suggested changing time perspective).

However, such an approach can only be tentative, for the study did not include the collection of the institutional data needed to implement it. It would probably be most illuminating of the soldiers' experience for they, unlike the others interviewed, are a cohort having a shared background and passing through largely the same processes.



## Implications for research, theory and counselling

### 1. Research

The glimpse which this chapter has afforded of the experience of change in 'mid-life', it is proposed below, has some contributions to make to the understanding needed for the administration of the institutional transitions and for the counselling of individuals in them. This suggests that there is a practical value in seeking the actor's view and thus in adopting the kind of research method used here. It further suggests the value of the conceptual frameworks used in this chapter.

Several further research initiatives, therefore, seem appropriate. The approach adopted in this study could be extended to other transitions (such as leaving prison, emigration, becoming divorced, bereavement, disablement, retirement etc.) and to the same transition over a longer period of time: here the men are not followed beyond the present transition. The material could then be analysed to establish whether it yields viable alternative conceptual frameworks. It would also be appropriate to take another group of men undergoing the same transition as here (and studied over a longer period of time, a mini-longitudinal study) and examine their experiences systematically within the frameworks of the psycho-social transition and/or the status passage, to gather material neglected in this present study. The differences in the conclusions could be compared and evaluated. As concluded in the last chapter, a longitudinal study (using this or some other research method) would be invaluable as well.

There are some more specific aspects of the men's experiences which have tentatively emerged from the interviews and been noted here: the apparent abasement of the self, the discrepancy between cognitive and affective responses to various aspects of change, the effect of the awareness of the passage of time on decision-making, the inclination to bring a period of discomfort to an end and so to foreclose choice, the expenditure of energy and the symbolic value of some aspects of the individual's life and their effect on decision-making. These would seem likely to repay further study, using perhaps the same research method or some other.

Another area of potential value covers the relationships between the domains of life during a period of change. ~~This, too, might repay —~~ further intensive study using this same method or that used in the Evans and Bartolomé research (1980; see Chapter Nine).

The last section noted the potential value of the use of the concept of the status passage. Another sociological approach which promises well for the examination of the soldiers' transition is that of Goffman's (1968) 'total institution'.

#### b. Theory

This chapter, as the last, has focussed upon the men's subjective experiences but few of the theories outlined in Chapter Eight are competent to deal with this: to provide a meaningful framework, concepts derived from outside conventional 'career' literature have been used here. Occupational changes of the kind dealt with here are becoming increasingly common and thus the scope of these standard theories will have to be widened to accommodate them.

However, most of the theories outlined in Chapter Eight offer some degree of understanding and explanation of the experiences of change, some more than others. The psycho-analytic approach offers an explanation of the generation and expenditure of energy. Social learning theory is competent to explain certain responses but, as noted in the chapter, previous learning may be of limited use in a new job situation except in the most general of terms, for many important aspects of work-life have to be learned through the 'informal organisation' (Collin, 1979b). Further, it is unable to recognise the important distinction between the cognitive and the affective components of the individual's response to change.

Self concept theory again emerges as the one with the greatest contribution to the understanding and explanation of these experiences though, as presently used in 'career' literature, it tends to give too little regard to the situational factors which both this chapter and the last identify as significant and which the men themselves also recognise as influences on their personal change. Mischel's approach (1973), noted in Chapter Nine, warrants further consideration in this field.



### c. Counselling

The last chapter recommended the recording of these experiences before they are forgotten or rationalised, so that others may benefit from them. What aspects of this experience are of significance in counselling? This question will first be answered in terms of the administration of these institutional transitions and then of the counselling of the individual.

The recognition that the individual may be coping with a shattered world and a shattered sense of self has certain implications for the administration of an institutional transition. While the transition may for the individual offer 'breathing-space' from some of the pressures of the outside world and the time to re-group his (or her) inner forces, such affective tasks may not be recognised as legitimate objectives of the transition, which may be administered by the institution as a preparation for the cognitive tasks of job-seeking and decision-making. It is possible that for some the degree of re-construction is so great that they may have to delay such cognitive tasks until their world is again coherent: this is a tentative conclusion drawn for Mr. Baldwin's experience (209b). Such people need permission from both institution and themselves to postpone choice.

The location of the individual within the grief cycle will also influence the success of the transitional experience. In some stages, it may not be possible to assimilate nor use the skills being taught for the objective transition; or they may be assimilated cognitively but not affectively. The institutional programme may have to accommodate many stages of individual development. These considerations also apply to the counselling of the individual. The location in the grief cycle, including grief for dreams and expectations as well as more tangible concerns, the discrepancy between cognitive and affective responses, the effect of a negative self concept, perhaps the inclination for self-abasement, fears about the passage of time and the negative stereotypes of 'middle age', the inclination to end a period of discomfort prematurely: all these may well militate against rational and effective decision-making and, if acted upon, greatly worsen the individual's objective situation.

Many important lessons about organisational life are learned through the 'informal organisation' and the individual may thus be unable to transfer much previous learning. Great anxiety may, therefore, be inevitable. The counsellor's role here may be to encourage relaxation (including relaxation techniques?) and to facilitate the strengthening of the self concept.

The recognition of the interrelatedness of the domains of the individual's life at once eases and complicates the task of the counsellor. On the one hand, the individual can seek support, comfort and security from the other domains when the work-life is in turmoil; on the other, the needs of these other domains demand recognition in decisions about new jobs. Symbolic, irrational concerns may interfere with rational decision-making but, nevertheless, may have to be accommodated until the individual is ready to relinquish them. The counsellor may be able to detect in these and in the areas in which the individual expends considerable energy some of the client's deepest concerns.

Many of the men in this study are coping not just with occupational change, difficult though this is for people in 'mid-life'. They are also dealing with the effects of their shattered assumptive world. As well as seeking a new job and appropriate training, they are also trying to establish a new perception of their environment and of themselves in it. It is perhaps in this task that they need the greatest help for, until it is completed, they may be unable to act rationally and effectively. A later chapter will suggest ways in which the counsellor may be able to help them in this.



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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### INFLUENCES ON THE PROCESS OF 'CAREER'

#### Introduction

The last two chapters have described the process of 'career' and the experience of the men in its present phase. The object of this chapter is to note the various factors they mention or imply as influences upon that process and hence that experience.

The recognition of these influences, their interrelationships and effects leads to the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of potential 'careers' available to the individual: at each shake of the kaleidoscope new possibilities are created. Mr. Thomas recognises the 'career' he might have had

'... at that time (...) the chances of commission could happen (...) but circumstances (in the army) changing in the latter five years (...) I don't want it (the commission) ...

So you're saying that had I interviewed you three, four or five years ago you might be saying something different?

Yes, I might very well have applied for a commission ...'

Using the classification introduced in Chapter Seven, this chapter will examine the exogenous factors, the endogenous factors, their interaction and the interrelationships between the several domains of the individual's life. It presents them as a list, generally without reference to any specific period of the 'career', although it is clear that their effects differ over time. To trace them chronologically would call (again) for longitudinal research. It concludes with an acknowledgement of the implications for research, theory and counselling (defined as hitherto).

#### The exogenous factors

Chapter Eight outlined some of the literature (mainly sociological) which focusses upon the exogenous factors which appear to be a major influence upon the individual's 'career'. Many such factors are either explicitly mentioned or implied in the interviews, some without



particular comment but others noted as granting opportunity or imposing constraint. They range from the most general and impersonal of political, societal and economic forces to the most immediate and intimate pressures of the family. There is space to mention only a few as illustration.

War features among the political factors which the men mention. It gave the young Mr. Scott (3b) the opportunity to escape from the poverty of home: he falsified his age and joined the army. Wartime military service brought Mr. Prince from his home overseas to settle permanently in this country. Mr. Portman mentions the effects of the Suez crisis on his army promotion. The significant influence of National Service upon the early working-lives of many of the men interviewed (see also Mr. Dickens, 30b) has already been noted in Chapter Twelve.

The attitude of the government of the day to matters of defence influences the lives of those in the services. As Mr. Scott says (24-6a)

'You've got to take into consideration trends in society, whether they're going to reduce the army or increase the army, pay goes up, pay goes down ...'

Mr. Charles, for example, says that it is possible that he will be offered a two year extension of service and that his response will be influenced by the amount of the army's expected pay rise (in 1979).

Other events in the political or public arena which are mentioned include the construction of the motorways, which gave employment to Mr. Bolton and Mr. Bonhill and the Health and Safety at Work legislation which Mr. Stephens sees as offering him potential opportunities.

There are many references made in the interviews to the influence of economic factors. Mr. Dickens refers (62a) to public spending cuts in the early 1970s and Mr. Bolton (155a) to those of 1976; they brought changes for both men's employers and led to their redundancy. Both also mention the more general conditions of unemployment and recession which have affected them: Mr. Dickens talks (43a) of local unemployment in 1958 and Mr. Bolton (212a) of the 'terrible recession' of 1973 onwards. Mr. McMillan had taken his last job in the expectation of increased

public spending in that particular sector in 1973, but was made redundant in 1978 because of subsequent spending cuts and rationalisation.

The effect on the men's lives of their socio-economic background is examined in Chapters Twelve and Fifteen and will thus be noted, but not repeated, here.

The influence of technological developments are not marked in the interviews, but some of the soldiers are necessarily reticent on this topic for reasons of security. However, it is clear that new technology will influence the future jobs of several men. Mr. Lipton mentions how computerisation had greatly affected his job.

Changes within a particular industry are a major influence on the progress of the individual's 'career'. There are several references to such changes in the army: its shrinkage, the lowering of status and the erosion of pay. Mr. Betts mentions these as an influence upon his decision to leave. The vast changes in the retail trade, from small shop to supermarket, affected the nature of Mr. Lipton's job. Major review and re-organisation in 1973 affected Mr. Bolton's (125a) perception of security and promotion. Mr. Driver mentions (86a) the cut-backs in his industry in the late 1960s, its proposed expansion (221a) in the 1980s and their effects on his job and prospects.

Another source of exogenous pressure is the employing organisation. Mr. Homer's job, for example, was changed by the take-over of his company and the dissatisfaction this engendered eventually led to the start of his present phase.

The effects of the organisation's promotion system is clearly seen in the interviews with the soldiers. Mr. Stephens talks of its serendipitous nature: 'right place, right time'

'... circumstances were dictating events really (...) when the army wants a certain trade discipline, all efforts go into producing the end result that they want at that particular time (...) If the army are particularly short at that time they're not averse to lowering standards as well.'



Mr. Baldwin (37-41a) and Mr. Jackaman (59-61a) mention the unfortunate effect on them of such changes: their responses were very different (Mr. Baldwin, 37a; Mr. Jackaman, 62-5a). Mr. Baldwin (167b) and Mr. Hampden (65a) both felt the detrimental effect of being in what were, from the point-of-view of their promotion prospects, poor postings. However, Mr. Baldwin also recognises (184a,b) that 'you take the rough with the smooth', for he has also benefitted from such contingencies. Mr. Scott attributes his first promotion to a shortage in a particular rank during the Korean war and Mr. Portman says

'I've got rather further on than I'd anticipated, but I like to think that's partly due to my own ability, but also to (...) the changes that have taken place in the services and the lack of officer material.'

A very different kind of exogenous factor which the men mention is the societal stereotype of 'middle age'. Several say that being over 40 is a handicap in finding another job: 'a hard business at 40' (Mr. Baldwin, 185a); 'being 40 (...) that's against you as well' (Mr. Dickens, 134a); a 'struggle' (Mr. Jordan, 22a). Although they do not necessarily experience physical decline themselves - some, indeed, reject this idea - it is the convention they fear among potential employers. It shapes their expectations about their future job and about the difficulties they will have in finding it: Mr. Southwell (88-9a) assumes he will have to take a 'secondary job' like that of dustman. A later chapter will look more fully at their experiences of 'middle age'.

More immediate exogenous factors are their family circumstances; a later section of this chapter will note the interaction of the various domains. Many note the influence upon them of their wife (see Mr. Southwell, 42b) and say their children's educational needs play a part in their occupational decisions (see Mr. Baldwin, 53b). Divorce and the question of the custody of children and the payment of their school fees influenced one man's decision to leave the army.

The work-lives of many more of the men than those interviewed at the Rehabilitation Centre have been affected by ill health and accident; for some, the effects will persist into the future. Strokes; heart attacks; kidney, respiratory, spinal problems; broken limbs: these

and more have influenced the nature of the work that can be carried out and hence caused men to lose their jobs, some to find very different ones, some to experience unemployment.

These few examples illustrate the range of factors existing outside the individual which have some influence upon 'career' but which, apart from the socio-economic aspects, have been largely ignored in the 'career' development literature with its focus upon endogenous factors. This neglect has meant that the interaction of the exogenous and endogenous factors, which this study concludes is of some importance to the understanding of 'career', has also been ignored.

The exogenous factors influence the 'career' because, singly or in interaction, they objectively change the individual's environment. They alter the nature of the employing organisation, the job and future prospects. They disturb the existing balance between the domains and demand some response from the individual, who has to find a new fit between self and environment and to restore equilibrium.

Although these factors have an objective reality, observable to many and, indeed, experienced by many, the individual may (as Chapter Nine suggested) have played some part in their existence, their nature or the force with which they operate. The health factors mentioned above may be seen as illustrating this point. Further, although they have an objective reality, the individual's experience of them will be subjective. Different people perceive, interpret and thus respond to the same factors in very different ways. For example, changes in an industry because of political decisions may be construed as threatening or constraining (Mr. Bolton, 125a); as a spur to action (Mr. Driver, 86a); as making new opportunities (Mr. Driver again, 220a; Mr. Stephens's 'another string to my bow'); as an explanation for individual failure or poor decision-making (Mr. Bolton, 191a).

Such different interpretations lead to different responses which then in effect, create different environments. This is the conclusion of Bandura's (1977) research, noted in Chapter Eight, which suggests that while in a given situation the potential environment may be the same for all, the individual creates the actual environment. This is illustrated in the interviews, in the different responses of Mr. Baldwin



(37-41a) and Mr. Jackaman (59-61a) to similar circumstances, the change in promotion regulations. For Mr. Baldwin this led to anger and frustration (79a ff.) and fear for the future, whereas Mr. Jackaman (30a ff.) has derived, he feels, very useful experience from it. The responses of Mr. Bolton and Mr. Driver mentioned above led to similar discrepancies in outcomes. Mr. Bolton's response (136a ff.) led to 'a very unhappy experience' (150a) of redundancy and anxiety while Mr. Driver's (111-3a) gave him further opportunities. Differences in perception of the environment and response to it are discussed more fully in Chapter Sixteen.

#### The endogenous factors

The literature written specifically on 'career' development, as Chapter Eight shows, deals extensively with the endogenous factors which influence 'career' but largely neglects the exogenous. The confidence it displays in the identification of such factors cannot be matched in this chapter which, because of the aims and methods of the study (see Chapter Ten), is dealing with unstructured and subjective material. The factors mentioned here, therefore, are not classifiable in terms of the theories noted in Chapter Eight, but are grounded in the men's experience.

This is an appropriate point to note the dilemma (manifest and experienced in the analysis of the material and in writing about it) implicit in the analysis and reporting of subjective material. In this chapter it is labelled 'endogenous factors'; here and elsewhere such terms as 'a negative self concept' or 'the strengthening of the self concept' are used. Thus, in reporting upon subjective material the process of treating it as objective has begun. As Roberts (1980, p. 162) writes, the self is a dynamic process which is constantly changing and is thus incapable of implementation, which is 'essentially a static concept'. Chapter Eight voiced some of the reservations about Super's self concept approach in these same terms: and this study confronts the same issue.

Having acknowledged this dilemma, it is hoped that the study resolves it by its dual presentation of the transcripts which allow the men to speak for themselves and of these analytical chapters. Further, while the latter are, indeed, abstractions of the men's experience, they are

abstractions grounded (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in that experience and it is for this reason that neither in the collection of the data nor in their analysis, does this study make use of what, in other circumstances, might have been an appropriate construct, that of personality, as formulated by, for example, Cattell (1965) or Eysenck (1952).

The allocation of the health factors to the section on exogenous factors is an example of this attempt to respect the men's experience. The physiological factors were classified among the endogenous in Chapter Eight (though, admittedly, this was questionable) and to the observer there is sometimes the suggestion that some of the men may have contributed to their physical condition. There is no doubt, however, that they perceived it as largely outside their control and thus it is classified here.

What, then, may be classified as 'endogenous factors', factors within the men which in some way influence their 'career'? There are many instances of what has hitherto been labelled the need to implement the self concept. Mr. Bolton seems (34b, 365b, 370b, 373b) to have been propelled through his early 'career' by his drive to acquire qualifications and experience which would give him access to the profession and life-style which accorded with his sense of self. Mr. Dicken's current activities, like taking the O-level, seem (96b) motivated by his need to implement a hitherto unregarded self concept. Mr. Hampden joined the army (3a,b) because he 'didn't fancy (himself) as a farmer's boy'. Further examples are discussed in Chapters Twelve and Fifteen.

The men's perception of the environment has influenced their occupational life. Mr. Driver's energetic resistance to the 'limitations' he sees (50a,b; 251a,b) led to his early pursuit of educational qualifications and has also brought him into the present transition. Mr. Jackaman appears (252a,b) to need a challenge and this influences his present thinking about his future. Mr. Townley's love of change (108b) influences the types of jobs he enjoys and hence his present situation.

Their time perspective has also influenced their 'careers' through the manner in which they make decisions. This will be discussed in Chapter Sixteen.



The final factor to be mentioned is their perception of their age. While their experience of 'middle age' will be discussed more fully in a later chapter, there will be noted here some instances of the effect of their awareness of their age and its implications upon occupational decisions.

On the one hand, Mr. Bolton perceived (163-4a) that 'at that age' (he was 41) he had little choice in jobs and, because redundant, accepted (167b) a temporary and otherwise unsuitable post, from which he was later made redundant again. Now 38, Mr. Baldwin says (198-9a): 'at my age I can't afford to fool around with employment'. As noted in the last chapter, he is anxious about making the right choice of job and so is not prepared (200-2a) to take the advice offered in his Resettlement interview 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.'

This objective - and his patent anxiety - will influence his choice of job.

On the other hand, at 42, Mr. Dickens feels (197b) that he has potential for growth and thus is making 'a start' (92a,b). He says (178a)

'I don't feel as though I'm forty and over the hill, I still feel young enough.'

It is thus apparent that for many of the men interviewed the factors which have influenced their occupational decisions and shaped their 'career' lie both within and outside them.

#### Interaction between exogenous and endogenous factors in the 'career'

Chapters Seven and Eight pointed to the significant influence upon the individual's 'career' of the interaction between exogenous and endogenous factors. This significance, re-stated in the broken truce hypothesis in Chapter Twelve, will now be examined in terms of the experiences of the men interviewed.

The interaction between the external and internal factors can best be seen by examining individual cases. The two men whose experiences will be used have been chosen because they seem to perceive this interaction themselves.

Talking of the plan he and his wife have long had (20a, 21b) to take a pub on leaving the army, Mr. Jackaman says (39-51a)

'We feel (...) we've been pushed down the funnel (...) everything else is outside the funnel, as it were, and we've just sort of been fed down that way (...) everything we've done has sort of led us to believe that we're taking the right decision anyway.'

There have been many factors interacting to produce this perception of the 'funnel', both exogenous and endogenous. He says (28a): 'the seed had already been planted' once Mrs. Jackaman's father made the suggestion. It was shelved then because they lacked experience (99a) and capital of their own (24a, 100-1a). They considered it again at the end of the next three year contract (25a, 97a), but again shelved the idea because their children were young (26-7a) and he received the offer of a very favourable posting (102a). The acceptance of this, they knew (104-8a), virtually committed them to another ten years in the army.

However, these postponements introduced new factors which also contributed to the 'funnel'. Both of them gained invaluable experience during these intervening years (31a ff., 171-2a, 215a) and they have gained confidence thereby (214a); his well-paid overseas postings and her responsible job have enabled them to save the capital they feel they need (8a ff., 215a). Interacting with these external factors have been the internal factors of their attitudes to life. They have been pragmatic and realistic ('it's no good saying what I could have done', 77a ff.; 'we sat down and worked it out', 112a; see particularly 92b). His response to the change in promotion regulations (56a ff.) as noted earlier in this chapter changed his environment and eventually gave him more useful experience (31a ff.)

Mr. Driver's account of his experiences (analysed in some detail in



line 120b in the commentary upon his interview) also exhibits the influence of the various factors and of their interaction. At that point in the interview he is spelling out the various influences upon his decision to leave his job and embark upon the present transition: a major change to contemplate. He says he perceived many powerful external pressures upon him, some pulling him, others restraining him. These are analysed in terms of a force field (see Chapter Nine). The forces driving him in his situation were the educational needs of his children and the physical distance from his ageing parents; the forces resisting change were his prospects in his company. Simultaneously there were attractions outside the situation in the form of opportunities for him in this country and an English education for his children. A similar analysis may be made of the endogenous factors: his desire to avoid 'limitations' is the driving force which is resisted by his perception of his future in that company.

Eventually, he says (191-2a,b)

'... the whole thing came together (...) There was enough pressure to make the decision and I made it.'

Thus the external and the internal factors have interacted to produce a situation in which the pressure for change was too great to resist any longer and Mr. Driver entered the present transition.

#### The influence of the various domains on the process of 'career'

It was noted earlier in this chapter that the pressures from the various domains of the individual's life form one of the exogenous factors which influence the process of 'career'. Mr. Baldwin articulates (145-7a) one of the effects of this

'... in applying for particular postings. They (the army) may not have liked that very much. (...) I've allowed family circumstances at times to influence where I wanted to go...'

This section will now examine some of the effects upon individuals over time and in the present; some of the effects in the earlier periods of the process were noted in Chapter Twelve.

Mr. Jackaman tells (45b) how he escaped his unhappy childhood home by taking a living-in job and then joining the army; how the needs of his children have influenced various job decisions (26-7a, 177b). His plans for the future stem (21a,b) from a proposal made by his father-in-law and his wife's support and cooperation are essential for their successful implementation.

Mr. Jordan also refers to the influence of the various domains upon his decisions in both early and later 'career'. He gave up (1b) his apprenticeship to do National Service and thus escape the humiliations caused by his family poverty. Later he felt unable (10a,b) to join the regular army because his fiancée was not happy with this. Once he had his own family he found it impossible to study to equip himself for his eventual departure from the army. He has decided to leave the army now (35b) because of his son's needs, the lessening financial demands of his family (119-123a) affect his planning for the future.

Mr. Bolton illustrates this relationship between the domains and the 'career' very clearly. He describes (62b) how in his early 'career' he took jobs to be near his fiancée; how her income, when they were married, enabled him 'to take certain chances' (218b) in his jobs; how she has a say in his occupational choices. He also relates how the needs of his family affected his decision to leave a job (76a ff.); how family needs still influence decisions (302b) and how his concern for his house would also influence them (355b).

This brief examination of the influence of the domains on the process of 'career' highlights three significant issues. The first is the value of the concept of 'domain' in the context of process. While it may be appropriate when focussing upon one point in time (as when examining the periods in Chapter Twelve), it is static and thus unable to conceptualise a dynamic process. Viewed in this way, it can be seen that each domain has its own 'career' and that the individual's life is a bundle of such 'careers'.

Secondly, it is clear from the men's accounts that these 'careers' are closely intertwined so that events in one have repercussions in another. Johnson (1977, p. 69), writing outside the standard literature on occupational 'career', says



'... the biographical approach. It brings together a network of linked careers in dynamic tension with each other. As observed over periods of time these links are re-negotiated, severed or reformulated.'

The men interviewed clearly demonstrate this, for their occupational 'careers' have been greatly influenced by the extra-occupational factors in their lives and (although this was not studied) the other areas of their lives will have been greatly influenced by what has happened in their occupations.

Thirdly, there is some suggestion that the men do not treat each domain separately, but act in accord with the needs of their life as a whole, making adjustments in one domain to accommodate changes or to compensate for deficiencies in another. This means that the predominant criterion for decisions about the occupation perhaps relate to the overall quality of life rather than that of the occupation alone; and that the concept of equilibrium between the changing domains is of significance. As Mr. Jordan says (128-9a,b): 'everything's balanced'.

#### Implications for research, theory and counselling

This chapter has examined the interaction of the exogenous and endogenous factors and their influence upon the process of the 'careers' of the men interviewed. Although the amount of material available for analysis here is relatively scanty it, nevertheless, suggests that the 'career' is neither solely that which is allowed by the environment nor that which is determined by the individual alone. The occupational path results from a transaction between the self and its environment (see Chapter Nine) and that transaction merits further examination than is possible here. The chapter also points to the virtual possibility of separating the various 'careers' of the individual's life. Intertwined, they closely influence one another so that it is impossible to examine the occupational 'career' in isolation. These tentative conclusions suggest significant implications for research, theory and counselling.

#### 1. Research

Some of the 'career change' research outlined in Chapter Seven (LaBuda, 1974; Murray, Powers and Havighurst, 1971; Neapolitan, 1980; Robbins,

1977; Roe and Baruch, 1967; Schlossberg et al., 1967) make some reference to the influence of the exogenous and endogenous factors upon the 'career' and, as discussed in that chapter, implicitly or explicitly note their interaction. This chapter suggests that these factors and their interaction need far more attention in research than hitherto.

One effect of such attention will be to lessen the possibility of the transfer of research results from one culture or social class to another, for the exogenous factors are strongly coloured by such context. Hitherto, with the emphasis on the individual rather than the environment, the results of American middle-class studies, for example, have been used in the formulation of a British counselling service and Roberts's (1977) assertions about the social class bias of this service has been strongly countered (this is discussed more fully in the next chapter). Henceforth such contextual considerations may have to be given more weight.

Once again, the most appropriate means of tracing the influence and interaction of these factors and the way the individual responds to them would be longitudinal research.

While there has been some research into the relationships between the domains (Evans and Bartolomé, 1980; Pahl and Pahl, 1972; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971), this has taken place outside the main body of 'career' studies and thus scarcely incorporated into 'career' theory. This merits close attention and, in particular, Evans and Bartolomé's conclusion (p. 46) that the manager shifts his attention between his professional and private life throughout his 'career' is worth further investigation outside the field of management. The suggestion made by Robbins (1977) and noted in Chapter Eight that out-of-work activities are examined in terms of Holland's categories might also be appropriate. Perhaps Super's (1980; 1981) Life-Career Rainbow approach, which identifies the various roles the individual plays over time and notes their interrelationships, will prompt further investigation and attention by 'career' professionals.

## 2. Theory

None of the theories outlined in Chapter Eight, even the decision-making and social learning theories which recognise the interaction of these



factors, easily accommodate the concept of the exogenous factors or the interrelationships between the various 'careers' of the individual's life. As noted in the concluding paragraphs of each of the last two chapters, self concept theory could be used to embrace a wider view of the self in its environment but would probably, nevertheless, be unable to conceptualise objective factors outside the individual. Perhaps there is scope here for the formulation of a more comprehensive theory of 'career' development.

### 3. Counselling

There are many implications of this wider view of 'career' for counselling for, apart from an awareness of self (the endogenous factors) for effective occupational decision-making, the individual also needs considerable awareness of the environment and of the other domains and their 'careers'.

The individual thus has to develop the skills of scanning the environment (often a fast changing environment at that), of identifying and assessing the threats and opportunities it offers and of using the information so gathered realistically and positively. While it may never be possible to gain control over the exogenous factors, an awareness of them and of the overall situation makes it possible to take appropriate action (including avoidance) in good time. At the same time the individual needs a continuing appraisal of strengths and weaknesses in the light of changing circumstances. (There are analogies here to business policy: does this offer any useful insights?)

The recognition that the individual may be seeking balance between the domains or overall quality of life rather than success in any one 'career' (and conventionally this would be the occupational 'career') suggests the need to extend skills noted above to the various domains, assessing their individual strengths and weaknesses and the effects of their interaction. Decisions may have to be made which are not rational nor effective in conventional occupational terms but which have a logic or an imperative in terms of the whole life. As unemployment increases and the nature of employment changes perhaps this holistic view becomes even more appropriate?



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### A 'mid-life' perspective upon the opportunity structure/occupational choice debate

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CHAPTER FIFTEENA 'MID-LIFE' PERSPECTIVE UPONTHE OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE/OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE DEBATEIntroduction

'... for the typical industrial worker, his career cannot be meaningfully understood in terms of self-actualisation and implementing a self-concept ... It is more usual for individuals to have to tolerate a lack of fit between their self-concepts and the occupations they practise.'

writes Roberts (1977, pp. 4-5), one of the major contributors to the debate between those who see vocational guidance as serving the existing social structure and thus as a form of social control and others who see it serving the individual's need for self-fulfilment. Chapter Eight first introduced the debate (1 b(ii)) and Chapter Twelve began the examination of the experiences of the men in its terms, leaving further exploration and conclusions for this chapter. The men's history, therefore, will now be continued and their response to the opportunity structure analysed. The chapter will then draw some conclusions about the debate from the perspective of 'mid-life' and will note the implications for research, theory and counselling (defined as before).

Subsequent developments in the working-life: response to the opportunity structure and implementation of the self concept

While many of the men support Roberts's thesis on the significance of the opportunity structure when they left school and during their early working years, the following examples strongly suggest that some have since experienced the strengthening, perhaps the implementation, of their self concept.

Mr. Bedford, who spent much of his earlier life 'chasing money', eventually found a job he enjoyed where, although money was still important, there were other satisfactions to be mentioned.

'Like my dad used to say, money ain't everything. If you can get up and want to go to work, that's half you're life. If you get up and hate going to that job, jack it in.'

He later took a labouring job which paid well, 'unbelievable', he says, but gave it up because he did not find it interesting. Of the present phase, brought about because of an accident, he says

'You've got to start looking for other aspects (...) It's not much point getting too uptight about it really: it's there and you've got to adjust to it (...) I've haven't lost anything. I've lost two and a half years scratching ... but things have turned out quite well again (...) they're not going backwards: in actual fact, they're going forwards because I'm going to train to be a mechanic again, which I wanted to do in the first place (on leaving school).'

He no longer seems to perceive himself as driven by the pressures of his situation, although objectively, because of the physical limitations imposed upon him by his accident, it could be held that his external constraints are as great or greater than before. (His four children are aged 7, 10, 14 and 17 and his wife is a nurse.) He seems to be construing his circumstances positively, trying to maintain control of his life and implementing his self concept by optimising those circumstances.

Mr. Jordan illustrates a similar change over time. Having stressed his financial straits in childhood and early adulthood (1b, 7b), there comes a change in the tone of the interview (117a,b ff.) as he starts to talk about the present and future

'Things started to go right all of a sudden (...) things worked out right in time. (...) it's a luck that everything's balanced. (...) I'm going to be very particular about what (job) I take (...) I'm working it out pretty well in my own mind.'

He seems to have started to re-construe his past. He says (116a) of his wife 'I don't blame her any more - she was a young girl'. Like Mr. Bedford, he seems to be trying to optimise his situation, noting its



advantages and disadvantages and looking for 'silver linings'. Perhaps he has strengthened his self concept - or re-defined himself in relation to his circumstances - and is now, hesitantly, trying to implement this in 'mid-life'. Although he does not use such concepts himself, he tells me that he thinks he has changed. He says he has a new attitude to what life has to offer him: 'some people can get it (the good things in life), why not aim for it?'

Mr. Scott (3b) also experienced childhood poverty but was leaving the army as a commissioned officer. He describes (10a ff.) how he has gradually modified his self concept

'... you then find from experience and looking at other people doing the job that you feel that you can do the job ...'

Mr. Dickens, too, illustrates how his self concept 'has strengthened since those early years when he perceived no choice but to bow to the pressures of the opportunity structure (9b, 11b). Now, however, his illness has made him appraise himself and, while still concerned about money (59b), he also wants to be educated, gain confidence and fulfil himself in a professional job (239a ff.). No longer does he accept the constraints of his external environment (218b): he is breaking them down through his educational aspirations and achievement (and is trying to ensure that his children are never so constrained, 233b). In so doing, he is re-defining his environment ('over the horizon', 220b) and himself ('I'm not stupid', 169a) as he re-builds his 'shattered' self (154a).

Thus while the pressures of the opportunity structure seem to have quelled the tentative stirrings of these men's self concept during the early years of their working-life, this no longer seems to be true, for they are expressing their sense of greater mastery over their environment.

#### Responses to the opportunity structure

An examination of the men's experiences identifies the possible existence of several responses to the opportunity structure. Because these are derived from and grounded in the men's experience, they are somewhat blurred and to some degree overlapping: the labelling and classification

give them a clarity and coherence they do not altogether possess. They are acceptance of the structure and some adaptation of the self to meet its demands; an attempt to overcome it by eroding it, restructuring it or transcending it. All make some demand upon the self concept. Sometimes the men seem to have initially responded in one way, but to have changed over time, which perhaps mirrors a change in their self concept.

# 1. Acceptance of the structure and adaptation of the self to meet its demands

The interviews suggest that acceptance can take several forms: habituation, optimisation and compensation.

## a. Habituation

Braverman (1974, pp. 139-51), inveighing against capitalism, writes of the transformation of individuals into a labour force and their habituation to the capitalist mode of production.

'... the workers are not destroyed as human beings but are simply utilized in inhuman ways, their critical, intelligent, conceptual faculties ... deadened or diminished ...'

'... But beneath this apparent habituation, the hostility of workers to the degenerated forms of work which are forced upon them continues as a subterranean stream that makes its way to the surface when employment conditions permit ...'

Some of the men seem to have experienced a similar habituation to the opportunity structure: though apparently chafed by their situation when young, they construed that they had to accept it and fit themselves to its mould. Mr. Dickens tells (25a) how 'you never raised your intellect higher ...' and, like many of the others (Mr. Bedford, Mr. Jordan, Mr. Scott and Mr. Southwell), spent his early adulthood trying to make a living and not looking beyond his immediate situation (223-6a,b)

'... 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 (...) like all teenagers, dancing, having drinks and so on. You're



diverted away from that sort of thing.'

They indicate that neither their occupation nor this anodyne 'way of life' fully expressed their sense of self: Mr. Dickens harboured dreams of culture and travel (81-3a), Mr. Southwell sought (17b, 27b) education, 'learning' and 'manners'. In dealing in what they saw as the only possible way with their everyday world, they were perhaps distorting their sense of self or at least suspending it unfulfilled. Mr. Dickens says (111-3a) of his early adulthood

'... the same dream, I still wanted to travel, and then marriage comes along (...) So you put the dreams to the background, carry on with reality.'

However, the 'subterranean stream' seems to have surfaced later in life. Mr. Bedford is prepared to 'jack it in' if the job is not satisfying; Mr. Dickens has decided (93-4a) 'I'd better start doing something with my brain'. Their self concept, necessarily disregarded in their early years, is now demanding greater recognition.

#### b. Optimisation

The interviews suggest that the response of some to the opportunity structure is optimisation: they make the best of their limited situation. This seems to have been the characteristic of those who joined the army because of the paucity of local jobs (Mr. Hampden), the need to escape their father's apparent dictatorship (Mr. Luke, Mr. Morgan) or some other aspect of home-life (Mr. Jackaman, Mr. Scott). However, this response was not in all cases made without some display of the strength of their self concept: Mr. Hampden withstood (3b) his father's moral pressure; Mr. Luke's father did not, he says, speak to him for three years; Mr. Morgan's father may still exert some pressure upon him (see Chapter Twelve). They were not prepared to succumb to immediate pressures but sought to make the most of their limited opportunities. Some of those men who, in their earlier years, appear to have become habituated to their situation seem to be optimising it in their middle years. Mr. Bedford, Mr. Jordan (127a ff.) and Mr. Southwell (100b) perhaps now have a stronger sense of self and are able to make the best of their circumstances, often turning them to their own advantage.

### c. Compensation

Some of the men who now seem to be accepting the limitations of their circumstances, involving perhaps some degree of constraint upon their self concept, may be compensating for this with the satisfactions they derive from the other domains of their life. This is spelt out further in Chapter Thirteen, though among the men quoted there are some, like Mr. Flint, who are responding not to a limiting opportunity structure but to other unsatisfactory aspects of their life.

### 2. Overcoming the structure

The interviews suggest that some of the men never accepted their opportunity structure and from the outset struggled to overcome it. The existence of their struggle testifies to the strength of the self concept which refuses to be constrained or distorted by the powerful pressures of society. Other men, their self concept for some reason having strengthened over time, have started to resist the opportunity structure in 'mid-life'.

This resistance seems to take three forms: erosion of the structure, restructuring it and transcending it.

#### a. Erosion of the structure

The existing opportunity structure is eroded when means such as education and 'career' ladders are found to give access to a wider range of jobs and a higher social status, thus permeating or breaking down the initial constraints and limitations upon the individual. (The extent to which such erosion is possible is open to question: Roberts (1981, p. 286 ff.) is sceptical about this.) The interviews show that this is not achieved without considerable tenacity and energy: the concomitants, perhaps, of a strong or strengthening self concept.

Several of the men seem to have displayed this form of resistance from the start of their working-life. Mr. Bolton began (5b, 9b) with what was perhaps an unrealistic self concept, but it nevertheless drove him to embark (34b, 370b) upon a lengthy and very demanding pursuit of qualifications and experience which would give him the professional status he so greatly



desired. Thus he eventually eroded (15b) the opportunity structure, though some of his actions in achieving this (164a,b; 373b) may have been dysfunctional in other ways. His house, as Chapter Thirteen suggested, may symbolise (355b) this erosion.

Mr. Driver illustrates a similar response. Spurred on (15b, 38b, 50b) by his father's injunctions, which seem, in their turn, to have been rooted in experience of the opportunity structure (see Chapter Twelve), his early life is coloured (71a,b) by his intention to buy a house and to achieve qualifications (50a,b ff.) despite considerable difficulties. He makes several references (50a,b, 251b) to the 'limitations' imposed or likely to be imposed upon him and his intention to overcome them: he seems to regard them as formidable but not insuperable.

The soldiers have partially eroded the structure through climbing the army's promotion ladder: Mr. Scott (10a ff.) is an example of this.

Some of the others have started the process of erosion at a later stage of their life: this suggests that their self concept has strengthened over time. Mr. Dickens has now achieved an 'O' level and aspires (91a, 239-43a) to an 'A' level and professional qualifications. This is not, however, an easy achievement: he still feels and fears the chains of the opportunity structure and expresses anxiety that he will yet be 'pigeon-holed' (169-70a,b). Other examples are Mr. Portman, whose experience is outlined in Chapter Sixteen and Mr. Stephens, who having been commissioned as an officer, now says 'I have a choice' and speaks of his recognition of his potential (noted in Chapter Twelve). Despite the early pressures of the opportunity structure, these men are now strong enough to break down some of its barriers and to start to fulfil themselves.

#### b. Re-structuring

Roberts (1981, p. 294 ff.) discusses the possibility of changing the opportunity structure. This is clearly a societal rather than an individual response, though individuals may contribute to it. The men's concern for their children's education (see Chapter Twelve) may be construed as such a contribution. As Mr. Dickens says (98-9a, 232-4a)

'I believe in education (...) I'd sacrifice anything to make sure my lads got one (...) So long as they're all right, that's the main thing - more important than me, even.'

### c. Transcending the structure

The wish 'to topple the structures, or ... transcend them' is naive, considers Roberts (1981, pp. 293-4), 'Complaining that reality is wrong'. The interviews, however, suggest that he is overlooking the possibility of the multi-dimensional nature of 'reality' and ignoring the human capacity both to interpret it in various ways and to change the self. Some of the men indicate that they are now thinking and, indeed, behaving as though they are not constrained or pressed as formerly: they are transcending the structure.

This transcendence has two forms: the re-definition of the structure (it is no longer perceived as limiting) and the re-definition of the self (as the kind of person who does not accept but overcomes the structure). The relationship between these two aspects of re-definition, like that between the self concept and the orientation to the environment which is discussed in the next chapter, is a close one.

Despite his disability, Mr. Bedford is re-defining his environment 'things (...) are going forwards'. Mr. Jordan now sees (128-9a) that 'everything's balanced'. However, it is Mr. Dickens's experience which most clearly suggests transcendence of the opportunity structure. Compared to his early years, when (105-6a,b) 'you never get the idea that you're good enough to do these sort of things', he now seems to be re-defining (169a,b ff.) his sense of self

'I don't want them to pigeon-hole me (...) because I'm not stupid (...) It's just something I've neglected...'

At the same time, he is re-defining his environment, now recognising (218-20a) that when he was a boy there had perhaps been opportunities for him which he had not then perceived

'... we were very limited in what we could have done but, there again, it's up to you to look across over the horizon, isn't it? I never did.'



'I regret (...) not taking my chances' (207-8a)

Of his present, however, he says (196-7a) 'I feel there's opportunity for everybody.'

It is thus possible to interpret that Mr. Dickens, through his new perception of himself and his environment, is now transcending the opportunity structure which previously bound him. Is this, however, a naive interpretation? Is, perhaps, his awareness of greater opportunity today attributable to the changes in British society since the Second World War rather than to any change in his perception? Overall, there has probably been some increase in opportunity, in the sense of both inter- and intra-generational upward mobility (see Keil, 1981), though Roberts (1981, p. 294 ff.) also points out that for some people there are now more limitations than before.

An objective increase in opportunity alone, however, cannot explain Mr. Dickens's response: others, like Mr. Baldwin ('it's a hard business at 40', 185a), are not as sanguine. Further, external changes cannot completely explain his changed sense of self. Additionally, apart from the possible stigma of their 'middle age', Mr. Bedford and Mr. Dickens now carry a physical handicap: yet both speak as though they perceive some kind of improvement in their life.

Alternatively, could it be that, like Mr. Scott (28-33a), he has a wider view of his world because he now has a more elevated viewpoint within it?

'It's a matter of climbing up the ladder before you're going to see any further (...) when you first start you can't see right to the top of the hill (...) as you get older you've got more sense and things start coming into it - more education et cetera - you start seeing a bit further ...'

The answer to this question is, probably, 'no' for, unlike Mr. Scott, Mr. Dickens had no organisational ladder to ascend. He does, however, have a different viewpoint since the dislocation of his assumptive world (see Chapter Thirteen).

The conclusion reached here is that he, like those objectively immobile

respondents in the Nuffield study (Goldthorpe, 1978), subjectively experiences greater opportunity or fewer limitations or greater fulfilment. This experience is in his mind: as he says (181a) 'I haven't got that 40 (age) in my mind.' He is thus transcending the structure.

Can this subjective transcendence objectively change the structure or his relationship to it? Some of his behaviour which is the outcome of his perception of the world, like taking and passing his 'O' level, will no doubt partially erode the structure and alter his opportunities somewhat, but to what extent it is not possible to judge here. This is a question outside the range of this particular study and raises, among other issues, the prior question of the nature of the structure and of 'reality'. In contributing to the debate on the opportunity structure, R.J. Roberts (1980) p. 160 introduces the alternative, social action view of

'... society and its institutions existing in the minds of men, rather than in "reality", this latter being socially constructed ... it becomes possible to alter the "opportunity structure", and society itself, by changing men's views about its nature.'

All that may be concluded here is that Mr. Dickens sees his environment differently and so is starting to act differently.

#### A 'mid-life' perspective on the debate

The analysis above suggests that over time some of the men have changed their response to the opportunity structure so that, by 'mid-life', it has a different significance in their life. However, is it legitimate to draw such conclusions from their recollections of past events and feelings? While this undoubtedly raises epistemological questions, the men offer evidence of the power and 'reality' (whether objective or 'socially constructed') of the opportunity structure during their early life, as Chapter Twelve has demonstrated. It is manifest not only in their reminiscences about those years but also in their actions (and probably those of their father, too): the striving for educational qualifications to overcome the opportunity structure and an often equal concern for their children's education to ensure that they are never similarly



constrained. Equally, as this chapter has shown, some of them now speak of their sense of opportunity in the present and future. It is, therefore, concluded - using as evidence the interpretation of their whole lives which they have chosen to communicate - that some of them have changed over time. How significant are these conclusions generally?

Some of them are 'special cases'. They have enjoyed a successful army 'career' and risen through the ranks to NCO or above, thus to a large extent escaping their original opportunity structure. Their experience is, therefore, undoubtedly different from that of those later generations of whom Roberts is primarily writing, but the question of how they were able to rise and so escape remains. As Roberts himself says (1981, p. 290) 'Industry requires fewer officers than men.' This study also includes the 'typical industrial worker' - like Mr. Bedford and Mr. Dickens - of whom he writes (1977, p. 4), so that it points to the existence of occupational experiences not accounted for by his thesis and which thus remain to be explained in some other way. Self concept theory is one such way.

Because it has been the intention of this chapter to demonstrate the possibility of a change in the response to the opportunity structure, the instances in which early constraints and later change can be identified have been highlighted. Some of the other men did not demonstrate such change, perhaps because the nature of the discussion in the interview did not elicit this kind of material, because (in a few cases) they did not come from the relevant social background, or because they had not so changed. It is to be expected that there are people who cannot or will not change in this manner. It is certainly not possible from this study to ascertain why some do and some do not. The conclusions drawn from Bandura's (1977) research, noted in Chapter Eight under social learning theory, are relevant to this question: there are several ways of experiencing the same environment (or opportunity structure).

From its perspective of 'mid-life', this chapter suggests that, while some of the men may not have greatly changed, others most certainly have and, in so doing, have demonstrated the possibility of change over time for people generally. This suggests that the arguments of Daws (1977, 1981) and Roberts (1977, 1981), apparently conflicting when seen

in terms of youth and early adulthood (Daws, 1981, p. 271), may yet prove to be complementary when viewed from a life-span perspective.

### Implications for research, theory and counselling

#### 1. Research

Some of the studies outlined in Chapter Seven (Hiestand, 1971; LaBuda, 1974; Neapolitan, 1980; Robbins, 1977) note some aspects of change in the individual and Musgrove (1977) examines some aspects of its process. Because the possibility of change is so significant, it would repay even further attention in research. It would be valuable to study the increasing strength of the self concept and the response to the opportunity structure: over the lifetime in longitudinal research and also, perhaps, by such means as personal construct theory and repertory grid (Kelly, 1955).

Further sociological research into the nature of and the responses to the opportunity structure through adulthood, with the recognition and exploration of subjective experience (as in Goldthorpe's 'life history notes', 1978) would also be valuable. In particular, it could further examine the tentative typology of responses outlined earlier in this chapter.

#### 2. Theory

Of the theories outlined in Chapter Eight, those concerned with the exogenous factors largely ignore the capacity of the individual to change, while those focussing upon the endogenous factors largely underplay the power of the environment. The interactive theories conceptualise the interaction, but not the change in the individual over time. Mr. Scott describes (10a ff.) this

'... 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 (...) Then you start looking at the Sergeant and think, well, I'm better than that Sergeant (...) the longer the service you do, you then find from experience and looking at other people doing the job that you feel you can do the job'.



The use of the verb 'feel' in that last line suggests that this is an affective response which matches the cognitive assessment of self based on experience. Thus although such a process of comparison and modification of self is explicable in social learning terms, self concept theory offers a greater insight into this subjective component of the experience. Indeed, Mr. Scott's description could be seen as the layman's analysis of the gradual process of discovering oneself and one's ambitions which is the core of Super's (1953) definition of 'career' development

'The process of vocational development is essentially that of developing and implementing a self concept: it is a compromise process in which the self concept is a product of the interaction of inherited aptitudes ... (with the) opportunity to play various roles and evaluations of the extent to which the results of role playing meet with the approval of superiors and fellows.'

It also parallels a very different approach to the changing self, that of R.J. Roberts (1980, pp. 162-4), who argues that the self, like society, is socially constructed.

'... the self constantly changes in interaction with significant others ... by processing the assumed expectations of others. ... simply thinking about myself alters it, as new expectations are considered and perhaps, in time, internalised. Far from the (occupational) choice being the implementation of a self concept, the self is created by the choice.'

Thus self concept theory again shows its value in the understanding of 'career' development though, as all previous chapters have also said, it needs to be used in such a way that the external constraints upon the individual are fully recognised.

### 3. Counselling

This debate holds many implications for counselling. Roberts (1977, 1981) concludes, on the basis of his acceptance of the power of the opportunity structure over many working people, that 'conventional career guidance (...)

is confined to a lubricating role' (1981, p. 294) in its allocation of people to jobs. The possibility of change and growth which these interviews indicate supports and, indeed, strengthens the opposing argument expressed by Daws (1977, 1981). If some people can over time positively adapt to, erode or transcend their structure then there is need for more rather than less counselling to help them do so, to offer the 'appropriate counter-balancing action' (1981, p. 278) to the opportunity structure.

'Children need not only to be protected from too vulnerable a dependence upon parental guidance and influence, but to be offered compensatingly a professional, fully-informed and disinterested alternative if they are to achieve a realistic basis for planning their lives ... (able to) own themselves, to become autonomous, self-directing, and less vulnerable to social pressures.' (1977, pp. 14-15)

The need for such counselling is as pressing whether the change be interpreted in objective terms (the erosion of the structure) or subjective (transcendence) for R.J. Roberts writes (1980, pp. 164-5)

'The proper object of counselling thus becomes, not acceptance of the social structure as it is (or appears to be), but a concern with the totality of the life experiences of the individual (...) Careers education thus becomes a matter of facilitating the young person's understanding of the reality which is the unique result of this total biography and, more importantly, his potential for creating new worlds.'

The practical implication of this is the need for adequate and effective information and counselling services throughout the working-life (Watts, 1980) and the development of new techniques and approaches (for example, Law, 1981) to help the individual behave 'as a responsible agent acting within a dynamic environmental setting' (Super and Knasel, 1981, p. 199).

Watts, Law and Fawcett (1981, p. 391) conclude their discussion of contemporary British developments in 'career' theory by saying

'No-one has infinite choice; but everyone has more choice than they know they have, both about where they might go (possible futures) and about who they might be (possible selves).'



This study underlines this. As the present economic and technological turbulences threaten traditional opportunity structures and fracture lives and 'careers', as people are increasingly called upon to embark upon 'mid-career change', so they may need more help than ever before in exercising that choice.



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### THE NEGOTIATION OF CHANGE IN 'MID-LIFE'

#### Introduction

Earlier chapters have described the process of change and the men's present experience of it; this one examines some aspects of their negotiation of it.

Having noted some of the resources upon which the men draw, this chapter introduces an embryonic concept which emerged from the analysis of the interviews, that of the orientation to the environment. It then examines their decision-making and the influence upon them of other people as advisers, reference points, models and mentors. The implications for counselling (defined as hitherto) are noted in each section, but there is no separate treatment of the implications for research and theory, for this would largely echo the conclusions of the preceding chapters.

#### The individual's resources

This section is concerned only with the material resources to which the men have access; some of what might be regarded as their 'inner resources' are covered in the next section.

Some of the research mentioned in Chapter Seven took note of the availability of appropriate resources for the negotiation of 'mid-career change': Clopton, 1972; Haug and Sussman, 1970; Hiestand, 1971; LaBuda, 1974; Neapolitan, 1980; Robbins, 1977. The experiences of the men interviewed suggest that two kinds of resources are significant for them: first, finance and second, qualifications and experience.

#### 1. Financial resources

Not surprisingly, many of the men referred to the importance of finance as they negotiate change. All know that the change is likely to involve an initial drop in income: they cannot judge, however, how long they will have to sustain this nor whether they will then return to their former level of income. Meanwhile, their basic outgoings may remain



the same so that they expect some drop in standard of living (though a few mention that they are approaching the time when the financial pressures upon them will lessen as their children leave home: 'maybe there is a change coming', Mr. Dickens, 128a; Mr. Jordan, 118a,b; Mr. Thomas). It is, therefore, important for them to establish a satisfactory financial base-line before embarking upon this period of uncertainty. This is clearly a particular difficulty for those like Mr. Dickens who face involuntary change.

There are several kinds of resources mentioned upon which they will draw during the period of change.

#### a. Capital

There are a few references to capital in the form of savings from income or of expected receipts. Mr. Driver, who chose to leave his last job, could afford to do so because his savings from high income put him in a sound financial position (120b, 327a). The soldiers generally feel in a comfortable position, for they will leave with pension and gratuity. 'I'm going to have money for the first time in my life', says Mr. Baldwin, (Mr. Hampden mentions (85a ff.) the even greater pension he would have received had he been promoted as expected.)

#### b. House

There are several references to house ownership. Some of the soldiers, who lived for many years in married quarters, have more recently bought a house and hope to settle down in it on leaving the army.

As well as the financial security a house offers (as collateral in a possible business venture, for example), mention is also made of the emotional security it gives (Mr. Bolton, 355b; Mr. Driver, 71b, 73b, 325a ff.)

#### c. Their wife

Apart from the emotional support that their wife gives them, referred to in Chapter Thirteen, she is an important resource in other ways. Many of the men have a working wife and some of these mention how

significant her income is during the present change of job or unemployment. (Mr. Bolton, 218-25a, whose wife's income had been important for his 'career' for a long time; Mr. Bonhill; Mr. Dickens, 129a). Only Mr. Flint mentions the concomitant difficulties created by his wife's 'career' needs.

For a few of the men (Mr. Ellis, Mr. Jackaman, Mr. Paddington and Mr. Scott), their wife is a special and invaluable resource, for they are all proposing to start a business in partnership with her.

d. The significance to them of their financial resources

These financial resources could be expected to determine the length of time the men can afford to be without a job and hence the degree to which they are selective in their job search. For example, Mr. Jordan, from a healthy base-line of army pension and gratuity (140a ff.). says (133a ff.)

'I'm going to be very particular about what I take ... I've never been 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 want to make sure that I've got the right job.'

On the other hand, Mr. Baldwin, also with a pension and gratuity and 'money for the first time in my life' shows that such resources may be valued very differently. He feels (205-6a) that at his age - 38 - he 'will be hard-pressed through age discrimination and the possible lowering of retirement age so that 'I can't afford to mess about with choice. (...) the first job I get has got to be the right one.'

This indicates once again that there can be a discrepancy between the men's objective and their subjective experience and that their action in a situation may result from their affective rather than their cognitive response to it. Whether the differences in their attitudes to their financial resources are influenced by their socio-economic status and experiences is an interesting question, but not one which can be answered from the interview material.



## 2. Qualifications and experience

The men appear to treat educational and professional qualifications and experience as major resources in the negotiation of change. Some are expecting to use the qualifications they have already obtained for their present occupation as a passport to their next; some have prepared for the present change by acquiring new qualifications and others are currently gaining them.

### a. Using existing qualifications

As well as Mr. Bolton and Mr. Driver, whose pursuit of professional qualifications has been referred to many times in preceding chapters, there are several (including those in the services) who expect to use their considerable professional or trade qualifications and experience as a passport to a new occupation.

### b. Acquiring qualifications in preparation for the change

Other men, perhaps well qualified in their own field, had foreseen that they might need other qualifications to equip themselves for their unknown future and thus before the change began had made some investment in education of various kinds (Mr. Portman, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Thomas). For some this had been by correspondence course.

### c. Acquiring qualifications in the present

Several of the men are currently acquiring new qualifications. The mature students regard their course as a general investment for their future and possibly as the means of effecting a change of direction. (A few see it also as a breathing-space in which they can take stock of their lives during a period of change: 'a period of adjustment would be good, rather than jumping straight into a job.')

Mr. Stephens looks upon the qualifications he is now acquiring in his present job as a useful investment for leaving the army, when he will 'take advantage of' them. Mr. Dickens has recently passed an 'O' level. He hopes that this will lead to higher education and eventually a professional job; meanwhile it has boosted his confidence and given him some feedback on his ability.

d. The significance to them of their qualifications and experience

Although it is apparent from the way in which some of the men sought qualifications that they perceive them as instrumental in effecting advancement or change in an occupation, it is also evident from Mr. Bolton's experience (373a,b) that their pursuit can be compulsive and, ultimately, shackling

'... the closer you are to it (...) the sillier it would be to go into something else, to give it up - you are nearly there (...) once you've got it you could perhaps be thinking of other things.'

Thus instead of liberating the individual as expected, qualifications may eventually shackle him or her to a given area.

This may also be true of the accumulated experience in a particular occupation: they may feel reluctant to abandon the advantages (including the comfortable feeling of belonging) which their knowledge and expertise give them. Thus in a situation of change they may prefer to accept a job of a less demanding and rewarding nature in their own field than to jettison their experience and risk striking out into 'fresh woods'. This is perhaps one of Mr. Morgan's considerations as he discusses the possibility of moving into fairly low level clerical work or of becoming a postman.

Some express a willingness to take such a risk: Mr. Townley, discussing the possibility of going on a course, says (84-8a)

'... my wife (asked why) are you applying for a course (...) 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 springboard into the future.'

While, for him, this may be a hypothetical consideration (34b), those who venture afield may share Mr. Homer's experience of going on a course: 'mentally stretched', 'stretches the imagination', 'recalled to life', 'I am living again'.



Mr. Jackaman (38a,b) and Mr. Scott use their experience to gauge whether they will realistically be able to effect their proposed future change. Mr. Dickens derives confidence (202a) from his recent education.

### 3. Implications for counselling

Reflecting upon the men's experience, it could be concluded that what is significant in their negotiation of change is not the existence (nor the degree) of material resources such as those mentioned above, for these cannot always be altered, augmented or utilised during a period of change, but the individual's attitude to and use of them.

There are several cases which suggest this. For example, Mr. Baldwin's substantial gratuity cannot buy him the freedom to be selective about his new job because he feels constrained by his age. Mr. Dicken's 'O'level is perhaps more significant as evidence of his changing self concept and fighting spirit than as a qualification per se. Mr. McMillan's formidable array of qualifications will avail him little while he continues to 'doubt yourself'; this will also be true of the already highly qualified Mr. Townley while he remains passive.

This again raises the significance of subjective experience in the process of occupational change and, with it, several implications for counselling. What appears to be important, if not essential, for the effective negotiation of change is the nature of the individual's self concept, with the ability to project that self forward into a new and different context. Material resources and cognitive skills have a limited role to play in this. What perhaps matters most is the forging of a coherent and appropriate identity; before this is achieved, the individual's ability to take stock of life, to identify, augment or update and make use of all available resources is impaired. Indeed, two of the interviews (not identified here to maintain confidentiality) suggest that to embark upon a course of education without a positive and realistic self concept may prove inappropriate, even disastrous.

Such a conclusion could also be drawn from a recognition of the following definition of 'effectiveness' (as used above to refer to the negotiation of change). While efficiency refers to the relationship between the inputs and outputs of object or situation, effectiveness is found in

the relationship between the outputs and the overall objectives. Thus while finance, qualifications and cognitive skills may make for an efficient negotiation of change, the effective negotiation requires that the outcomes are appropriate to the overall objectives of the individual's life, the identification of which is bound up with the self concept.

Thus the first and most important task of the counsellor is the recognition of the individual's subjective world and the facilitation of an appropriate self concept. This may call for a period of re-orientation before new commitments can reasonably be made and new skills acquired: the legitimacy of this has to be recognised in the provision of financial support for people undergoing occupational (and other?) change.

### Orientation to the environment

#### 1. Introduction

The last section suggests that, in the negotiation of change, the individual's 'inner resources' may be of greater significance than the existence and nature of the material assets. This section examines one aspect of those 'inner resources'.

Chapter Ten noted how from the beginning of this study I had some interest in Kotter's (1966) concept of the locus of control (outlined in Chapter Nine), but had not pursued his particular approach on methodological grounds. In the interviews, therefore, I listened for indications of such internal or external attributions and, for example, explored with the men some of their references to 'luck'. My initial interest has grown over time. The chapters preceding this one have underlined the major influence, often hitherto underplayed in 'career' development theory, of the environment upon the individual's 'career': the corollary of this is the recognition of the significance of the individual's response to that environment.

From my sensitivity to this area there has developed this embryonic concept of the orientation to the environment: the stance individuals adopt in approaching their particular world. It influences their interaction or transaction (Lazarus, 1980) with that world and is thus of critical importance in their negotiation of change. I did not perceive



the nature of this orientation before nor during the interviews but, as related in Chapter Eleven, during their analysis. It thus emerges directly from the men's experiences (as related in the interviews and filtered through my perception): on the one hand it is uncontaminated by any prior hypothesis or assumption I took to the interviews, but on the other - and consequentially - it was not explored nor clarified in the interviews. Thus although it seems to stand out sharply in some cases - hence my perception of it - in many others it is difficult even to infer, either in whole or part. This, no doubt, represents a typical experience of the application of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) approach to grounded theory: some excitement and much frustration.

It should also be noted here that while I became aware of the three dimensions of the orientation to the environment at an early stage of the analysis, my recognition of their relationship with the self concept came at a much later stage, after much reflection and greater familiarity with the transcripts. (The more these are read, the more difficult it becomes to blinker the attention and focus upon a narrow range of topics for this thesis for fascinating issues continue to spring from their pages.) I have, therefore, to conclude that, although I see these dimensions, others analysing the same material might see them differently or become aware of others. This makes necessary the presentation of some of the transcripts so that readers can evaluate my interpretations and make their own. My identification of the men's orientation to their environment is reached through an examination of the language they habitually use in the interview (which expresses their concepts and so indicates the way they see themselves and their world), the attitudes and sentiments they express and the behaviour they report. The following sections will illustrate this.

## 2. The dimensions of the orientation to the environment

How do individuals approach their environment? The interviews suggest that their orientation to it has at least three dimensions: their perception of the environment, their time perspective and their pre-disposition to act upon the environment. It seems probable that these dimensions are inter-related, that the individual's position along them changes over time and perhaps between situations and that this position is related to the nature of their self concept. These various

interrelationships may be inferred from some of the interviews, but are by no means clear. Four cases (those of Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Bolton, Mr. Jackaman and Mr. Townley) are used below to illustrate some of the more extreme positions and their effects upon the negotiation of change.

These three dimensions will now be examined in turn before looking at the orientation to the environment as a whole and examining its relationship with the self concept.

#### a. Perception of the environment

My first awareness of what I have since labelled the orientation to the environment was stimulated by the many repetitions of the phrase 'taking advantage of' by Mr. Stephens. I concluded from his language and the actions he describes that he regards his world as relatively constraining, though with random, intermittent chinks of opportunity for which he has to remain perpetually vigilant in order to take advantage of them. This awareness of his perception of his world led to a further examination of the transcript of the others' interviews and the recognition that some of those, too, seem to see their environment as closed and constraining, while others see it as open. Thus I identified this dimension of the perception of the environment, which is assumed here to be a continuum ranging between the extremes of open and closed. This clearly requires further exploration in research: although open/closed seem to be the primary characteristics of the environment perceived by the men, there are also faint traces of other attributes of the environment, such as fair/unfair, comprehensible/incomprehensible, comfortable/uncomfortable, benign/malign and malleable/recalcitrant.

Apart from descriptions of their actions, I take as indications of the men's perception of their environment their use of the words (or their synonyms) 'opportunity' and 'decision' (suggesting that the speaker construes the environment as open to him) and of 'luck' (suggesting that it is seen as closed against him in some degree).

#### i) an open environment

The men express perceptions of differing degrees of openness of their environment. Several seem to see it as completely open, so that they can act upon it as they choose, unrestricted by external constraints.



Mr. Bowers and Mr. Roberts convey a strong sense of their recognition of the openness of their world. Mr. Townley says (112b, 148a) 'my opportunities are so great'. Mr. Driver perceives (251b) only permeable barriers against him. Mr. Bolton apparently acts (296b) as though he perceives an open environment (an engineer can become an accountant or a solicitor if he so chooses), though it is clear that in the past he has often misjudged it (315). All the above talk of 'opportunity' and of 'decision'; only Mr. Bowers and Mr. Roberts (and Mr. Driver when quoting someone else) of 'luck'.

Other men leave the impression that they see their environment as partially open: Mr. Boatman, Mr. Charles, Mr. Hampden, Mr. Stephens. All of these speak of 'opportunity' and all except Mr. Charles refer to 'luck' several times; all except Mr. Boatman and Mr. Hampden speak of 'decision'.

#### ii) a closed or constraining environment

There are other men who speak as though they see their world as fairly closed or constraining: that is, they perceive and expect constraints to be imposed upon them from their environment.

Both Mr. Scott and Mr. Southwell approach their world as though it is constraining; if tackled, however, parts of it may prove fairly amenable. Both talk of the 'fiddling' they engage in (Mr. Southwell, 19b, 100b): activities which Goffman (1968, p. 172 ff.) calls 'secondary adjustments', by which the individual gains mastery over some small areas of an otherwise uncontrollable environment.

Though Mr. Portman looked for 'new horizons' abroad and 'a place of opportunity', he nevertheless experiences the army's promotion system as a 'pawn'; even the officers are 'pawns'. Mr. Morgan also feels the limitations of his world. He finds it generally uncomfortable, but makes himself accept and then enjoy whatever happens: of one enforced activity he says 'and that wasn't bad for me' and of another 'it won't last forever, I'll soon enter another phase'. Mr. Jordan seems to accept the 'slipping away' (80a ff.) of his dreams of promotion without demur. Mr. Baldwin's perception of his closed environment is noted under iv) below.

It is perhaps not insignificant that some of these men have also been the subjects of the previous chapter's discussions of a limiting opportunity structure; and that they are all soldiers, who have perhaps been drawn towards a fairly constraining occupational environment (see Mr. Hampden, 14b, on loyalty and 'soldierly' attitudes). All except Mr. Morgan refer to 'luck' several times; Mr. Portman and Mr. Southwell both speak of 'opportunity' and 'decision', but Mr. Morgan of neither and Mr. Jordan only of 'decision'.

It is, however, not only the soldiers who perceive life as constraining. As well as some of those who may have changed their perception of their environment (see below), Mr. Homer also sees it as closed ('just one of those things') and to some degree incomprehensible (see Mr. Jackaman, 158b).

### iii) the four illustrative cases

Of the four men who illustrate the extreme positions on the dimensions of the orientation to the environment, Mr. Bolton (296b), Mr. Jackaman (92b) and Mr. Townley (112b) perceive their environment as largely open and thus do not feel themselves constrained in their negotiation of change. For Mr. Baldwin, on the other hand, the world is experienced as harsh, inequitable and closed (10b, 131-2a). He seems to be in distress (164-5a, 206b) and throughout the interview rails against his situation. He refers to 'luck' several times, but also to 'decision' and once to 'opportunity'. This seems to be a changed perception of his environment since his experience of the 'thunderbolt' (37a), when he learned that his expected promotion would not materialise. Previously he had seen his world as predictable and open (32a ff., for example).

### iv) changes in the perception of the environment over time

The last chapter referred to the problem of drawing conclusions about the men's past behaviour from their present recollections, but found circumstantial support for its conclusions. Here the interviews seem to suggest that some of the men may have changed their perception of the environment over time: the only evidence here, however, is semantic. Mr. Baldwin (see below) seems now to see it as closed. Mr. Driver (50b, 251b) and Mr. McMillan (see Chapter Thirteen) speak as though they now see their life as more open than before. Mr. Dickens, who once felt his early life constrained by the opportunity structure, now recognises (205b) the openness of his environment and aspires to professional status.



v) possible explanations of the men's perception of their environment

Social learning theory would suggest that their perception derives from previous experience and may thus change as external pressures lead to different experiences: Mr. Baldwin illustrates this. Self concept theory, however, offers a different explanation: the perception of the environment derives from and in turn feeds into the self concept: Mr. Dickens's experience illustrates this. His new perception of the openness of his life stems not from improved circumstances, for these seem to have deteriorated, but from a strengthened self concept. Now acting as though his environment is open, he has taken an 'O' level which has both boosted his ego (202a) and possibly given him more opportunities than ever before (239-43a).

This study can do no more than identify such differences between these men and point to their significance for the negotiation of change. The perception of the environment as open makes for pro-activity and liberates decision-making; the perception of it as closed fosters reactivity and constricts decision-making.

b. The time perspective

Chapter Four noted how the individual may have a preference for or predominant orientation to a particular time zone, past, present or future, variously referred to as perspective, orientation or horizon (Hoornaert, 1973; De Volder, 1979). The first term has been used in this thesis to avoid confusion with the 'orientation' to the environment.

This is an aspect of the management of change in which I had been interested from the beginning of the study; I had thus asked almost all the men about their view of their future at certain points during their life-history. They reveal themselves as differing greatly in this, these differences finding parallels with Mann, Siegler and Osmond's (1972) 'psychotypology of time', which I did not in fact read until the analysis stage of the research. Because these differences have potential to influence their negotiation of change, I identify them as another dimension of the orientation to the environment.

i) present time perspective

Several men indicate that they have a present time perspective. For example, Mr. Bedford says

'I'm a day-by-day man, myself. I don't struggle into next year. I live today, tomorrow and the next day. I don't believe in planning anything (...) whatever turns up, you do. If nothing turns up you don't do it. (...) I don't really follow dates much, or years.'

Similarly, Mr. Bolton says (253a,b ff.)

'Temperamentally I'm the kind of person that doesn't worry too much about what's going to happen in a year's time. (...) a year seems a remote period to me ...'

He says further (204-5a,b)

'the prospect of waiting another year or so (...) and twiddling my thumbs (...) I couldn't face this.'

Mr. Roberts says

'I live from one day to the next and don't plan ahead very well. My wife plans, not me ...'

The interviews with Mr. Jordan, whose leaving date came as a surprise to him (76b, 110b) and with Mr. Southwell (65b) suggest that they, too, have a present time perspective.

One effect of such a perspective may be a hazy sense of past and future. Both Mr. Bedford and Mr. Bolton, for example, find it difficult to recall dates, even the approximate years, of past events in their life. As the quotation above suggests, Mr. Bolton seems to acknowledge the future cognitively, but cannot grasp it as a reality.

As discussed in Chapter Thirteen, these men may also have the tendency to act in order to end a situation of uncertainty: Mr. Bolton's 'twiddling my thumbs', 205a; Mr. Jordan, 110b. However, Mr. Hampden, who may also be doing this (126b), seems to have a future perspective.

Some of the possible correlates or explanations of a present time perspective are referred to in Chapter Four; others noted by



De Volder (1979) are depression, external locus of control, lack of control over the future situation. However the quotations above are not adequately explained in these terms; Mann, Siegler and Osmond's (1972) 'psychotypology of time', outlined in Chapter Four, seems to offer greater insight. According to this (pp. 164-5), these men are sensation types.

'... act upon their perceptions without hesitation. They are not hampered by trying to decide between alternate courses of action ... responding directly to stimuli rather than out of an intellectual or from a predetermined plan ... Waiting is equivalent to denial ...'

Such a time perspective could be expected to be a handicap in the negotiation of change, for the individual cannot project either self or situation forward into the future, cannot realistically anticipate the outcome of present actions. This, indeed, seems to have been one of the weaknesses in Mr. Bolton's negotiation of change (212b). Mr. Roberts (see above) and Mr. Southwell (42b) are perhaps protected from the difficulties incurred by their perspective by the planning abilities of their wife.

Unless this perspective and its effects are recognised by agencies involved in helping people manage change, problems in comprehension, communication and empathy may arise when it is wrongly assumed that the individual is planning for the future.

#### ii) past time perspective

Only one of the men interviewed could be interpreted as having a past time perspective. He, however, displayed some confusion about his life in general. It was difficult to obtain a coherent work history from him and to establish the series of events which brought him into the present. On several occasions he says 'was', which he follows immediately - as though cancelling it - with 'is'. 'I'd like to go back to about 14', he says and tells me some of his early history

'Do you spend a lot of time looking back?

Yes.

You enjoy looking back?

Yes, yes. It's something of a relief, really.

From the present?

Yes, from the present and the future. I think of the future and I turn it round and round in my mind and I forget it.

People can't see the future. You can see the past, not the future.'

In Mann, Siegler and Osmond's (1972, p. 149) typology, the person with a past time perspective is a feeling type

'... time is circular: the past manifests itself in the present and then is immediately returned to the past as a memory ... tend to see situations in terms of what is similar in the current event to events in their personal past, rather than in terms of what is unique about the existential situation.'

This perspective could also be expected to handicap decision-making and the management of change. However, Mr. Andrews's interview will not be used to illustrate this, for it presents material which is more than usually difficult to interpret and is thus only rarely referred to in these chapters.

### iii) future time perspective

Most of the men seem to have a future time perspective, though there are, as will be shown below, significant variations in this.

Mr. Driver (120b) and Mr. Jackaman (92b) look to the future realistically, as a natural extension of past and present. Their foresight of the likely effects of their actions and the likely changes in their environment aids them in their negotiation of change, for they are able to prepare themselves to take advantage of opportunities and to forestall (or at least lessen) trouble. Mr. Ellis, Mr. Paddington and Mr. Stephens also clearly demonstrate a similar approach and the interviews with others suggest it.

This time perspective, perhaps of those discussed in this chapter the most convenient for the negotiation of change, belongs to Mann, Siegler and Osmond's (1972, p. 157) thinking type, who has a basic sense of continuity in time and is concerned with ideas, principles and planning



'Before starting anything, the thinking type examines what he conceives the whole situation to be ... Spontaneity is not particularly characteristic ... They want to make up their mind, arrive at a logical conclusion before they act.'

It is this perspective which achieves the desired quality of 'planfulness' in the model of vocational maturity (Super, 1977: see Chapter Eight): as this section makes clear, however, some people do not have this perspective and, thus, may never display that quality.

The interviews suggest that as well as this view of the future which is based upon continuity and realism there are other kinds of future perspective. Mr. Townley, for example, frequently speaks of the future - and so can be said to have a future time perspective - but for him it is indistinct ('I don't see the future terribly clearly now', 147a,b), or expressed in affective rather than cognitive terms ('I have a feeling for what I'm going after', 83a,b) or in the conditional tense ('I would ...', 33b, 34b). His love of change ('I look for change', 108a,b) places him within Mann, Siegler and Osmond's (1972, p. 171) intuitive category of people who 'tend to skip about rapidly from one activity to another.' This kind of future perspective perhaps impedes the identification of future goals and thus does not contribute to the easy negotiation of change.

Mr. Bowers seems to have a different kind of future perspective, one which seems to be discontinuous from the past and present. He sees the future in his organisation very clearly but is frustrated because others there do not share his vision: 'it seemed so obvious to me, personally'.

'I was going so far (...) They will find out in 18 months' time, I'm sure of it ...'

Mann, Siegler and Osmond (1972, p. 171) would classify this as another facet of the intuitive type

'... intuitives frequently experience the frustration of waiting for events to catch up with that which is, to them, already clear and apprehensible ... constrained to return to the present and wait until chronological time has caught up with his vision

... restlessness with the ordinary pace of time and events.'

Such a person, they write, can see the future but not plan for it. This aspect of the future time perspective thus makes difficult the decision-making of the present and is thus another handicap in the negotiation on change.

#### iv) the four illustrative cases

Of these four cases, it has already been shown that Mr. Jackaman and Mr. Townley have some kind of future perspective. Mr. Baldwin ('I've got 25 years' working life maximum left', 203a; 'I'd be nearly 50', 189a,b) has a similarly realistic, continuous view as Mr. Jackaman. Mr. Bolton, however, has a present time perspective which, as already shown above, makes his management of the present change difficult for him.

#### v) changes in the time perspective

Hoornaert (1973) suggests that the time perspective is dynamic and continually re-organised. There is some indication in the interviews of change overtime. Mr. Scott, for example, explains (34a ff.) how he has developed a greater future orientation as he has neared the time for leaving the army, in which he had hitherto little need to think of the future.

'How long do you think you've been thinking along these lines about the future?'

'Very short period. (...) in the army (...) you work in an environment whereby if you are sick or anything goes wrong you still get the same pay (...) you tend to carry on until you get very, very near the end when you could really drop one if you didn't start thinking about the future.'

It may be that Mr. Jordan is also making the same change (26a,b).

#### vi) possible explanations of the men's time perspective

The attribution to situational factors of the cause for the change in Mr. Scott's view would point to social learning theory as a competent explanation for the time perspective. However, the Mann, Siegler and Osmond (1972) 'psychotypology of time' points to personality differences;



De Volder (1979) notes other research indicating individual differences. Mr. Townley's case, as discussed in the section on the self concept below, tentatively suggests some relationship between the time perspective and the self concept. This study can only raise but not answer the question of causality and correlation; these, again, merit further research.

#### vii) evaluation of the 'psychotypology of time'; other typologies

This analysis of the men's experiences suggests that there are differences between them which largely parallel Mann, Siegler and Osmond's (1972) 'psychotypology of time'. The major discrepancy between these experiences and the typology lies in the intuitive type. There seems to be too little in common between the visionary realism of Mr. Bowers and the vague and conditional assumptions of Mr. Townley to justify the attribution of the same label to both. Further research would undoubtedly be valuable.

It is appropriate to mention here the several typologies of organisational behaviour (see Collin, 1979b) which may also be relevant to the men's experience. Rapoport's (1970) typology of managerial development is of particular interest here: Mr. Bowers presents himself strikingly as a 'metamorphic developer', Mr. Townley also, perhaps.

#### c. The predisposition to act upon the environment

Another difference between the men interviewed which influences their negotiation of the present change lies in the degree to which they act upon their environment. Their apparent willingness or ability to act is labelled here 'predisposition to act' and is seen to constitute the third dimension of the orientation to the environment. In contrast to the other two, their position along this dimension is largely identified through their reported behaviour rather than their attitudes. (Again, although active/passive seems to be the major attribute of this dimension, there are also overtones of accepting or resisting circumstances and of perceiving action as being one's own or another's responsibility.)

These differences are strongly marked in the interviews (I encouraged many of them to talk about what they were doing in the present) and yet this dimension, as Chapter Nine observes, is scarcely developed as a coherent concept in the literature. It is thus another area in which research would be valuable.

### i) activity

By activity is meant here the predisposition to act in order to manipulate or to change the environment to make it more accepting of or congenial to the individual; it includes varying degrees of pro-activity, from reacting to circumstances and taking opportunities to making them.

The activities the men mention which prompted the identification of this predisposition include the acquisition of qualifications, enquiries about and applications for jobs and research into possible jobs. Some of the men are very active in these ways: they are not allowing their circumstances to constrain them and do not accept the situation as a given, but act to change it to some degree. Mr. Bolton's (79b, 89b) and Mr. Driver's (50b) pursuit of qualifications and appropriate experience have been discussed in earlier chapters: they acted energetically to change their circumstances. Mr. Baldwin, too, is active: he applied for postings in the past (145a; see also Mr. Hampden, 14b) and is now starting his job search and taking Resettlement courses ('as many as I can get on', 212a). Mr. Dickens is active, 'struggling' (178a) with Maths and taking an 'O' level (see 96b). Mr. Jackaman is actively researching the possibilities for his future (200a ff.)

It seems probable that people may be disposed to differing degrees of activity in the various segments of their environment, the domains of their life. While Mr. Morgan, for example, is relatively passive in his occupational domain, he is very active in his leisure domain; this is also perhaps true of Mr. McMillan, as Chapter Thirteen indicated. Mr. Southwell also seems fairly passive in terms of changing his environment in any major way and yet he is very active, as noted earlier, in the secondary adjustments of organisational life, in what he calls 'fiddling'. His relative passivity, however, is perhaps compensated for by his wife's activity ('I would never have attempted the thing if it hadn't been for the wife'; 42b, 48-9a).

The predisposition to act is of significance in the negotiation of change for, in a situation in which the individual's transaction with the environment is subject to change, the individual's activity can control or influence that transaction. However, as briefly discussed in Chapter Thirteen, not all activity is necessarily effective or appropriate: Mr. Bolton (167b) and Mr. Flint, though both predisposed



to act, do not always do so appropriately. For effective action it seems that this predisposition must be matched by the appropriate position on the other dimensions of the orientation to the environment as well as by judgement and other cognitive skills.

## ii) passivity

The individual who does not act to manipulate or to change the environment has a passive predisposition. While, as noted above, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Southwell are both relatively passive, an even greater degree of passivity is shown by Mr. Townley (2b, 154a ff.)

'I think once it starts it'll come and I don't have terribly much influence on it ...'

This suggests that his passivity is related to a sense that he has little control over his environment: yet, as noted earlier, he is aware of opportunities.

Such passivity leaves the individual to the mercies of the environment and could thus impede the effective negotiation of change. Its deleterious effect upon decision-making is particularly clear in Mr. Townley's case; this will be discussed again later in this chapter.

## iii) the four illustrative cases

Of these four cases, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Bolton and Mr. Jackaman are active whereas Mr. Townley is passive.

## iv) changes in the predisposition to act

It is possible to infer that many of these men have increased or decreased the level of their activity over time or have altered the nature of their activity in some way: Mr. Dickens, for example, once moved jobs to increase his income but is now expending his energy 'to re-build my own ego' (153a). An apparently significant change is the lessening of the degree of Mr. Townley's activity. He speaks of past activity and his love of change (108a ff., 131-4a); he has left his job and taken a lengthy trip abroad - all indications of past (though not necessarily effective) activity - but now seems frozen and unable or unwilling to act.

v) possible explanations of the men's predisposition to act

This analysis of the interviews does not correspond closely with a single aspect of activity discussed in Chapter Nine. While the men's predisposition to act seems to reflect some degree of autonomy and mastery, it is perhaps more concerned with their expenditure of energy which was discussed in Chapter Thirteen.

Social learning theory offers an explanation of this predisposition in terms of past learning experiences; other explanations derive from a psycho-analytic or a self concept approach. For example, Mr. Townley's passivity, which seems to be of recent origin and inconsistent with his position along the other dimensions of his orientation to the environment, may be explicable in terms of some past learning experience or of some deeply-felt or deeply-seated change or perception of self.

d. Self concept

As the introduction to this part of the chapter noted, the interviews suggest a relationship between the individual's self concept and orientation to the environment. The nature of this relationship cannot be determined here but merits further examination in research.

Chapter Thirteen has already presented some evidence of the state of the men's self concept. In addition to the degrees of confidence they express, it should be noted that they also convey some sense of the following aspects of their self concept: realistic/unrealistic; relaxed/driven; coherent/confused.

There are several apparent demonstrations of the relationship between the self concept and the orientation to the environment. Mr. Dickens indicates that his self concept is growing stronger and more positive (153b, 169b); at the same time he is starting to see opportunities never before recognised (220b), to act upon his environment (the '0' level, struggling with Maths) and to plan ahead (136/1b). Mr. Driver, with an open/future/active orientation seems generally to have a strong and realistic self concept (315b, 316b; but see also 301b). While the young Mr. McMillan (see Chapter Thirteen) lacked confidence, he also perceived his environment very narrowly. When in 'mid-life' he started to gain confidence, he also started to plan ahead and to see much wider opportunities.



While Mr. Jackaman, with an open/future/active orientation has a positive self concept (214b), it is difficult to infer the relationship between the self concept and the orientation to the environment in the other three illustrative cases (see Figure Fifteen). Mr. Baldwin is at present questioning (159a ff.) his sense of self. Mr. Bolton seems to have started with an unrealistic self concept (9b); he may have become more realistic about himself over time (243b) but not about his environment (103b). Finally, of Mr. Townley's sense of self there is little clear indication in the interview; just as he paints a hazy picture of his future, so he leaves little impression of how he perceives himself. Does his lack of a clear vision of the future reveal his own poverty of self concept?

Despite the difficulty, at times the impossibility, of tracing the relationship between the self concept and the orientation to the environment and thus understanding its nature, the existence of such a relationship is, nevertheless, suggested by these interviews.

e. Orientation to the environment: a valid new approach to understanding the negotiation of change?

This chapter has examined the ways in which the men approach their environment and has discerned some patterns in their approaches. From these patterns it has identified a tentative and embryonic concept, the orientation to the environment. Because it is grounded in the men's experience it is far from refined and requires considerable exploration in other research; it is possible, however, that further refinement will 'bruise the reality' (Law, 1981, p. 333) it seeks to represent. That, however, is a future problem. The present task is to examine how this concept can contribute to the understanding of the men interviewed.

The interviews suggest that the men differ in the stance they adopt in approaching their environment and that their orientation has at least three dimensions: their perception of the degree of openness of their environment, their time perspective and their predisposition to act upon that environment. It would seem that these dimensions are inter-related and that the individual's position along one is likely to be compatible with positions along the other two. There is coherence in the orientation as a whole when the positions along the three dimensions

are compatible, when, for example, the individual sees the environment as closed, is passive in response to it and has a present time perspective. None of the men adopts such an extreme stance, though Mr. Jordan and Mr. Southwell perhaps approach it. Several men (Mr. Argent, Mr. Bowers, Mr. Driver, Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Ellis and Mr. Jackaman) seem to be at the other extreme of these dimensions and see their environment as open, are active upon it and have a future time perspective.

Not all of the men, however, have this degree of consistency within their approach to the environment. If the four illustrative cases are plotted along the three dimensions, as shown in Figure Fifteen, it can be seen that while Mr. Jackaman is in the 'right' cell, having compatible positions along the three dimensions, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Bolton and Mr. Townley are not.

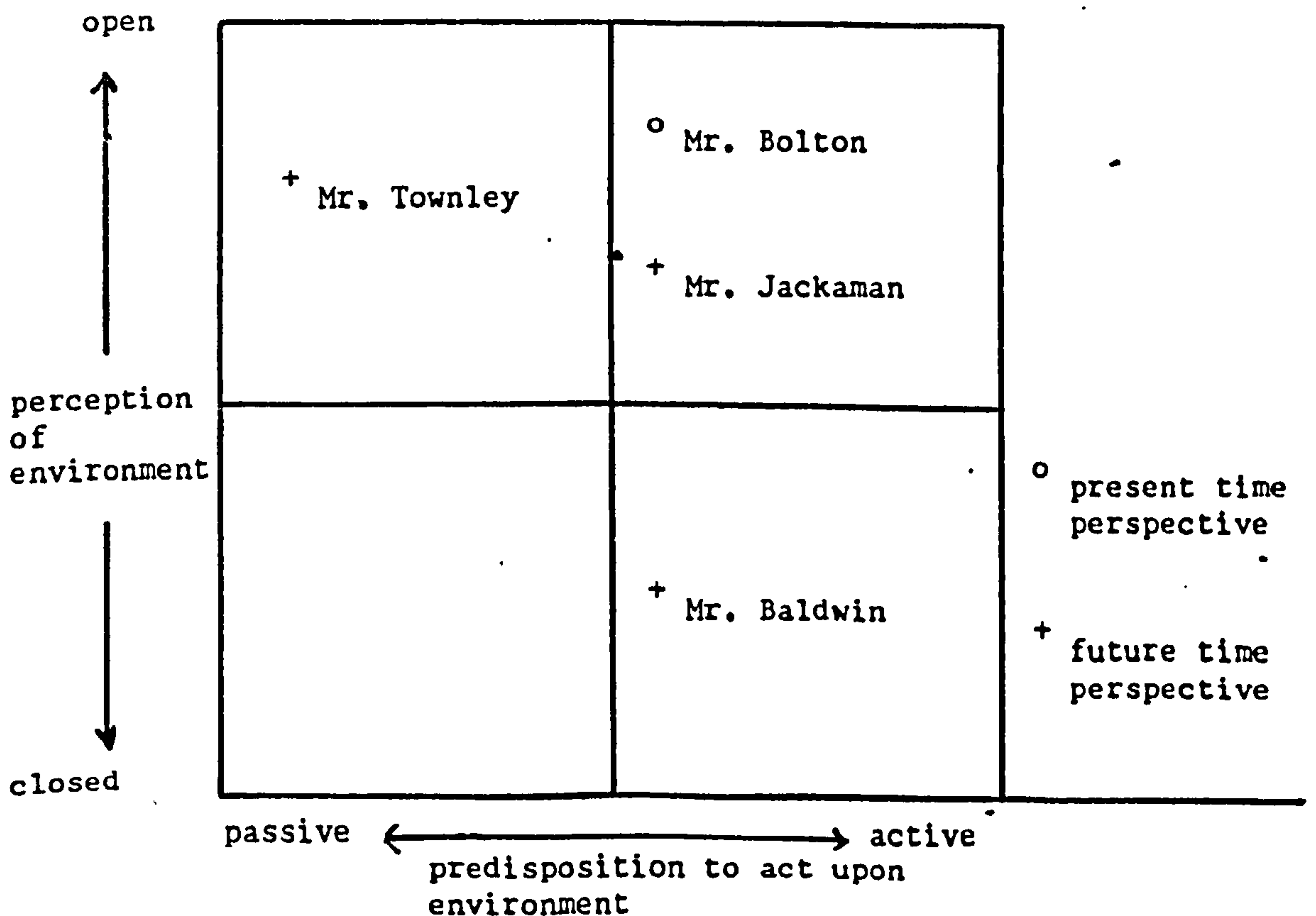


Figure Fifteen

The Orientation to the Environment of the Four Illustrative Cases



The three men whose orientations lack consistency indicate some considerable difficulty in their negotiation of the present change: relating some objective problem or emphasising their emotional distress. Mr. Baldwin, though active and with a future time perspective, perceives his environment as closed. As Chapter Thirteen showed, he still seems to be in an early stage of the grief cycle and is struggling to understand his environment and hence himself (for example, 153a ff.) Mr. Bolton perceives his environment as open and is active upon it, but has a present time perspective. The likely effect of this has been a series of disastrous job moves (some ending in redundancy) and the possibility that he is at present in the wrong situation. Mr. Townley looks to the future and sees his environment as open, yet remains passive and is currently doing nothing to effect change: some of his present difficulties are hinted at in 82-6a and 135-9a. None of the other men seems to have such an inconsistent orientation to their environment as these three have and none makes their distress or difficulty so explicit. (Other men are almost certainly under stress, Mr. Flint and Mr. Homer evidently so).

Consistency in the orientation to the environment is, thus, perhaps critical to the effective negotiation of change. Although the position along each dimension may have an influence upon this effectiveness, this is perhaps of lesser significance than the overall consistency. While the open/future/active orientation is perhaps ideal for the negotiation of change and the men who have this approach are making good progress, those approaching the other extreme of the dimensions do not seem to have experienced undue problems. Perhaps they do not have such high expectations that they become greatly disappointed or perhaps, like Mr. Southwell, they are helped by their open/planning/active wife.

The orientation to the environment conceptualises the ways in which the men appear to respond to their environment and, in so doing, offers an explanation - inconsistency within it - for some of the unhappy results of their responses. This grounded concept would, thus, apparently merit further exploration and clarification in research. Have its dimensions been accurately and exhaustively identified? What are the relationships between them? Is consistency between them as desirable as appears here? How does the individual take up a given position along each? Can that position be changed and, if so, how? What is the relationship with the self concept? Can this be changed and if so, how?

It is also appropriate to compare this tentative concept of the orientation to the environment with Rotter's (1966) well-established and researched locus of control. The two approaches differ in several ways. Rotter's derives from his behaviourist approach, whereas, as the preceding section shows, the concept of orientation is more strongly influenced by self concept theory. Rotter's scale identifies the individual's location on the I-E dimension; the orientation takes a wider view of the individual's relationship with the environment and envisages that this relationship will change over time and between situations. Rotter is concerned with this single dimension, whereas the orientation recognises at least three. However, as noted in Chapter Nine, Gurin et al. (1969) conclude that the scale measures four factors rather than one unitary factor; other studies agree upon two of their factors. These are 'Personal Control', how much control the individual has and 'System Modifiability', how far society's problems can be overcome (Peck and Whitlow, 1975).

These two factors perhaps find parallels in two of the dimensions of the orientation to the environment: the predisposition to act and the perception of the environment. This parallel, however faint, gives encouragement to the recommendation for the further investigation of the orientation in research. (A further parallel, with the work of Arroba (1977), will be discussed below).

### 3. Implications for counselling

It was suggested above that the orientation to the environment influences the negotiation of change. Those with a closed/present/passive orientation may not see the long-term outcomes of a situation of change; they will thus not see the opportunities nor the threats. Those with an open/future/active orientation will be able to work towards these opportunities and avoid those threats; they are able to see beyond the bad experiences in the present to the possible opportunities in the future. Those in the 'wrong' cells may be experiencing the disadvantages of the extremes of each dimension without its accompanying advantages and may thus be badly handicapped in their negotiation of change.

Further research is required to establish whether this orientation has validity or utility outside these interviews. The remainder of this section



will note the implications it would have for counselling people in change.

Much advice upon 'career' decision-making is likely to be based upon the premise of an open/future/active orientation and would thus be incomprehensible to or inappropriate for those who have another orientation; they may be unable to learn the skills necessary for effective decision-making or may apply them inappropriately. The counsellor would first have to establish the client's orientation to the environment and take it into account in the counselling process.

It has been suggested that some of the men in this study may have changed their orientation over time. The counsellor might be able to facilitate such change, perhaps by reinforcing positive aspects of the self concept which could, in time, modify the orientation. Alternatively, the counsellor might be able to help the individual modify one aspect of the orientation, such as the time perspective, and this in time might lead to a modification of the self concept.

### Decision-making

#### 1. Introduction

Chapter Eight noted that, while there are several well-regarded 'career' decision-making theories and Super (1981) considers decision-making to be 'the essence of career development', it has not yet been closely examined in 'career change' research. By no means did this study focus closely upon this aspect of the negotiation of change but it is, nevertheless, able to offer some examples of effective decision-making, to analyse some difficulties experienced and to make some suggestions for future research.

#### 2. Two examples of effective decision-making

In describing how they are currently negotiating (or have in the past negotiated) change, Mr. Driver (120b, 228b ff.) and Mr. Jackaman (92b) offer examples of what appears to be an effective process of decision-making. Their approaches are very similar (though their backgrounds are different), with one man emphasising in the interview one aspect of the process and the other man focussing upon another.

Both men speak of the gathering, sifting and evaluation of information: they scan their environment and identify possible opportunities and threats (Mr. Driver, 232-3a; Mr. Jackaman, 163a ff., 204-8a). They are realistic (Mr. Driver, 120b; Mr. Jackaman, 24b). They are aware of the needs of their domains, of their own strengths and weaknesses, and of the state of their resources, including that of their self confidence (Mr. Driver, 315b; Mr. Jackaman, 214b). They think ahead: both have a strong future time perspective. They listen to the advice of others and evaluate it: Mr. Driver says (245a) that he 'weights' it.

Both men keep their options open. Mr. Driver is concerned (264b) lest he be 'limited' (251a) and Mr. Jackaman points out (198a) that 'we haven't put all our eggs in one basket', keeping some room for manoeuvre. They also protect themselves with sufficient resources and with a fall-back position. While taking decisive action, Mr. Driver has insured himself (110a, 316b) against undue risk by taking 'certain precautionary steps'; 'I've built in a lot of protection' (320a). The Jackamans are similarly prudent with their less affluent resources: they postpone action until they have sufficient capital and experience (92b, 97a ff.) Compare this with Mr. Bolton (326b, 344a ff.), who seems willing to plunge headlong into a business venture.

Having made their decision, both men commit themselves to it. 'You've got to look to the future', says Mr. Jackaman (77-84a), 'it's no good saying what I could have done, if it hadn't been'. In the same vein, Mr. Driver says (238-9a) 'having made the decision I'm going to stick to it.' This contrasts strongly with Mr. Jordan's 'had I' approach (13b) or with Mr. Townley's apparently conditional (34b) intention to act.

Two aspects of effective decision-making which Mr. and Mrs. Jackaman (24b) make clear are flexibility and pragmatism. They do not adhere closely to a pre-determined plan, but constantly watch their circumstances and modify their actions accordingly: 'this is too good to miss' (103a), they say of a possible new posting which would keep them in the army for a further ten years and thus postpone what they had planned. Compared with this, Mr. Bolton's single-minded approach is unfavourable: he pursued his dream tenaciously (365b), apparently making no adjustment for changes in the environment and their implications for his job (191b). He also makes a poor assessment of his environment (178b).



Mr. Driver, talking (228a,b) of his 'theory about decisions', draws attention to the creative generation of alternative solutions in effective decision-making. He sets himself a time limit, before which he collects 'as much information as I can by all avenues that are open.' Until the limit expires, he withholds evaluation of the information, while his ideas are 'milling around' (234a). He thus gives scope for the generation of new ideas, perhaps the formation of a new Gestalt (see Chapter Nine). His decision seems to be made when what he perceives to be the superior forces in the situation prevail, when there is 'enough pressure to make the decision' (192a,b). This suggests that Mr. Townley who appears passive in this period of change, may perhaps not be opening himself to sufficient information and awareness (and hence the sense of pressure) to force him into a decisive move. On the other hand, Mr. Thomas says that too much information about possible lines of action can be very confusing and 'gives a troubled mind'. He speaks of the need 'to be channelled', presumably seeking some means of filtering and evaluating incoming information. Differences in the willingness or ability to handle such information, as shown by Mr. Driver and Mr. Thomas, could well repay further research.

Mr. Driver and Mr. Jackaman both emphasise the cognitive and the conative aspects of their decision-making process and there are suggestions that they match these with their affective responses: the Jackamans' references to the enjoyment of their work (see 92b) and Mr. Driver's exploitation (234a) of his unconscious resources.

### 3. Influences upon effective decision-making

It seems likely that the individual's mode of decision-making would be intimately related to the orientation to the environment. For example, Mr. Baldwin is impeded by his present perception of his environment. Feeling himself deceived in the world he once thought he knew, he is now aware that it is chaotic and unyielding and he finds it difficult to make a choice (206b), a decision. Mr. Bolton's decision to join the firm of consultants (140a ff.) seems to have been impaired by his present time perspective (204a), his poor assessment of his environment (103b) and the objectives and criteria to which he works (such as the need for experience, 191b). At present Mr. Townley is passive and making no decisions: everything is conditional (2b, 34b). Thus despite the apparently logical nature of decision-making (largely taken for granted

in the decision-making theories outlined in Chapter Eight), with its need for skills which can be systematically improved, these interviews suggest that the decision-making of some individuals will be impaired by perceptual and illogical factors in their approach to life, by their orientation to the environment.

The interviews further suggest that the cognitive, affective and conative aspects of decision-making, referred to in Chapter Eight, need to be compatible for effective decision-making. In the decisions which can be classified as weak or ineffective there seems to be a mis-match between these three aspects. Mr. Baldwin, for example, is responding affectively (106-7a, 205-8a) when a cool, cognitive appraisal is required; the reasons for him doing so were discussed in Chapter Thirteen. Mr. Bolton, also seems to have made a wrong response on several occasions. Talking (44b) of his response to the offer of a job, when a cognitive, evaluative response is called for, he stresses his affective response ('with great relief I was accepted', 118-9a). Oddly, however, where he could understandably have stressed an affective response (292b), he emphasises the cognitive. He is, indeed, aware of both responses when he talks (326b) about risk. Mr. Townley articulates (83a,b) an affective where a cognitive response is needed

'I have a feeling for what I'm going after (a job) - it's very difficult for me to describe ...'

He is also failing to make a conative response, as was noted earlier in the discussion of passivity. By contrast, the effective decision-makers, as the previous section shows, seem to make appropriate and compatible responses.

Are these differences between the men stable and explicable by means of a construct such as personality? Or, apparently like the orientation to the environment, do they change over time and between situations? Arroba's (1977) repertoire of decision-making styles which the individual uses in different situations was noted in Chapter Eight. Some of the men discussed above seem to be making decisions in ways which are similar to the styles she identifies. Mr. Driver and Mr. Jackaman would seem to be making the decisions described above in her logical style, objectively appraising their alternatives on their own merits or against



known goals. Mr. Bolton seems to be adopting the emotional style in the decisions referred to above, choosing the line of action with the greatest emotional appeal. The intuitive style, in which a decision is made if it feels right or inevitable, seems to represent the approach of Mr. Townley noted above; however, he might have been expected to use the compliant style she defines, which is characterised by passivity.

Following Arroba's thesis, the styles the men above use suggest that they do not see their decisions imposed upon them (when a compliant style might have been adopted) and that, while Mr. Driver, Mr. Jackaman and Mr. Townley regard them as 'very important', Mr. Bolton perceives his as 'quite important'. The interview material is not adequate to explore Arroba's approach further, but it would prove very illuminating in any future study of the negotiation of change.

The analysis earlier in this section of the cognitive, affective and conative aspects of decision-making and the potential incompatibility between them is in contrast to Arroba's approach, which would appear to associate each aspect with some particular styles: cognitive aspect/ logical style; affective aspect/emotional (possibly intuitive) style. An exploration of the differences between these two approaches would make a fascinating area for further study. Has the individual to develop a repertoire of styles and to use them appropriately or to make the appropriate and compatible response in each decision?

Arroba's article has a considerable relevance for this study. She underlines the importance of recognising both objective and subjective realities: perhaps Mr. Bolton's affective response was appropriate to the world as he experienced it? Her identification of an active-passive dimension and of the significance of the degree of control perceived in a decision situation are reminiscent of the active/passive and open/closed dimensions of the orientation to the environment; she does not include a time dimension in her analysis. The potential similarities and differences between these two studies merit further investigation.

#### 4. Implications for counselling

The experiences of the men in this study raise several important

questions upon this. How do people acquire their decision-making skills? Social learning theory contributes some understanding, but the possible relationship between decision-making and the orientation to the environment suggests that self concept theory would be as, if not more, illuminating. Once again, the counsellor has to start with the nature of the self concept and the orientation to the environment before embarking upon skills training: the individual may lack the ability to learn or apply those skills, however logical or appropriate those skills might be.

The counsellor has also to be aware of the possibility of a repertoire of styles appropriate for different situations or of the desirability of compatibility between the three aspects of responses noted above. Thus, perhaps, it has to be accepted that there are no (or few?) key decision-making skills to be taught: rather individuals have to become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and to approach new situations appropriately, optimising their strengths and compensating for their weaknesses.

A further implication for counselling is the need - already elaborated at the end of Chapter Thirteen - to recognise the individual's subjective world and to give appropriate support: many decision-making skills, though effective for the objective world, may perhaps have little relevance in the individual's interpretation of life. The next part of this chapter will conclude with some suggestions upon appropriate help.

#### The influence of other people upon the individual's negotiation of change

The influence which other people had upon them was another topic I raised with most of the men: Hiestand (1971), LaBuda (1974), Robbins (1977), Schlossberg et al. (1967) and Thomas (1977) all touch upon either such influence upon their 'career changers' or their need for information and advice.

This final part of the chapter will examine first the sources and nature of the advice the men say they receive and then the ways in which they use others for comparison, models and mentors; it will conclude with the implications for counselling. Once more, the categories for analysis are grounded in the experiences the men report.



## 1. External sources of information, advice, guidance and counselling

### a. Formal advice

The giving of advice is integral to three of the occupational transitions in which I interviewed the men: the Resettlement Service, the Rehabilitation Centre and the PER course. Formal advice of this kind is assumed to be essential to the effective negotiation of change; there is, indeed, a growing demand (see Watts, 1980) for an occupational and educational information service for adults, and indeed the formation of a National Association of Educational Guidance Services in 1983. However, with the disbanding of the Occupational Guidance Units there is now little or no free occupational guidance except that which accompanies such transitions and some kinds of training and State financial support.

These advisors are likely to be aware of the nature and needs of the environment, aware of the nature and needs of the individual and to try to match the one to the other. It is assumed that people will seek, accept and act upon such advice, though Hiestand (1971) and Robbins (1977) find that only a few of their respondents sought such help. This, then, was a matter I raised in the interviews.

Very few of the men, as noted in Chapter Twelve, had received 'career' guidance in their youth and there are now only a few, in middle-class jobs, who are currently seeking it. On the whole, while some turn to the professional for information about the environment, they firmly reject the need for any formal system of advice outside the transition. (Several of the Rehabilitation Centre trainees, however, express themselves as dependent upon their medical practitioners for occupational advice.)

As Mr. Charles puts it

'It's your decision in the end ... you don't really want someone else to make your decisions (...) I'm quite happy to do it for myself and decide upon all possibilities.'

Mr. Ellis echoes this, saying that having been brought up to make his own decisions, this is what he does; he has no need to seek others'

advice. Similarly Mr. Jordan says

'I've done it all on my own (...) I suppose I thought that nobody else would make me do what I didn't want to do again.'

Those who are receiving guidance during the present transition do not always appreciate it. For example, Mr. Baldwin says (199a ff.)

'...it frightened me a little bit by what he said (...) he's not talking to a young man any more ...'

Though the advice he received is no doubt objectively sound, it is not compatible with his subjective perception of his needs.

Apart from a spirit of independence, these responses also suggest a mis-perception of the function of 'career' counselling. This may be a relic of the men's early socialisation: in their initial response to the opportunity structure they had perhaps learned not to expect that others - and particularly authority figures - would be concerned with the implementation of their self concept. Now that they perhaps have a stronger sense of self, they resist the idea of interference. They accept the offer of information, but not of counselling which, in its attempt to encourage them to take a wider or a more realistic view of themselves, they may perceive as undermining their long-delayed autonomy and, any way, unlikely to be realistic or relevant. Perhaps (pace Roberts, 1977: see Chapter Fifteen) adults have to be educated to recognise counselling as a further means of autonomy rather than of control?

#### b. Informal advice

Several of the men refer to sources of informal advice upon their current occupational problems: a friend (Mr. Driver), their parents (Mr. Hampden, Mr. Morgan), their wife (Mr. Bolton, 357b, Mr. Lipton, Mr. Southwell, 42b). However, while they may listen to this advice, they all respond to it differently. Mr. Bolton says (362b) that he would only take serious note of the advice of an expert in the appropriate field. Mr. Driver (245a ff.) and Mr. Jackaman (123a ff.), both apparently effective decision-makers, incorporate the advice they receive from others into their general intelligence and evaluate it accordingly.



Informal advice may be particularly significant when formal advice may be not available or too costly. It has the advantage of being given by someone who knows the individual, perhaps intimately, over a long time and in many different situations. Its concomitant weakness is that the advisor may have blinkered expectations of the individual and a partial view (as recognised by Daws, 1977, pp. 14-15, quoted in the previous chapter); or may lack an extensive or penetrating knowledge of the environment. Formal, impersonal advice, whatever its quality can, to some degree be ignored: Mr. Driver recalls how he once rejected the advice of a personnel officer. Informal advice, however, which is personally given by father or friend may carry such emotional overtones that, despite its quality, it is difficult to neglect: as the young Mr. Luke, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Roberts once felt (see Chapter Twelve); and as others are perhaps now finding.

## 2. Comparisons made by the men

Although the men leave the impression that formal and informal advice has influenced them relatively little in their past or present negotiation of change, they indicate that they are, nevertheless, open to external influence through the comparisons they make between themselves and others.

These comparisons (explicable in self concept or social learning theory terms) may be significant (though hitherto largely unregarded) influences upon the negotiation of change. Their significance lies first in the fact that the individual makes the comparison in accordance with his own awareness or blindspots. The conclusions he draws are potentially more direct, relevant and insightful into his own needs than the advice another could give him; they do not require translation from another's perceptions, though they may derive from and reinforce his own faulty or limited perceptions. Secondly, and associated with the first, such a comparison addresses his subjective reality whereas the advice given by another springs from observation of his objective world. The significance of the subjective aspect of 'career' and the consequent limitations of certain approaches in counselling have been stressed in several of the preceding chapters. The potential significance of the comparison in counselling has perhaps not yet been fully developed.

This section will now examine various forms of comparison which the men use: with organisational benchmarks, with other people and with people in similar situations.

#### a. Organisational benchmarks

Certain norms of achievement or progress, variously expressed in terms of age, length of service, status or income often become established informally in an organisation. (The 'timetables' in hospital treatment perceived by Roth (1963) and the roles of mentor and sponsor identified by Dalton, Thompson and Price (1977) are examples of this.) These benchmarks may be greatly influenced by the norms of the formal organisation, as communicated through the formal promotion system or staff appraisal schemes; the informal norms may sometimes be formally recognised. The standards and expectations generated by the army's annual report system played a significant part in the frustrations of Mr. Baldwin (47b) and Mr. Hampden (80b). People relate themselves to these benchmarks to learn something about themselves and how well they are progressing according to the time-honoured organisational criteria. They thereby gain feedback on their performance, which influences their perception of themselves, develops their personal timetables and fosters their expectations of a particular future. When such norms exist, individuals will make such comparisons, perhaps discounting or disbelieving information from formal sources; others will also appraise the individual against these norms, so that shared expectations of a particular future for the individual may arise.

Sofer's (1970, p. 274) study of men in 'mid-career' illumines this well.

'There is an exquisitely sensitive awareness of each grading within the organisation in relation to age, as a sign of one's chances of moving to the top. People are constantly mulling over the question whether they are up to or behind schedule.'

The interviews with the soldiers (Mr. Baldwin, 19a ff.; Mr. Hampden, 63a ff., 139a,b) produce several references to the significance of these benchmarks to the negotiation of change: they indicate the individual's past achievement and possible future in a known environment. Chapter Thirteen described how these men built up considerable expectations



of their future by their reference to these norms and how their world was shattered when these did not materialise.

Whereas the formal promotion system deals largely in objective realities, these benchmarks are used to construct the individual's subjective world. Sometimes the two sources of information tell different stories, as Mr. Baldwin experienced (159a ff.)

'... that report (...) it was absolutely brilliant (...) In fact, it wasn't true ...'

Sometimes, for its own rational purposes, the organisation may change its promotion system and hence the benchmarks, thus confusing and confounding the individual (Mr. Baldwin, 83-4a; Mr. Jackaman, 59-60a). At other times (according to Mr. Baldwin, 132a ff.), it may deliberately obscure or manipulate the formal appraisal or annual report. Thus the basis upon which the individual's expectations are being constructed may prove far from stable or accurate; using misleading information, the individual imagines an impossible future.

When people leave the organisation, as in 'career change', they lose this important source of comparison and thus of self-knowledge. They move into a situation where there may be no benchmarks or where they may be difficult for the newcomer to perceive. Feedback from some other source perhaps becomes more important during such transitional phases.

#### b. Comparisons with others

The interviews indicate that the men make many comparisons between themselves and others. As noted in the last chapter, Mr. Scott describes (10a ff.) how the young soldier compares himself with the man in the rank above him and, finding that he has similar or superior attributes ('I'm better than that sergeant'), aspires to that rank himself. Mr. Driver also makes these comparisons: with more experienced engineers in his industry and with his father (43-5a) 'I don't think (my father) got the drive that I've got.' This comparison tells him something about himself and suggests certain future directions to him. However, Mr. Thomas points out that a job may prove to be very different from that imagined when watching others doing it.

There is likely to be some degree of acquaintanceship and similarity between the individual and the person with whom he compares himself in order to initiate the comparison and to make it an effective one. Through the comparison the individual discovers himself and assesses his strengths and weaknesses and through this learning will perhaps modify the self concept. Whether explained in self concept or social learning theory terms, it is significant in individual development.

One of the losses in job change (and other changes, too) is of contact with people with whom it is reasonable to make comparison. Mr. Baldwin expresses this loss as he describes (108a ff.) his fears about moving into civilian life; 'am I better than they are, am I worse than they are?' Without such comparison, he is finding it hard to assess himself, to learn new behaviours and reinforce them. This is a particular problem for women in organisations - whether changing jobs or not - for there may be few others with whom to make a reasonable comparison.

#### c. Comparisons with people in similar situations

The interviews suggest that another important reference point is a person in a situation similar to the one in which the individual is or is likely to be. Such people may be unknown to the individual and virtually faceless, but their actions and experiences in that situation are examined to suggest future possibilities for that individual and to identify future opportunities and threats. Parkes (1971, p. 112) writes of amputees

'... people who have successfully come through major transitions ... are often best able to help other individuals who are still caught up in the process of realisation ... when he meets someone more seriously mutilated than himself who appears to be coping well and cheerfully with his disability ... it becomes possible for him to look to the future in an optimistic manner.'

Several of the men are currently making such comparisons. Mr. Dickens says (194-6a)

'I was reading in the paper how some old man went and passed (...) his 'A' level Maths - 78. I thought if he can do it, I feel I can at least try and do it.'



Mr. Jackaman is finding out how other people manage pubs (205-8a). The soldiers are taking note of what others who have left the army have since done (see Mr. Southwell, 95b); this is part of the information given them by the Resettlement Service. However, they point to the limits on this information, which generally concerns the successes. As Mr. Baldwin says, 'The truth of the matter isn't that good at all. And you never hear about the ones that don't make it.' Mr. Thomas expands upon this: he would find it helpful to learn about the actual jobs that others 'in my sphere' eventually did, including those who find themselves underemployed and those who are underemployed but happy. He does not find it helpful to know what the specialists have done.

Whereas the comparisons noted in the section above help to clarify the individual's self concept and those with the organisational benchmarks their organisational identity and organisational future, these comparisons with people in a similar situation suggest possible futures in an unfamiliar environment. They are thus a device for self-guidance during the negotiation of change, a means of discovering, understanding and translating into their own terms the new environment they have to master.

### 3. Models

Social learning theory (see Chapter Eight) identifies the role of the model in much social learning through life. The model, who may be ignorant of the role being played or may perhaps offer inappropriate, poor or damaging lessons to the imitator, may be copied in whole or in part.

The interviews show how several of the men modelled themselves upon others to some extent when they left school (noted in Chapter Twelve): Mr. Baldwin ('165 years continuous service in one regiment'), Mr. Charles, Mr. Hampden, Mr. McMillan. Some also tell how through imitation they have learned new skills and behaviour which have eventually changed them. Mr. Driver, who perhaps also modelled himself upon his father, talks (321a ff.) of the friend he had when an apprentice, 'I watched the way he did it' (which was with great confidence) and, by implication, copied him. Speaking of an officer he once had Mr. Jordan says

'He was a man that taught me everything (...) I always copied and I never went wrong.'

Similarly, Mr. Scott says

'He taught me more about soldiering than I'd been taught by anyone (...) I wouldn't say I modelled myself on him ... but ... I was teaching the same lessons he taught.'

Mr. Thomas, again speaking of an officer who had commanded him, says graphically of this process of modelling

'I've modelled myself on the one I first met when I came (...) in (...) a smashing chap ... I've stolen a little bit of him'.

and he now says to those below him 'I don't want you to be the same as me but steal a little bit of me'.

None mentions a model during their present phase of change, though several, as noted earlier, are trying to make comparisons with others. Clearly, in situations of change, it is possible that existing models may be lost.

Whereas the comparisons discussed in the earlier sections serve the purpose of bringing self knowledge and an awareness of possible future selves, the individual's use of the model suggests that the individual has a tentative awareness of self and of an ideal self and that the model is being used as the means of selecting behaviour which will enable the implementation of that self (or the growth) towards the ideal self. The model may thus be an important means in development: the individual identifies someone who approximates to his ideal self (or to some aspects of it) and imitates the behaviours which implement that self. Such modelling may not necessarily be realistic: the individual may wrongly identify the appropriate model (as perhaps Mr. Bolton, 5b had done) or misinterpret the significant behaviours. It is, nevertheless, a significant aspect of development and one which justifies further examination in research as well as respect in counselling.



#### 4. Mentors

The recognition of the significance of the mentor in adult development is a recent concern in the literature (Noller, Frey, 1983) and one which seems likely to grow. Unlike in the other forms of comparison mentioned in this chapter, the learning here stems from an interpersonal relationship between the mentor and an individual. It thus cannot exist at the will of or for the benefit of one party alone; it cannot be (except in the sense of an 'arranged' marriage) formally instituted by an organisation.

The literature suggests that in the effective mentor relationship the senior person teaches the younger 'the ropes', directs efforts towards worthwhile goals, encourages realistic but aspiring expectations, gives feedback on strengths and weaknesses, praises without envy, pushes forwards or restrains where necessary or politic, guides into and through new learning situations, gives encouragement and confidence and nourishes the self concept. From such a relationship the senior person (whether in age, seniority or experience) gains personal satisfaction through the exercise of influence, validates his or her own experience, finds an outlet for further achievement when higher promotion is no longer possible and a means to influence the future. All of these could have the negative aspects of control and envy in a poor relationship. The younger person is at the same time mastering the essential lessons for organisational life or for life in general and is learning about self with moral support in difficult periods or in failures and deriving the benefits of psychological success discussed in Chapter Nine.

This can be a close personal relationship so that its ending, which comes as the younger person achieves maturity and so outgrows the need, may be a painful experience for both. Indeed, Levinson et al. (1978, p. 334) write

'Like all love relationships, the course of a mentor relationship is rarely smooth and its ending is often painful.'

Such a relationship may exist within an organisation, where much of the learning would relate to organisational behaviour (Collin, 1979b); or it may exist outside, where the learning is of coping with life in

general (Levinson et al., 1978; Vaillant 1977). The literature suggests that the relationship gives great advantages in the 'career': Vaillant (1977, p. 219) writes

'Grant Study men with relatively unsuccessful careers either had not discovered mentors until their early forties, or had mentors who served only during adolescence.'

The interviews contain several indications both of the existence of this relationship and of its notable absence. Mr. Southwell speaks (14a ff.) of a mentor in early adulthood

'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, 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.'

It was perhaps from this relationship that he learned the value of education (31-2a).

Other men talk of similar relationships in their early 'career'. Mr. Betts at 22 had a boss who was a good motivator and 'taught me a lot'. In his late twenties Mr. Portman became friends with his commanding officer of the time, who greatly influenced his thinking, pointing out the qualifications and experience the younger man lacked which would impede his promotion prospects. 'I took his advice', started a programme of education while overseas and eventually achieved a much higher rank. Mr. Bedford speaks of the support a boss had given him during early adulthood, teaching him new skills and giving him confidence.

In some respects Mr. Driver's father, 'who kept telling me to get myself qualified' (18a), was acting as a mentor during his early years; he was also a model of some kind (17b, 44b). The present uncomfortable relationship between them (1b) is not unlike the breakdown of the mentor relationship noted above.

Mr. Bowers seems to have enjoyed such a relationship in his first job.



His boss, though apparently 'lacking' professional skills, clearly excelled in developing younger employees who eventually outgrew him.

'My boss let me do anything (...) I was responsible for as much as I could become responsible for. He was marvellous. He had a history of taking people in, training people ...'

In the present, however, Mr. Bowers, a very self-aware man, expresses his need of someone to compare himself with

'having had nobody to measure (myself against) (...) I don't know (whether I'm effective) - that's the point. Because I've never had anybody to say. (...) I can't satisfy myself that I'm successful (...) I certainly haven't got the confidence ...'

He is asking, perhaps, not just for a point of comparison, but for a mentor relationship which will give him confidence in himself.

In Mr. Dickens's reference to the lack of 'encouragement' received in his youth (for example, 81a ff.), he seems to be regretting the absence then of a mentor relationship. He says nothing to suggest its presence or absence now.

An aspect of this relationship which emerges from these interviews and which is not noted in the American literature is that this relationship exists despite pressure from the opportunity structure (as in Mr. Southwell's case); indeed, perhaps it exists in some cases because of that perceived pressure. These interviews give no indication whether the relationship bridges people of different social classes (Mr. Portman and his commanding officer may have come from the same class originally). It may, indeed, be an important means of breaking down the structure and of boosting the self concept. This would certainly make fascinating research.

An examination of this relationship suggests that it is performing the combined functions of the various forms of advice and comparison already noted in this chapter. It gives the individual some degree of advice about the environment and about organisational norms; it fosters a knowledge of self, a belief in self and the means of changing the self. The fact that the relationship, as suggested by the scant

research information now available, ends in the 'mid-life' period, also suggests that perhaps adults in general do not need continuing advice and comparisons; or perhaps they do not need them in stable situations, or perhaps they need them but generally never have them. Perhaps there is a greater need during times of change; and if there is no mentor relationship available - either because it does not exist for the individual or has drawn to its natural close - then perhaps those forms of advice and comparison become critically important during 'mid-career change'.

The paucity of possible mentors for women - while not an issue in this particular study - should also be noted.

##### 5. Implications for counselling

One of the major themes of Phase Three has been the significance of the subjective aspect of 'career' and the need for its adequate recognition in research, theory and counselling. This theme has emerged again in this part of the chapter, which has noted the different contributions to the negotiation of change of, on the one hand, the advice and guidance which emanate from others and, on the other, the inferences and conclusions about self which the individual draws from comparisons or relationships with others. It is upon this latter source of information that this concluding section will focus for it is suggested that it offers a key to the understanding of some of the subjective aspects of 'career' and thus has a crucial importance in the negotiation of change, thereby meriting particular attention by the counsellor.

What are the sources of and the influences upon the individual's interpretation of objective events, the subjective aspect of 'career'? This study cannot answer these questions, though Chapter Twelve's description of the process of 'career' indicates some of the areas in which answers might lie. This chapter adds to those areas the comparisons and relationships it has discussed which, it concludes, contribute to the clarification, strengthening and modification of the self concept, to its implementation in the present and to the development of a future self. The individual's assumptive world, the subjective interpretation of 'career', is influenced by these comparisons and relationships with others.



This has several implications, one of which will be briefly noted here and another more fully explored. The first concerns the systematic development of an individual within an organisation (as in management development). While standard approaches largely address the objective 'career', the individual is simultaneously making subjective interpretations (through these comparisons and other means) and the nature of those interpretations may be partly influenced by the people available for comparison. Thus when transferring staff, for example, consideration has to be given to the appropriateness of the boss and of the job, to that of the colleagues and of the department. In staff appraisal, people perhaps need feedback upon the performance and future prospects of others as well as of themselves, including others who may have left the organisation. The degree of openness this would require would be influenced by, among other factors, management style, organisational climate and the levels of participation and trust, which exist. Open discussion of 'career' issues could take place through 'career' workshops and through coaching relationships between senior and junior personnel. While these, when formally instituted, may lack some of the dimensions of the mentor relationship, they could either develop such dimensions over time or sow the seed of such a relationship with someone else.

In recognising the powerful 'Heineken effect'<sup>1</sup> of these comparisons (they may touch parts of the 'career' which other techniques cannot ...), care must be taken not to assume that they offer means of manipulating the individual's subjective experience. The availability of appropriate and effective models and points of comparison may well influence that interpretation, but the nature of that influence will be determined by countless other factors outside the organisation's power to control.

This same caution applies also to the second implication, which is for the counselling of people experiencing occupational change. The counsellor may, through means to be discussed, provide appropriate material for the individual to use but cannot thereby determine that use.

Before examining those means, there must be noted the particular significance of the subjective evaluation of others during the experience of change. First, many of the skills, such as those of decision-making,

<sup>1</sup> A lager advertisement: 'Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach.'

which are recognised as important in the effective negotiation of change, cannot address what might for some be the most critical aspect of that change, the subjective. Secondly, people experiencing a 'broken truce' may be in a stage of the grief cycle in which they cannot, temporarily at least, use those skills. When the self concept is thrown into disarray by some change in the assumptive world, the healing of that assumptive world becomes the fundamental need; the exercise of cognitive skill may only partially contribute to this. This seems particularly clear in Mr. Baldwin's case, as described in Chapter Thirteen. He is struggling with what he perceives as a 'murderous choice' (206a,b), a cognitive activity which, affectively, he is not yet able to carry out. He and others like him desperately need ways of informing their subjective world, yet their customary sources of information, the models and comparisons, may also be swept away in the change.

What part can the counsellor play to help such people? (Counselling is defined as in Introduction to Phase Three). A pre-requisite, as discussed in the conclusions of several previous chapters, is an awareness of and respect for the particular dimensions of the individual's problem and the use of interventions appropriate to them. One such is the provision of models and points of comparison relevant for the transitional experience itself and its possible outcomes.

How, then, may this be achieved? The counsellor could arrange for the individual to meet others who are in or have passed through the same transition. They would probably be at various stages of the grief cycle and would have different strategies for negotiating change, different orientations to the environment. They would be encouraged to share their experiences, discussing their particular situations; their cognitive, affective and conative responses; their expectations, the degree to which they have fulfilled these and by what means; their recognition of the need for certain skills or approaches; their timetable of responses; the effects upon the other domains of their life; their failures, their changes of plan or approach and their latest hopes for the future. The counsellor could ensure that they represent a variety of strategies, both effective and ineffective and a variety of actual and potential outcomes; the particular identification the individual makes with them, however, cannot be ensured.

Such an approach, perhaps carried out on a group basis, would be



feasible in many institutional transitions, such as in the Resettlement Service. It is, in effect, already an outcome of some transitional arrangements or of training schemes or 'drop-in centres' for the unemployed; but it may be an accidental outcome, not planned, and thus perhaps not permitting a wide range of examples, nor accorded timetabled time and space nor sufficient other resources.

However, this may not be a practical approach when dealing with the single individual or series of single individuals. Here (and also as a supplement to the group approach) the counsellor could use a variety of materials to present vignettes of people experiencing change: tapes, videos and films; brochures, books, cartoons; newspaper and magazine articles; posters. Such material could be specially prepared to cover the topics outlined above, or the counsellor could point to existing television programmes, films or novels as points of comparison. The temptation with specially-prepared material is to include valuable lessons and to exclude undesirable models rather than to allow individuals to draw their own conclusions.

Another counselling device, when discussing possible lines of future action or choice of occupations, might be to accompany information about the various options with details about people who have or who are taking them.

This focus upon models and points of comparison could offer a fruitful line of development in counselling and one which could be tailored to the circumstances of the counsellor and the needs of the client group.



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### The perception and experience of 'middle age'

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## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### THE PERCEPTION AND EXPERIENCE OF 'MIDDLE AGE'

#### Introduction

Chapters Two, Five and Six examined the literature concerned with the changes said to take place during 'middle age', in particular with 'mid-life crisis'. This chapter now reports upon the perceptions and experience of 'middle age' of the men interviewed and raises again several of the issues discussed earlier.

At the time of the interview nine of the men were in their 50s, 15 in their 40s and eight in their 30s. They knew that for the research they were regarded as being in the middle years of their life (the invitation to the mature students to take part in the research, for example, refers to 'mid-life experiences'). As the transcripts of the interviews in Volume Two show, the discussion of ageing and of 'mid-life' was not extensive: I asked most of the men about their attitudes to and experience of 'middle age' and they also referred to their age when replying to other questions.

Although between them they cover 25 years of the life-span, from 30 to 54, this does not permit any view of the changes which take place over such a period of time. For this a longitudinal study of the individual would be needed.

#### The men's perceptions of 'middle age'

An examination of the men's expectations of and beliefs about 'middle age' suggests that their perceptions of it derive more from their pragmatic approach as potential applicants for a job than from some abstract concept which they hold; more from what they have heard about 'middle age' than from their own experience. (It should, of course, be remembered that some had not long entered their middle years according to the criterion of this study.)

#### 1. The definition of 'middle age'

Those asked about the meaning to them of 'middle age' did not find ready answers. For example, I asked Mr. McMillan

'It's not a concept that you use in your own life?

No ... er ... er ... my wife (...) (says) "(...) I'm middle-aged now" and I'll say "So what?" I think being middle-aged doesn't really mean anything, as a concept, to me. (...) It's just me ... at this point in time and the fact that I'm 30, 40, 50 is not, as far as I am aware, anything that particularly impinges itself upon me, except that, when I became 50, I began to realise that (...) retirement is not all that far away ...'

Mr. Charles also has to think this through

'What do you mean by the term "middle-aged"? (...)

Middle-aged ... I suppose ... when you start sitting down at night, not doing anything. (...)

(...) what does it mean to you in terms of age?

(...) maybe it's a state of mind rather than a state of being middle-aged (...) if you don't think of middle age perhaps you're not (...) you tend to be a bit more staid in your ways, you don't do things that you would do when you were younger ...'

It also, he says, depends upon your way of life. In his occupation he is kept active and thus 'slightly younger', whereas

'If you're sat in the same factory for 40-odd years (...) you'd get slightly - set in your ways ...'

Mr. Paddington distinguishes between chronological and experiential 'middle age': 'I know men of 70 who are doing a day's work ...'

The replies of these three men are in accord with the conclusions drawn at the end of Chapter Two: that 'middle age' is a very ambiguous term. They give an experiential definition of it (as a 'state of mind'), but recognise that it has overtones of physical slowing-down and decay and also of specific chronological age. Perhaps it is not a meaningful concept for them because it is somewhat confusing: it attempts to embrace chronological age, attitude of mind and physiological states, the correspondence between which they reject.



## 2. Their beliefs about 'middle age'

This section examines what appear to be the men's beliefs about 'middle age'. Apart from two specific references to earlier expectations of positive experiences (which those concerned imply have not been fulfilled), the interviews convey the impression of a strong belief that 'middle age' - at least for people about to seek a new job - is a 'problem' period in life. Chapter Fourteen has already noted some of the influences upon the men of these beliefs about 'mid-life'.

Mr. Dickens is one of the exceptions who expected positive experiences in 'mid-life' (141-4a): in this case competence and self confidence.

'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 ...'

The other is Mr. Flint, who says that he had expected to be at his 'best', physically and mentally, at the age of 43.

### a. Belief in physical and mental decline in 'middle age'

There are several references to the expected dwindling of energy and activity to which Mr. Charles is referring when quoted in the previous section. Mr. Townley, for example, talks of 'slowing down'. Mr. Morgan uses 'middle-aged' as an epithet to denote a lack of energy and stamina (of himself at 21: 'like a middle-aged man') or a sedentary, inactive job (the clerical job he had when he was about 30: 'a middle-aged sort of job').

Now aged 38, Mr. Baldwin sees himself (7-8a) at his 'peak' and 'still in good physical condition'. However, he seems to believe (198-202a) that 'mid-life' is a period of physical decline which he will shortly enter

'... at my age I can't afford to fool around with employment (...)  
he's not talking to a young man any more.'

Mr. Stephens refers to decline in cognitive functioning

'... we all know that the learning age starts deteriorating from

the age of about 25 upwards till we come to about 35 - it's starting to become a struggle.'

For this reason Mr. Homer thinks that older people should take up/ educational courses, which for him have been re-vitalising.

'Middle age', some mention, brings a sense of obsolescence and possible displacement by younger people. Like some of their other beliefs, this is expressed through a comparison. Mr. Charles (above) compares his present with his younger self; others compare themselves with younger people now. Mr. Jordan has always been an active sportsman but he now speaks of (51-2a,b)

'... competition with the youngsters (...) who can run twice as fast as I can (...) battling against younger people whose brains are more active ...'

In similar vein Mr. Bolton says (287-9a)

'... bright young graduates (...) who would walk rings round me ...'

#### b. Belief in age as a barrier to employment

'People might say that age is going to be against me (...) but I don't think that's right. I think that's probably an excuse in a lot of cases.'

Perhaps of those interviewed only the Jackamans (154a) would agree with Mr. Driver (268-71a,b), for many express concern about the likely difficulties of getting a job 'because of my age' (Mr. Jordan, 22a,b. // He is 45 and makes several references to this anxiety.) At 47 Mr. Southwell has similar fears (89a,b); Mr. Bolton felt them when he was 41 (163a,b).

Mr. Dickens perceives his age as an enormous barrier to getting a job: '... 40 and over the hill ...' (178a); '... being 40 (...) that's against you as well.' (134a). He seems to think that employers see people in their 40s as old and decrepit, fit only for the lowest grade of occupations to which the fit adult would not stoop. He is now almost 42 and feels 'young': 'I'm not going into an old cap and pipe.'



(182-3a). He feels 'too young' 'to go cleaning lavatories' (not in the transcript).

Some of the frustration implied here is echoed in 42 year old Mr. Bedford's explanation for his experience of age discrimination

'I went up for job after job after job but there's a lot of this "You're over the hill" touch, "you're ready for the scrap-yards ..." (...) Even if you're fit, you're still ready for the scrapheap if you're over 40 according to them because they really don't want to pay you anything substantial, so they prefer an 18-year old kid and pay them peanuts.'

While still finding it difficult, others recognise some validity in employers' attitudes: the 'mid-life' recruit is a doubtful investment. Mr. Hampden, for example, says (128-33a)

'... at 40 - a lot of people say you're too old (...) I don't feel it, but in a way they have got a point. They would prefer to employ someone that's 20 and train them in their ways (...) rather than somebody who's firmly fixed in his ideas...'

Mr. Baldwin sees (185-90a,b; 203-4a) this from the individual's perspective

'...it's a hard business at 40 - starting again (...) I'd be nearly 50 by the time I qualified and then there's 15 useful years left? (...) I've got 25 years' working-life maximum left (...) retirement will be down to 60.'

These men were interviewed during an occupational transition, so it is not surprising that they should speak of fears and anxieties. They express anxiety about their age, but it has to be questioned whether their statements actually represent their beliefs about 'middle age' itself. Do they not, perhaps, reflect their fears about their job prospects in particular or about the change in their life in general? While this question cannot be answered directly from these interviews, the actual experience of 'middle age', where discussed, seems to belie these beliefs. This point will be returned to again later.

c. The 'problem' decade: 40s or 50s?

Just as the Colchester study (Ritchie, 1980: see Chapter Two) recorded variation in the ages at which its respondents recognised the start of 'middle age', so in these interviews there are differences in ages at which the supposed problems of decline and discrimination in employment are said to occur. The explanation for the differences noted in both studies could well be the same.

The men quoted in the previous section are mainly in their 40s and feel that they are about to face problems because of this. There are others, however, who perceive these problems as belonging to the fifth decade. Mrs. Jackaman (154a) contrasts her husband's present opportunities at the age of 43 with those he will have at 55. Mr. Scott (now 54) is concerned about 'flogging himself' at 55. Mr. Portman (47) talks of 'the magic age of 50 (...) which seems to be a stumbling-block' (in employment). Mr. Prince says that employers do not think older people worth re-training; he has experienced difficulty because he looks younger than his 51 years.

It should be noted that most of the men just quoted are now in their 50s and that none of the men in the study in that age-group speak of experiencing problems created by their age when in their 40s; the few civilians, for example, do not mention discrimination against them in employment. In seeking the significance of this for an understanding of 'middle age', it cannot be assumed that the 50-year olds were once like the 40s or that the 40s will grow like the 50s: this is the common error of cross-sectional research. There are several other interpretations which can be made, none of which can be conclusive: because of the nature of this study, they can only be raised as questions for future research.

The first interpretation is that these differences reflect differences in approaches to life: perhaps those who now fear discrimination in their 40s are particularly pessimistic. To some extent the discussion of the orientation to the environment in Chapter Sixteen supports this interpretation in respect of the differing beliefs of Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Bolton, Mr. Jordan and Mr. Southwell on the one hand and Mr. Driver and Mr. Jackaman on the other. It does not, however, explain Mr. Dickens's position.



A second interpretation, that the negative feelings about age reflect an anxious (though temporary) response to a situation of change, could account for Mr. Dickens's (and others') concern, though both Chapter Sixteen and later sections in this chapter demonstrate how positive he is in other respects.

A third interpretation is that negative feelings about being 40 have been generated because employers discriminate more against 40-year olds than against 50-year olds. This is possibly the interpretation of the experience reported by a 'career change' course for redundant executives (Page, 1977).

A fourth interpretation is that at the time of the interview there is more discrimination against 40-year olds than in the previous decade; a fifth interpretation is that there is more discrimination against both age-groups. There is no means of knowing from this study whether this is so; certainly it has long been recognised that employers practise age discrimination. (Boglietti, 1974; Jolly et al., 1979; Slater, 1973).

A sixth interpretation is that more 40-year old than 50-year old men were interviewed. The final interpretation is that, in some way, the nature of 'middle age' has changed, that it offers more negative experiences than hitherto. This question will be raised again shortly.

Whatever the 'real' reason for the differences in their beliefs (and it is probably a combination of several of the possible interpretations), it has to be concluded that these perceptions reveal little about the objective nature of 'middle age'.

### The men's experience of 'middle age'

Having noted the men's beliefs about 'middle age', this chapter now continues with an examination of their actual experience of it and a discussion of the discrepancy between expectation and reality.

#### 1. Awareness of change in themselves

To explore their experience of 'middle age' I sometimes asked whether

†they thought they had changed: many explicitly recognise that they have, or speak in a way which implies that they have (see also the section on their changing self concept in Chapter Thirteen). Among these are Mr. Jordan (see Chapter Fifteen) and Mr. Paddington. Mr. Argent is now 'more re-assured' in his feelings of competence; Mr. McMillan feels more tolerant; Mr. Roberts has 'matured'. Mr. Thomas has changed because 'times have changed' and Mr. Bonhill says that in a changing world personal change is essential, 'or wind up like a cabbage'.

Mr. Boatman and Mr. Bolton (not in transcript) report no change in themselves. Mr. Charles, now 38, thinks he has not changed in the last ten years and denies that he is 'middle-aged' now.

Others seem to recognise that they have changed - or grown older - but say that they have not been conscious of changing. Their awareness of it now seems to be at a cognitive level only; they have not yet achieved the 'state of mind' they consider appropriate to 'middle age'. For example, Mr. Dickens says (180-3a)

'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 feel a young man.'

It is apparently society's stereotype of 'that 40' which has broken into and disturbed his undifferentiated sense of being. Mr. McMillan's experience is similar

'... do you never see yourself as middle-aged?

Er ... (pause) ... I am sorry to be a bit slow in answering this but I want to think about it. Er ... my wife and I have talked about this; we've often said that we don't feel different ... from how we felt when we were much younger ... (...) (my mother) feels very much as she did when she was a young girl - er - that doesn't mean to say we haven't changed ... (...) but middle age as such doesn't worry me.'

As his thoughts on the 'concept' of 'middle age' (quoted earlier) show,



in his case it is retirement which 'impinges itself' and forces an awareness of his age. In Mr. Jordan's case (64-7a,b) it is the sight of a young man in a responsible job; in Mr. Southwell's (106-9a), his physical condition

'you look at a young lad of 20 (...) Then you suddenly realise that he's not young: you're old.'

'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.'

Mr. Homer shows that this new awareness does not swamp or eradicate the earlier sense of self, that there is easy movement between the levels. The sense of self has integrity; it continues

'... on occasions I am still that boy ... my mirror tells me I'm 54, but get me down a country lane ...'

## 2. The discrepancy between their beliefs and their experience

When asked, some of the men deny that they are 'middle-aged': Mr. Bedford ('I'm not, not by a long shot'), Mr. Charles, Mr. Dickens ('I feel a young man', 178a ff.). It is also clear that, when discussing their present difficulties, all the men attribute them to their situation of illness or accident, redundancy or frustrated promotion rather than to their age. (Mr. Bedford, quoted above, interprets some of his experiences as age discrimination by employers.) Nevertheless many of them, as this chapter has shown, chorus the problems of 'middle age' or of 'being 40': there is some measure of discordance between what they believe and what they experience. It would thus seem that the problems to which they refer are mostly hypothetical; they rehearse what they believe will happen to them and what they understand happens to other people of their age. They are drawing upon the common knowledge of their society.

It seems that, despite strong evidence of the continuance of high levels of physiological and cognitive functioning throughout most of adulthood (see Chapters Two and Five), in the societal stereotypes and popular images of 'mid-life' the emphasis is upon negative characteristics.

(The source of these images cannot be explored here; they are very probably changing, as a later section discusses.) Shared stereotypes are powerful influences upon perception and behaviour; they are constantly reinforced and generate self-fulfilling prophecies. The stereotypes of 'middle age' will have contributed towards employers' discrimination and that very discrimination has become incorporated into the 'myth' of 'middle age'. Inevitably, the men of this study are confronting the 'myths' of their society and only a few are able to question or reject them.

### 3. Their responses to the stereotypes of 'middle age'

The men display a range of responses to the stereotypes of 'mid-life' they have received from their society. Certainly in Mr. Driver's case (268-71a,b: quoted earlier) and possibly in Mr. Jackaman's (154a), his experience denies the stereotype any validity and, having no meaning for him, it offers him no threat.

Others, however, seem to accept the stereotype, albeit unwillingly, and to define themselves in its terms. This seems to be Mr. Baldwin's response. Although at present he sees himself at his 'peak' (7-8a), when considering job applications he is 'not a young man any more' (201-2a). Similarly, Mr. Jordan seems prepared to accept that 'he's not young: you're old' (66-7a). There are hints of grieving in their acceptance, mourning for their lost youth. Chapter Thirteen has already discussed their location within the so-called grief cycle: Mr. Baldwin experiences the anger of its early phases.

Mr. Dickens (and possibly Mr. Bedford?) seems to be struggling to throw off society's apparent classification of him ('I don't want them to pigeon-hole me', 169a,b). He is frustrated and confused. He feels 'a young man' (183a) but it is difficult to judge the validity of personal experience in the face of society's opinion and easy to succumb to a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Chapters Thirteen and Fifteen show, however, Mr. Dickens seems to be clinging to his sense of self and transcending his situation.

Mr. Homer, Mr. McMillan and Mr. Southwell, discussed earlier, seem able to accommodate both society's definition of them and their own



experience, and to do this without disrupting their own definition of themselves. They seem to achieve these through their recognition of several layers of awareness. At a cognitive level they are 'middle-aged'; at deeper levels they are still young; at all levels they are themselves.

It seems likely that there must also be some degree of intermingling of stereotypes and self-definition in these and in other men, though this is not a phenomenon which is actually identifiable in this study. It can only be concluded, however, that their reports inevitably indicate more of the subjective than of the objective nature of 'middle age'.

The discrepancy between the learned stereotype and lived experience undoubtedly contributes to the distress which many of them feel in the present phase of their 'career'. The confusion it causes may help explain why some appear to taunt themselves with the prospect of what they consider to be degrading jobs: postman, dustman, lavatory cleaner. (Mr. Baldwin, 97a, 101b; Mr. Dickens; Mr. Morgan; Mr. Southwell, 91b).

#### 4. Changing stereotypes and a new model of 'middle age'

Mr. Thomas's remark that 'times have changed' and its implications of changes in the individual is echoed by Mr. Dickens (183-191a)

(...) middle age is different now from what it used to be?

Yes (...) 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 (...) that's all they had to go.

(...) even men of 50 can look forward to something, today anyway.'

Like him, Chapters Two and Six suggest that the nature of 'middle age' is changing. A new model of 'middle age', appropriate to the conditions and needs of contemporary society, is slowly evolving. The shared stereotypes which derive from this model will change also; indeed, new stereotypes are beginning to take root. (Hepworth and Featherstone, 1982; Featherstone and Hepworth, 1983).

Deep-seated societal change is painful for individuals. The conclusions to Chapter Six proposed that 'mid-life crisis' could be interpreted as a symptom of their adjustment to these changes. Some of the experience of the men in this study could be interpreted in a similar manner. They are caught between two models of 'middle age': their discomfort springs from this position rather than from any intrinsic quality of 'middle age'.

Mr. Dickens is perceptive in his remarks about adulthood. He has discovered that, despite his expectation, much of his past experience is out-of-date (144-7a). The adult of today, he says (304-5a), needs to learn throughout life: that is 'the crux of it, for a 40-year old'. This means that education is vital for him and his family (89a,b).

Age discrimination in employment is a legacy of the old model of 'middle age'. Perhaps as adults learn to learn and develop flexibility and adaptability throughout the life-span this will eventually disappear?

#### 'Mid-life crisis'

The nature of the questioning in the interviews is unlikely to have probed to the level at which 'mid-life crisis' might be identified, yet nevertheless some of the men refer to experiences similar to those featured in the 'mid-life crisis' literature and discussed in Chapter Six. Some of these experiences have already been noted in Chapter Thirteen's exploration of the experience of change; they will be examined again here.

For example, Mr. Jordan is shocked into a realisation of his age and feels it is 'too late for dreams and ambitions' (58a ff.). However, he seems to have taken stock of his life (117b), speaks positively of his future and leaves no impression that he is experiencing 'crisis'.

Mr. Dickens's world has crumbled (154b); he is very conscious of negative characteristics of his age and may have undergone a change in time perspective (293b). Nevertheless, he too has reviewed his life (92b, 96b), is acting positively and displays generativity rather than 'crisis' (233b).



Mr. Flint is experiencing difficulties as he negotiates the period of change. He blames himself and his circumstances; there are hints of depression. He is aware of the rapid passage of time: 'the older I get the less time I have'. He is searching for goals and feels 'like a boat in mid-Atlantic without a rudder'. 'Failure', 'frustration' and 'fulfilment' (or lack of it) seem to be key words in his interview; lack of confidence and a weak and struggling self concept seem apparent. However, what he says does not suggest that this is just an experience of his middle years, but one which has been lifelong. He seems to have an important safety-valve in his hobby, which he is seriously considering making his major occupation.

The last person to be mentioned here and the one whose apparent distress perhaps most resembles the symptoms of 'mid-life crisis' is Mr. Baldwin (185b, 225b). He is concerned about his age and the rapid passage of time. He questions his own identity (165a,b) and is aware of a gap between aspirations and achievement (32a ff.). Although he talks (232a,b) of taking stock of his life, much of what he says displays anger and frustration (37b, 100b) and he flirts with the idea of 'dropping-out' (245a,b ff.) There is no indication of generativity. However, he rejects the notion of the 'male menopause' for himself (225-6a).

Mr. Baldwin's experiences seem echoes of much of the literature on 'mid-life crisis': do they then elucidate some of the questions raised in Chapter Six? Clearly, considerably more information about him would be required before it could be judged whether he was experiencing some kind of developmental 'crisis' of the kind of which Levinson et al. (1978) write. Certainly he feels distress, but it is worth noting that despite some faint (but perhaps false)scent of 'mid-life crisis' in the interview (225b), Chapter Thirteen adequately analyses his and others' experiences as a psycho-social transition. In those terms he is experiencing the ontological insecurity of the dislocation of his assumptive world because of a situational change, the effect upon him of the army's promotion practices.

It could be, of course, that 'mid-life crisis' has caused him to respond to the thwarting of his ambition in this way. The evidence is not available to judge this nor, perhaps, is it needed because his

experiences can be satisfactorily understood by means of the concept of the psycho-social transition which is at a higher level of abstraction and embraces several different kinds of experience. Mr. Baldwin's case, therefore, is yet another indication of the need to question the validity and function of concept of 'mid-life crisis'.

#### The multiple layers of reality in subjective experience

'I look different but I don't feel any older'

'I haven't got that 40 in my mind'

'Unconsciously I know I'm 42 (...) I feel a young man'

'I am still that boy'

'he's not young: you're old'

While this chapter contributes nothing to the knowledge of the objective characteristics of 'middle age' it has, perhaps, in its exploration of the men's subjective experiences, thrown doubt upon the nature of 'middle age' in any meaningful objective terms. It will now conclude with speculations elaborating upon one of the major themes of this thesis, the dual faces of reality, objective and subjective.

The men's experience of 'middle age' reflects their awareness and acceptance of a multi-faceted, multi-layered reality: past, present and future; observable and experiential; objective and subjective; perhaps indeed several layers of subjective experience. The sense of the integrity of the self persists throughout (because of?) these many layers and despite changes within them, such as bodily decline. The 80-year old woman 'feels very much as she did when she was a young girl'. Individuals experience several layers of reality simultaneously and have access to various levels of their own history, moving freely between them. Sometimes this is a fluid, imperceptible movement, by which the individual can transcend or re-construct objective reality. At other times there is a sense of disjunction when, for example, the ageing face looks out of the mirror.

As well as being aware of these several layers, the men also recognise discrepancies between them. There is, perhaps, a delicate balance which enables them to live comfortably with the discrepancies,



but when that balance is lost there is confusion and self-doubt. This seems to happen when the evaluations of other people conflict with self-definition; when others define the individual appropriately enough according to one of the layers of their reality, but to the exclusion or distortion of the others. This topples the fragile structure and undermines the sense of self.

Academic language is scarcely adequate to communicate these experiences: the reader will find that Proust (1983) has captured their essence.

### Implications for research, theory and counselling

Many of the implications of this examination of the men's experience of 'middle age' are the same as those of previous chapters and will thus be only briefly mentioned again here.

The major issue the chapter raises is that of the subjective dimension of reality and this has implications for research, theory and counselling. It throws doubt on the definition of 'middle age' as a concept and on the use of chronological age to define people, whether as a criterion for inclusion in a research study or in other situations. It also points to the need for a research method which takes note of subjective experience if a rounded view of the individual is sought; and implicitly criticises research intended to have practical implementation which does not seek such a view.

The chapter also questions some of the literature reviewed in Chapters Five and Six on the developmental nature of 'middle age' and of 'mid-life crisis'. It supports the conclusions of those chapters: that individuals change in response to their changing situation and that as society changes, so its model of 'middle age' also changes.



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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE THEORY OF 'CAREER'

#### Introduction

Most of the conclusions of the research have already been stated, for the final sections of the previous chapters of Phase Three note the implications of their contents for research, theory and counselling (the most relevant field of application). There are, however, some significant themes which recur throughout the thesis and it is these to which this chapter now returns. (Its examination is confined to the field of 'career' - which others might have referred to as 'career' development - though many of the points made would apply equally well to that of 'middle age'.) In closing the thesis, this chapter points the way forward for 'career' theory.

One recurrent theme is the need for an understanding of 'career' which has relevance in the complex and turbulent world of today; that is, for a theory which is comprehensive enough to conceptualise it as a process formed by the individual's responses to the interaction of a wide range of exogenous and endogenous influences within a changing environment. Another theme is the need to recognise the actor's view of 'career'. It has also been re-iterated that there is a need for research and theory to address these issues and to adopt methods which are appropriate to the study of process and of the actor's view.

This chapter, therefore, proceeds by first briefly evaluating existing 'career' theories in the light of these needs and noting the calls that have been made for a more comprehensive theory. It then suggests that the systems approach could be used to develop an appropriate model of 'career' which could generate future research and possibly lead to this comprehensive 'career' theory. Acknowledging, however, that this approach cannot incorporate the actor's view, the chapter also proposes the adoption of the 'soft' systems approach. It concludes by noting some implications for research, theory and counselling.

## The need for a new approach in 'career' theory

### 1. A 'career change' for 'career' theory?

Using the terminology of the thesis, the body of 'career' theory itself could be said to be facing a 'career change'. The exogenous influences upon its 'career' (the nature of the environment) have changed and, interacting with the changing endogenous influences (the recognition of its limitations), are creating a phase of instability from which a new direction for theory could emerge.

### 2. Summary of the evaluations of existing theories made in earlier chapters

The critical examination of these theories in the chapters of Phase One suggests that it is now appropriate to take stock of the established thinking about 'career', which has hitherto developed sporadically and adventitiously within several academic disciplines and in response to a growth economy. The chapters of Phase Three show that many of these theories offer frameworks which allow insights into some of the experiences of the men I interviewed. The sociological theories can adequately explain many of the exogenous influences and the psychological theories many of the endogenous; a few theories recognise their interaction. However, what is lacking is any one theory which conceptualises a wider view of 'career', which embraces both environmental influences and the individual's responses to them: for example, a theory which would refine the notions of 'truce' and broken truce generated in Chapter Twelve and grounded in the men's experience.

In the words of Super (1981, p. 51, quoted at the end of Chapter Eight), these existing theories are 'segmental'. They have further limitations. They tend to ignore any but the substantive 'career' and to adopt a normative view; they are often derived from research which focussed upon middle-class samples.

### 3. The need for a comprehensive approach to 'career'

Noting the calls for a 'global' or 'general' theory of 'career', Chapter Eight concludes that this may now be needed not only because of the limitations noted above but also because of the stage of development at which 'career' theory now is: it seeks a higher and more abstract level



of explanation. An appropriate approach, I suggest, would have to recognise the holistic and dynamic character of 'career'; it would not be normative because it embraced the exogenous factors. Other requirements of it would parallel those which Smelser (1980, pp. 22-3) outlines for a theory of the adult life course and which were noted in Chapter Ten (challenges, resources, adaptive responses and historical accumulation). It has to be accepted that the observer's and the actor's view cannot be encompassed within one conceptual framework: the comprehensive theory, however, would consider the observer's view of the individual's endogenous factors. The desired theory would be expected to explain all aspects of the individual's 'career', though it might be unable to embrace organisational and occupational 'careers' as well.

Super (1981, p. 51) suggests, as noted in Chapter Eight, that self concept theory might be the 'synthesising' theory which binds the various 'segmental' theories into the 'global' whole he sees as desirable. Another strong contender for the role of 'synthesising' theory or, indeed, of the 'global' theory itself, is social learning theory. (There is no reference to this in Super's paper, and only one glancing reference in Watts, Super and Kidd, 1981 altogether). The chapters of Phase Three have acknowledged the value of both these approaches, while they and Chapter Eight point to the limits of their use. The theorist who finds it acceptable to extend Rogers's (1951) approach to the self concept to embrace the exogenous factors; or who is comfortable with the behavioural approach which underlies social learning theory (Thoresen and Ewart, 1976) could probably develop a comprehensive theory of 'career' which meets the requirements above.

While recognising the value of these two theories I suggest, however, that a wider extension of them, though encompassing the area desired, would not give any greater insight into it than they now do. I propose, therefore, the adoption of an entirely different approach, which brings with it very different insights but which is consistent with those of both self concept and social learning theories. This is the systems approach, which appears to meet most of the requirements noted above.

## The systems approach

### 1. Introduction

The systems approach has developed substantially over the last twenty years or so. It is a 'metadiscipline' (Checkland, 1981, pp. 5-6), the subject matter of which can be applied to fields such as biology, engineering, cybernetics or the social sciences. Despite the early labelling of 'general system theory' (Bertalanffy, 1968), it is not a rigid theory but, as Checkland further explains, a way of thinking about any kind of problem. It is particularly appropriate to tackle 'organised complexity': it adopts a holistic rather than a reductionist approach and is concerned with functional rather than causal relationships. It is not a mechanistic nor deterministic but an essentially organic approach.

The systems view is holistic: it conceptualises a system of interrelated elements interacting with its dynamic environment. This is the approach which the last section noted was needed in 'career' theory. However, the systems approach is an observer's view. It has its own rationality and coherence and thus cannot be regarded as the synthesis of existing 'career' theories, the 'refined, validated and well-assembled segments' of which Super (1981, p. 51) writes. It gives another kind of synthesis and offers a formal conceptual model which, I suggest, could be fruitfully used to generate research and ultimately, perhaps, a comprehensive theory of 'career'.

### 2. The open system

#### a. Characteristics of the open system

While there is now a vast literature on the systems approach (for some indication of which see Checkland, 1981), I have mainly used Katz and Kahn (1978), who adopt a systems approach to organisations, for this section.

A system has a purpose or mission which 'serves to cohere and link' its activities (Checkland, 1981, p. 174).



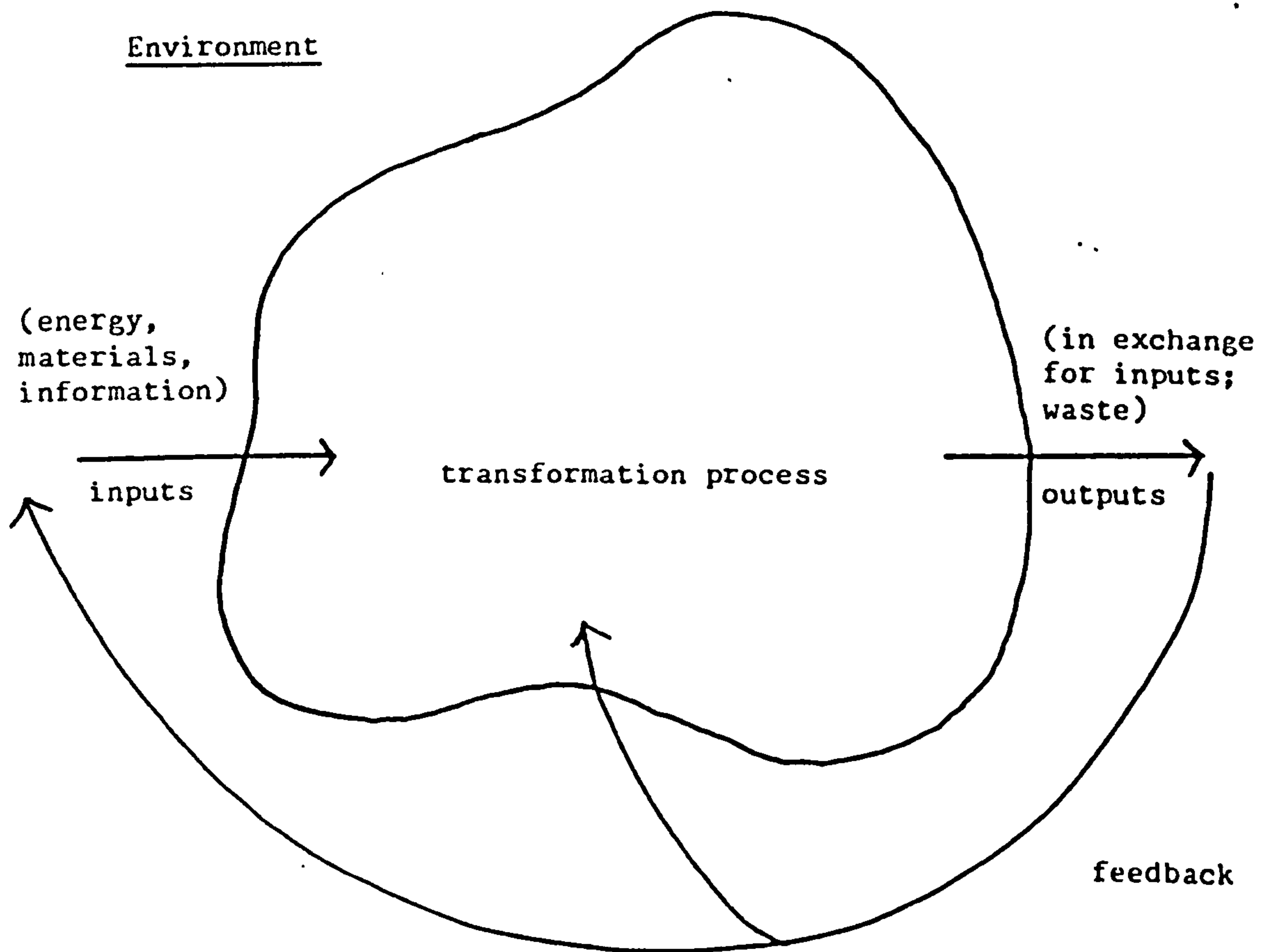


Figure Sixteen  
An Open System

As Figure Sixteen shows, the open systems draws its inputs (energy, materials, information) from its environment, transforms them for its needs and discharges its outputs back into the environment, either in exchange for further inputs or as waste products. The system receives feedback from the environment which enables it to modify its inputs, conversion process or outputs and thus adapt to its environment. This constant process of adaptation demands, through homoeostasis, readjustments between its parts to keep the system in a steady state: the system seeks greater internal consistency and a balance of relationships between its parts. However, other essential activities also disturb its equilibrium. By its constant exchange and/or storage of energy, materials and information, the open system arrests the tendency towards disorganisation and decay (entropy). In so doing it fosters greater

differentiation among and elaboration of its parts, which in turn demand greater coordination and integration. The open system thus strives for a dynamic equilibrium.

#### b. The functions of the sub-systems

The system consists of interrelated parts, each of which gives something to and receives something from the whole. The total system is thus synergistic and more than the mechanical arrangement of its parts: it is an organic whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.

There are several functions which have to be performed by the sub-systems in order to maintain the system and allow it to adapt both to its environment and to its own internal changes (Ackoff, 1976). While the specific nature of the sub-system will derive from the nature of the system itself, their functions will be the transformation of the inputs, the sensing of the environment, the prompting of external and internal adaptive responses and the maintenance of overall control of the system. Checkland (1981, pp. 288-91) identifies an 'awareness', an 'operational' and a 'monitoring and control' sub-system in a systems model of a particular organisation. Katz and Kahn (1978, pp. 51-9) identify five generic types of sub-system: the 'production' or 'technical' sub-system, which is concerned with the transformation process; the 'supportive' sub-system, which acquires the inputs and disposes of the outputs; the 'maintenance' sub-system, which upholds the system; the 'adaptive' sub-system, which generates appropriate responses to the environment; and the 'managerial' sub-system, which coordinates, adjusts, controls and directs the sub-systems.

The sub-systems, however defined, are closely interrelated, so that changes in one ripple through the others demanding that they adapt to return the system to equilibrium.

#### c. The system's environment

The system's environment is a complex network of other interrelated systems, so that changes in one may ultimately have a significant impact upon others. Because of these interrelationships the boundary of any one system may not be easily identifiable: it would be defined to exist at the point beyond which activities relevant to the system's behaviour cease.



It can also be recognised that the system may be part of a superordinate system. Bronfenbrenner (1977) regards the environment as a 'nested arrangement of structures' (p. 514). The microsystem comprises the relationships between a system and the other systems with which it interacts in its immediate environment. The mesosystem comprises the relationships among those other systems and the exosystem the relationships between these systems and others with which the system in question has no interaction. Bronfenbrenner includes here (p. 515) relationships with the major institutions of society; these may have an indirect influence upon the system. Finally, the macrosystem (p. 515) refers to the

'... the overarching institutional patterns ... such as economic, social, educational, legal and political systems ...'

This ecological view (applied to 'career' development by Webster, 1981 and Young, 1983) conceptualises the location of the system within its complex and dynamic environment and the influences, direct and indirect, upon it from changes within that environment.

### 3. A systems view of 'career'

#### a. A systems model of 'career'

The systems approach uniquely meets some of the requirements outlined earlier for the understanding of 'career' in the contemporary setting. It conceptualises the nature of the individual's environment, both intimate and distant, its influence upon the individual, the individual's response to it and the resulting internal and external adjustments. It permits a wide ecological view and/or a closer, focussed view of 'career'. Figure Seventeen illustrates a simple model of 'career' derived from this approach.

The approach may be applied at several levels of analysis. Focussing upon the individual in the occupational domain, the individual may be regarded as the system, the output of which would be occupational activity or the 'career'. If the concept of 'career' (whether individual, organisational or occupational) were taken as the system, its output could be the individual's attitudes and activity in all domains. Such systems could be said to have various purposes, depending upon the specific system under consideration; they might include quality of life;

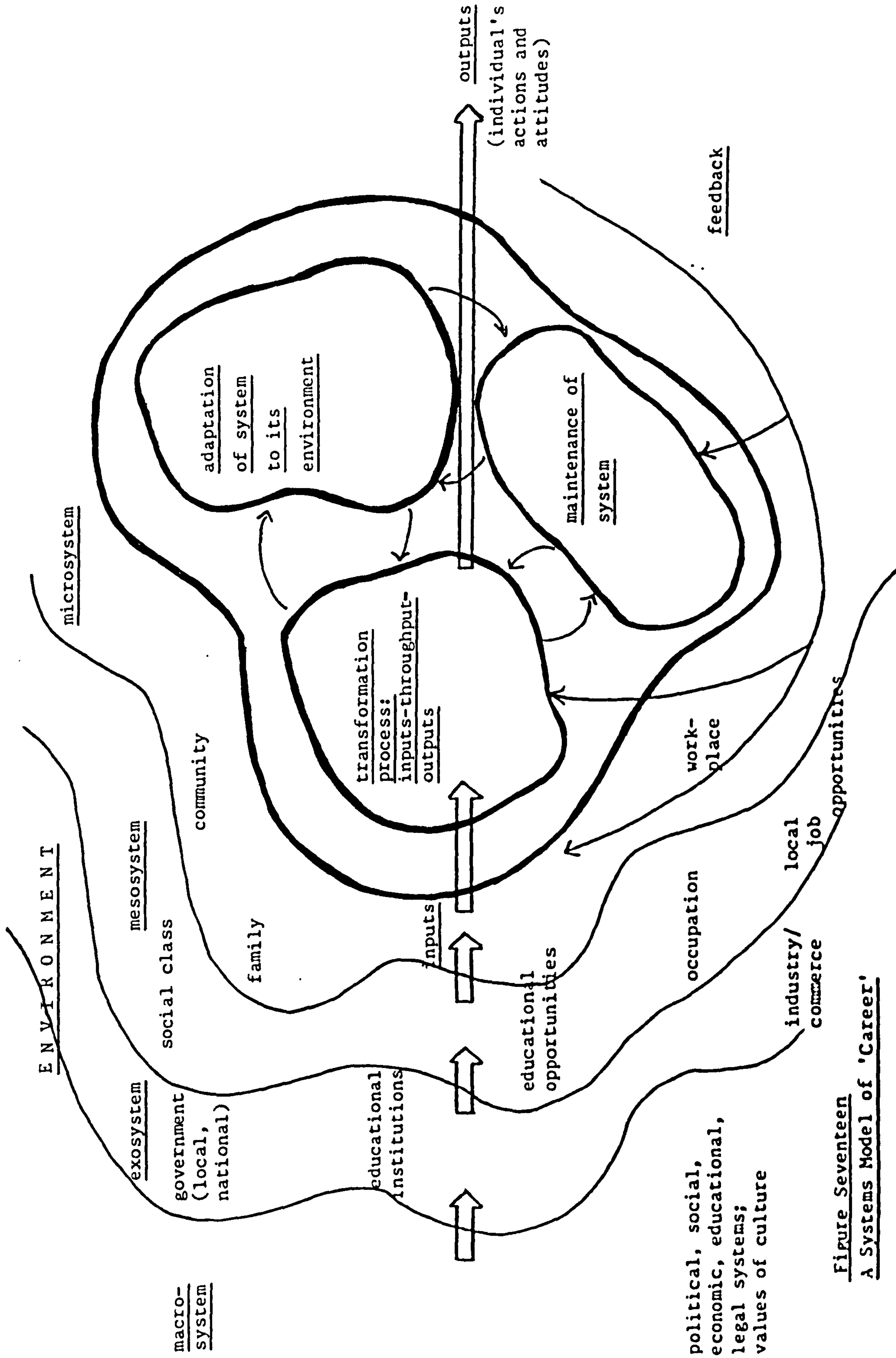


Figure Seventeen  
A Systems Model of 'Career'



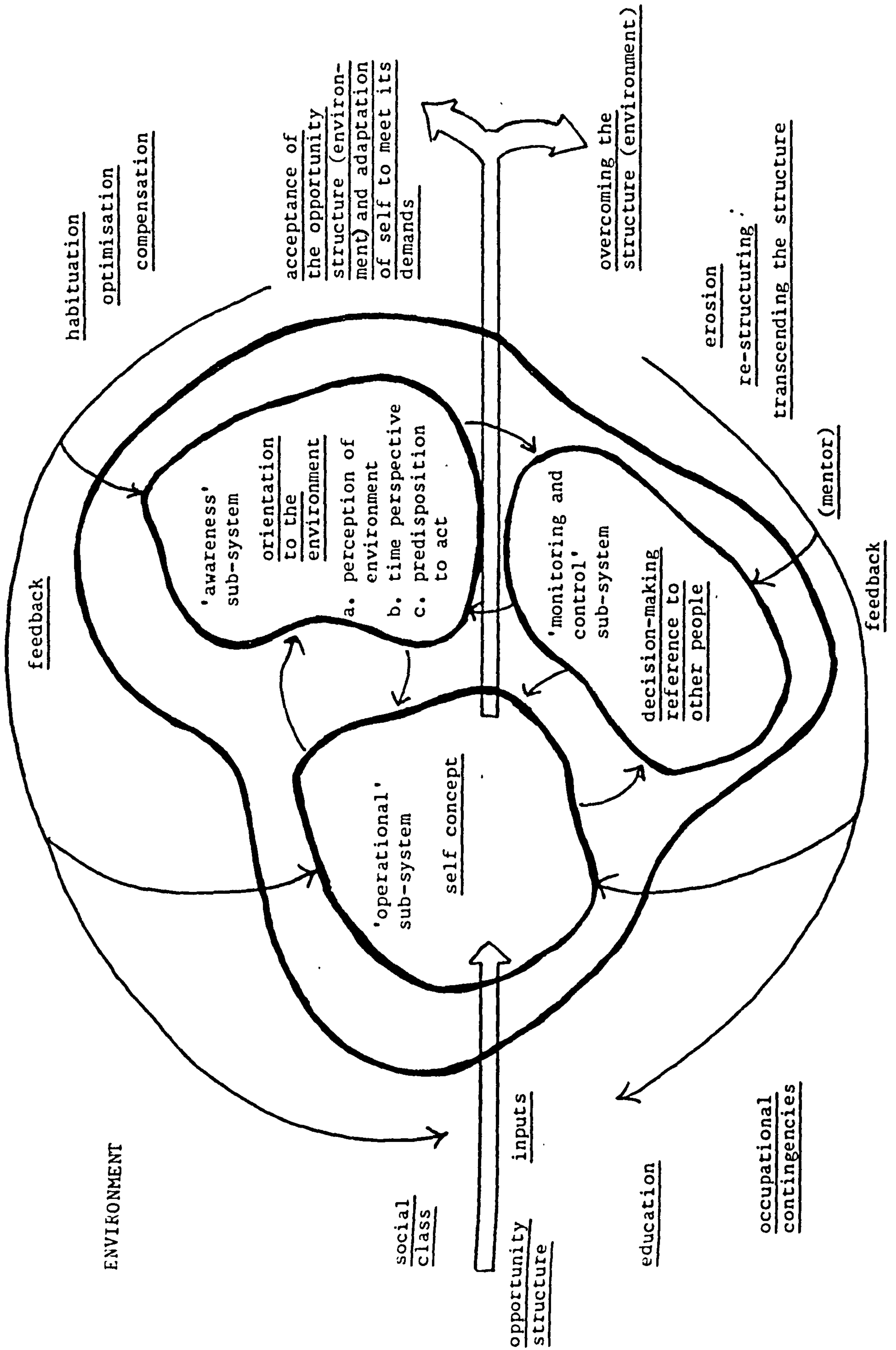
quality of working life; individual social status; individual advancement; management succession; management development; organisational stability; role allocation in society.

Using this approach, the individual's 'career' may be conceptualised as a system open to its environment, which consists of the interrelated political, economic and social systems; the individual's family and community systems; the individual's occupational and work organisational systems. Some aspects of these systems and their interrelationships are shown in Chapter Fourteen.

The system receives its inputs from this environment - genetic inheritance, sex, race, social class, educational qualifications, occupational opportunities - feeds them through its transformation process and discharges its outputs back into the environment in the form of attitudes and activities - taking a particular job, progressing in it, changing jobs or occupation, for example. One of the waste products may be stress which, as discussed by Evans and Bartolomé (1980), may be discharged into marriage or family.

Feedback from the environment may prompt the modification of the sub-systems (to be discussed in the next section) or of the inputs: the threat of redundancy or the identification of new opportunities may prompt the acquisition of new skills or more educational qualifications. Negative entropy may be acquired by importing and storing more energy than is currently needed; for example, by taking a job which is not demanding or by achieving higher qualifications.

Changes in the individual's environment influence the nature of the inputs into the system and disturb it until the appropriate internal and external adjustments have been made and equilibrium restored. Thus changed occupational demands such as promotion, re-location, re-training or redundancy or increased family demands on marriage or the birth of a child activate the sub-systems. They may modify some of the outputs, creating, for example, increased or reduced commitment to the organisation. Many of the responses of the men studied by Evans and Bartolomé (1980) and the 'personalising responses' of the managers studied by Knibbs (1979) could be construed in this way.



### Figure Eighteen



b. Elaboration of this systems model of 'career' grounded in the field-study

Figure Eighteen elaborates this simple systems model of 'career' by incorporating some of the insights from the interviews refined and discussed in Chapters Fifteen and Sixteen. I had not heard of the systems approach when conducting the interviews nor when making the analysis and synthesis which led to my identification of the orientation to the environment; nor was I consciously aware of it when making the other analyses. Nevertheless, some of these insights and conceptual models are consistent with this systems model of 'career'. The orientation to the environment fulfils the function of the 'awareness' (Checkland, 1981) or of the 'adaptive' (Katz and Kahn, 1978) sub-system: it is the means by which the system senses the nature of the environment and reacts to it. The self concept, recognised to be of such great significance through the chapters of Phase Three, transforms the inputs into the system and fulfils the 'operational' (Checkland) or 'production' (Katz and Kahn) function. Some of the other aspects of what Chapter Sixteen refers to as the men's negotiation of change fulfil the function of the 'monitoring and control' (Checkland) or 'managerial' sub-system. Decision-making meets the system's need 'to be coordinated, adjusted, controlled and directed' (Katz and Kahn, p. 51). The reference to other people for information and as points of comparison, models or mentors could be said to monitor the activities of the other sub-systems by giving feedback on the relation of outputs to inputs and by providing standards of performance.

It can also be seen in Figure Eighteen that the several responses to the opportunity structure identified in Chapter Fifteen constitute some of the potential outputs of this system. Feedback to the system when there is acceptance of the structure and adaptation of the self to meet its demands maintains equilibrium at a relatively unchanging level and there is little stimulus to the greater differentiation of parts. The individual engages in habituation, optimisation or compensation. This model highlights the significance of the weak self concept which in the transformation process makes relatively little impact upon the inputs and is reinforced in its state by the nature of the outputs. This seems to represent the younger Mr. Dickens. On the other hand, the output or response which attempts to overcome the structure alters the nature of the inputs, a change which calls for new adjustments and greater differentiation

among the sub-systems, which again changes the nature of the outputs. For example, the intention to erode the structure (in the terms of Chapter Fifteen) may lead to the importation of new inputs like a more demanding job or more educational qualifications. These will increase self esteem and strengthen the self concept, create a recognition of the openness of the environment, foster a longer time perspective, lead to the adoption of new models or sources of comparison, all of which will ultimately enable the individual to effect further change upon the environment. This model seems to represent Mr. Dickens as he is at the time of interview.

In very general terms, the differences between these responses parallel the differences Ackoff (1976, pp. 107-8) identifies in the 'behavioral classification of systems'; in particular, the difference between 'goal-seeking' and 'purposeful' systems.

#### c. Insights into 'career' afforded by this systems model

This systems model meets most of requirements outlined at the start of this chapter for a more comprehensive approach to 'career' and offers some significant insights into it. It embraces exogenous and endogenous influences and their interaction; the individual's response to them and the effects upon both self and the environment; it encompasses both stability and change. It incorporates the observer's view of the self concept, and exceeds (but without negating) the insights of the other 'segmental' theories.

The model effectively conceptualises the relationships between individual and the environment in terms of inputs, transformation and outputs. It offers an explanation for the strengthening of the self concept over time in some individuals, and the weakening power over the individual of some aspects of the environment. Thus it explains more adequately than either self concept or the sociological theories the issues of the opportunity structure/occupational choice debate. Further, it suggests that no one input will determine the 'career'; the most adverse of conditions will not of themselves determine the final outcome, for the individual's responses are crucial. An input never hitherto experienced could, through the resulting adjustments among the sub-systems, create previously unlikely or impossible outputs. Moreover, open systems are



characterised by equifinality: the system can attain the same final state from differing initial conditions and along a variety of paths (Katz and Kahn, 1978, p. 30). This suggests a very different understanding of 'career' from the 'career' development theories (and a different understanding of adulthood from the lifespan development theories).

This approach also offers an explanation for the broken truce discussed in Chapter Twelve. In systems terms, this occurs when the system has to adapt to a changed environment and so adjusts its sub-systems. These changes create instability, but the adjustments demanded by homoeostasis restore the system to a new level of equilibrium: a new truce is negotiated. As Mr. Jordan says (128-9a) 'everything's balanced'.

Chapter Sixteen suggests that both orientation to the environment and decision-making are related to the nature of the individual's self concept, but is unable to determine the nature of that relationship. This model, however, indicates something of the interactions between these sub-systems (each a system in its own right), and between them and the system as a whole within its environment and something of the adaptations which each has to make to the others.

I have commented upon (particularly in Chapter Thirteen) but been unable to explain the remarkable displays of energy some of the men have given. The concept of entropy may have some relevance here. Were these energies mobilised because of the threat of disorder in their system? Certainly, in increasing their qualifications through their energetic activities Mr. Bolton and Mr. Driver were importing some negative entropy into their 'career' system.

Finally, systems thinking offers another approach to the definition of 'career': it suggests the need to identify the boundary beyond which activities relevant to the 'career' cease. Such a definition would vary between individual and, like Gysbers's (1974) definition quoted in Chapter Three, would be far wider than is now commonly accepted.

#### The 'soft' systems approach to 'career'

Although the systems approach has the potential to make a major contribution to the desired comprehensive view of 'career' (it offers insights

into several of the issues which emerged in my own study), it fails to meet one of the major requirements for the understanding of 'career'. It offers an observer's view and is unable to encompass the actor's view which, from Chapter Three onwards, has been argued to be of major significance. However, this essential viewpoint can be achieved by using Checkland's (1981) 'soft' systems approach.

He uses (pp. 283-4) systems thinking within a phenomenological framework.

'... social reality is the ever-changing outcome of the social process in which human beings ... continually negotiate and re-negotiate with others their perceptions and interpretations of the world outside themselves.'

He thus applies the system approach to the complexities and ambiguities of social reality so that (p. 163)

'... real-world complexity is unravelled and understood as a result of translation into the higher level language (or meta-language) of systems.'

To achieve this 'translation' he uses the 'notion' of the 'human activity system'. This 'expresses some purposeful human activity' (p. 314) and (p. 14)

'... can be manifest only as perceptions by human actors who are free to attribute meaning to what they perceive. There will thus never be a single (testable) account of a human activity system, only a set of possible accounts all valid according to particular Weltanschauungen.'

Recognising the significance of the differences between actors' and observers' interpretations, Checkland stresses (p. 118) that it is essential to include in the description of a human activity system an account of the observer and of the stance from which the observation is made.

These systems, which are (p. 314)

'... notional in the sense that they are not descriptions of



actual real-world complexity ... but are intellectual constructs ...',

can be used to explore the 'real world', promote effective debate and insight among the actors involved and hence achieve feasible and desirable changes in the 'real world'. He writes (p. 249)

'Our purpose in building them cannot be to grope towards a systemic ontology. They are tools of an epistemological kind which can be used in a process of exploration within social reality.'

The considerable potential of this 'soft' systems approach for the understanding of 'career' will by now be clear. Not only does it offer the comprehensive view afforded by the systems approach discussed in the last section but it also - and very significantly - allows the incorporation of the actor's view into the understanding of 'career'. It acknowledges that the observer's and the actor's view are different and that logically the observer can never adopt the actor's perspective. However, the translation of the 'real world' into the meta-language of systems permits the construction of a conceptual model of exogenous and endogenous factors which also gives space to the observer's awareness of the actor's view. The model is recognised as a construct rather than as an attempt by a scientific observer to describe and analyse a definitive 'reality'. Through the iterative process of 'soft' systems methodology (to be outlined shortly), the model is compared by the actor with the shifting 'reality' to which it relates, is refined and modified until the actor is able to make feasible and desirable 'real-world' changes. Defining 'career' as a human activity system, such a model (whether used in research or counselling) could be the vehicle by which the actor clarifies and understands the phenomenal or transcendental 'career' and acts upon these insights. The observer, who cannot be admitted to the actor's world and thus cannot have direct knowledge of it, may nevertheless have some glimpse of it and hence some understanding as the actor identifies the mismatch between model and 'reality', modifies the model and eventually acts upon the knowledge and understanding generated by the iterative process by changing self and/or environment. Thus the objective of taking account of the actor's view in 'career' research and counselling (and thence in theory) will have been achieved: some understanding (rather than complete knowledge) on the part of the observer and, far more significantly, increased and realistic knowledge and understanding of both self and of the world on the part of the actor.

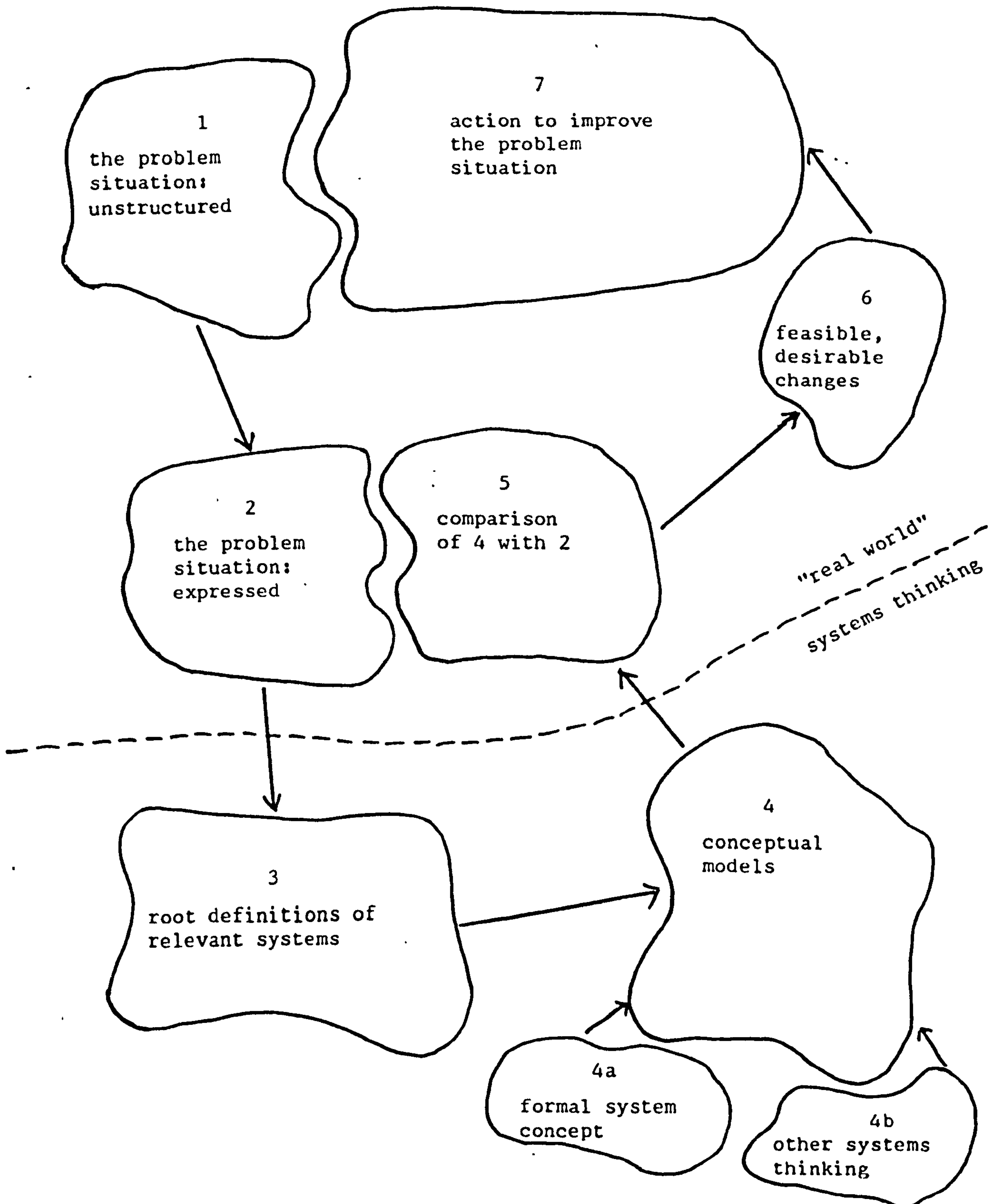


Figure Nineteen

'Soft' Systems Methodology (from Checkland, 1981)



Figure Nineteen outlines the 'soft' systems methodology, Checkland has developed. The first steps are to build up a picture ('express') a situation (p. 316) in which there is perceived to be a problem.

'A nexus of real-world events and ideas which at least one person perceives as problematic: for him other possibilities concerning the situation are worth investigating.'

Many 'career' experiences, and certainly 'career change', could be described in these terms.

The next step is to name some systems which appear to be relevant to the putative problem (p. 164) and to prepare a 'root definition' of them; that is, a 'concise, tightly constructed description of a human activity system which states what the system is' (p. 317). Checkland identifies the essential ingredients (CATWOE) of an effective root definition (pp. 224-7); these are shown in Appendix Six. A conceptual model of the system is then built; this reflects each element of the root definition and thus shows what the human activity system thus defined does. He emphasises (pp. 169-170)

'... the resulting model ... is not a state description of any actual human activity system. It is in no sense a description of any part of the real world; it is simply the structured set of activities which logic requires in a notional system which is to be that defined in the root definition.'

This model is then checked against a 'formal system model' of 'any human activity system' (pp. 173-4) and against other systems thinking (p. 176) to ensure that it is comprehensive and coherent and to reveal any inadequacies in it or its underlying root definition. Checkland's 'formal system', he explains, is defined somewhat more narrowly than systems models used elsewhere (and adopted in the earlier sections of this chapter). For example, he deliberately excludes the concept of negative entropy, for it has never been found to be a crucial characteristic of the systems so far investigated by means of this methodology.

The next step (p. 177) is to make

'... a real-world comparison between what exists there and what

is in, or is suggested by, the models of systems thought to be relevant to the problem.'

The process of comparison, involving 'concerned participants in the problem situation', identifying any mismatch between model and 'reality' and 'teasing out the complexities of "reality"' (p. 178) will create a debate about the possibility of changing the situation. At this stage the conceptual model could be found to be inadequate and its inadequacy traced to the original expression of the problem situation, the root definition or the construction of the model itself. The iterative process of exploration will thus begin again until the 'real-world' comparison identifies feasible and desirable changes. Thus Checkland concludes (pp. 284-5) that the 'soft' systems approach is founded on the assumption of the need for and the value of continuous learning.

#### Conclusions: towards a comprehensive theory of 'career'

In this thesis, I have examined a rich, complex and ambiguous area: the definition, theory and lived experience of 'career' and 'mid-career change'. I conclude that this significant area, in which many of the changes and pressures of contemporary Western life are being experienced, requires further examination and understanding. This has to be undertaken in the future, however, in ways somewhat different from those used in the past: in particular I argue the need for a more comprehensive approach and a recognition of the actor's view and experience.

This chapter proposes that the systems approach would make a major contribution to this comprehensive view of 'career'. This is not to suggest that there be adopted 'a systems theory of "career"' (though this may well be possible), but that the systems approach be used to model the 'career' and so generate new understandings which might possibly lead to a new, comprehensive theory.

When in 1981 I gave a paper outlining some of the ideas in the early sections of this chapter to a National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling research seminar (Collin, 1981b), it was received with some reservation. The systems terminology, associated with cybernetics and other 'hard' approaches, was perhaps construed as alienating, mechanistic and deterministic; and the analogies I used between aspects



of 'career' and the Katz and Kahn (1978) sub-systems were, I now recognise, unhelpful. I had not at that stage encountered the 'soft' systems methodology of Checkland: however, even without that, the basic systems model I believe now, as then, gives many valuable insights into 'career' and points a future direction for theory.

At the research seminar in the following week Webster (1981) proposed an ecological approach to 'career' development, with particular emphasis on counselling and 'enabling environments'. Two years later, Young (1983) also argued 'the application of the ecological metaphor to career development'. Their proposals, I believe, support the view I am advocating. While they examine the individual's 'career' within the wide sweep of the environment and trace the interactions between its various levels, I focus upon the individual's response. What links their work and mine is the basic systems model. We are all adopting the same approach, but from different starting-points.

As well as having this potential for research and for the development of theory, the systems approach as outlined in this chapter could be fruitfully used in counselling. The identification of the boundaries of the 'career' system, of the sub-systems and the relationships between them, the concepts of feedback, homeostasis and dynamic equilibrium, of entropy and equifinality, the contrast between efficiency (inputs: outputs) and effectiveness (outputs: purposes or goals), the comparison between a 'soft' systems model and 'reality', development as greater differentiation of parts: all have considerable potential for the counsellor.

The thesis has noted some other important directions for research which could also generate theory and inform practice. These include the need to conceptualise 'career' as a process and hence to adopt appropriate research methods: there is particular need for a longitudinal study. (This is also true for the field of 'middle age'.) The significance of the exogenous factors and their interaction with the endogenous has been stressed: the acceptance of this means that it is not possible to construct a normative theory nor to translate theories grounded in the experiences of one culture into those of another. (This, again, is true for the field of 'middle age'.)

There is a need for further exploration and for grounded theory (in

'middle age' as in 'career'). However, as well as seeking the generation of 'substantive' theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), the value I have found in the concepts of status passage and the psycho-social transition for the interpretation of my research material (the broken truce in Chapter Twelve and the experience of dislocation in Chapter Thirteen) suggests that there is merit in pursuing 'formal' theory, too.

Finally, the thesis raises questions about the method of research and advocates further research which adopts the methodology of the phenomenological approach. I suggest that the 'soft' systems methodology and repertory grid employed in the spirit of personal construct theory (rather than in its debased form) are both powerful tools within this framework. They might also be more time-effective than the approach I have used in my own research, though there may be other insights which the critic and analyst of literature could offer.

As it negotiates a new truce between the changing demands of an uncertain and turbulent world and the striving for a higher level of coherence, abstraction and generality, 'career' theory faces many exciting new directions which will perhaps take it into the next century and at the same time into a new paradigm of social science research.



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

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

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APPENDICES



APPENDIX ONEFEBRUARY 1976 : APPLICATION TO SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCILCAREER SATISFACTION AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICEIN MIDDLE AGE

Unemployment has increased: technological and organisational developments are forcing people of all ages into the job market, and the redundancies brought about by inflation-created liquidity crises and manpower 'shake-outs' are augmenting their number. Jobs are becoming increasingly vulnerable and thus valued, though not indiscriminatingly (Hill et al, 1973). Employees have come to expect high levels of the 'hygiene' factors (Herzberg, 1966) of work, of security and of self-fulfilment through work, and their demands are in part endorsed by State legislation. There is also a growing concern among employers to provide job satisfaction, not merely to reduce labour turnover, but to 'enrich' jobs. In quest of these satisfactions, job hunting is acceptable. The duty of loyalty to a firm (or in personal relationships) is no longer acknowledged; changing technologies and other social forces are educating people to expect, accept and adapt to major upheavals in their lives. The environmentalists and anti-materialists have perhaps encouraged the consideration of drastic changes in occupation, rallying Dick Whittingtons rather than lemmings. The recent changes in pensions provisions will perhaps make it less painful to leave an established post. Finally, the changes may not be voluntary, or sought-after. A longer life-span may now be expected with more years to work. Yet technological changes may phase out the requirement for some skills and make some workers suffer from a sense of personal obsolescence well before they reach retirement.

There is some evidence,<sup>1</sup> albeit perhaps largely apocryphal (Toffler, 1970; Korving, Korving and Keeley, 1975; Hales-Tooke, 1975; Williams and Guest, 1971; Clark, 1973) that a growing number of middle-aged people are facing these problems and are prepared to abandon an established career and venture forth upon another. Mid-career change may, therefore, be a growing phenomenon though comparatively little is yet known about it empirically. One of the reasons for this may be that there is no science of middle-age to form the conceptual framework for such research. In a scan of the registers of published theses in both Great Britain and the United States, the

<sup>1</sup> The references made here have only been included in the list of references if they have been referred to elsewhere in the thesis.



dearth of information about middle-age contrasts remarkably with the wealth of data on infancy and adolescence and with the somewhat sparser knowledge about old-age.

Among the theorists of human development, Jung (1933) and Erikson (1963) have paid attention to the mid-life period. Neumann (1964) suggested that during it the process of centroverson becomes conscious and the creativeness of the psyche and the positiveness of the conscious mind achieve a synthesis; and Elliott Jaques (1965) further developed the concept of the 'mid-life crisis'. The vocational development theorists, however, have scarcely recognised the phenomenon of mid-career change. Strong (1943) recognised little change in vocational interests from the age of 25; Super (1957) considered that they were stable from late adolescence and that occupational change in middle-age could be described as 'floundering'.

It is, perhaps, partly because these theorists have not focussed on this area that little fundamental research has been undertaken. There have been a number of small American studies (Clopton, 1972; Roberts, 1975; LaBuda, 1974) examining the motivational aspects of career change, while in this country the particular interest of Mr. W.G.H. Robins of U.W.I.S.T. in the career changes made by scientists is noted. Sofer (1970) has made an extensive study of middle-aged managers in relation to their established career and Rapoport (1970) has examined the impact of attending the Administrative Staff College, Henley, upon the careers and personal development of the managers who were its members.

There is, therefore, scope for the collection of data, not only to describe and possibly define the phenomenon but also to provide a groundwork for those called upon to advise or to act in this sphere: employers in the planning of management development schemes; trades unions interested in manpower planning; educationalists devising continuing education programmes; careers advisers; the government agencies concerned with occupational guidance, training and placement.

It is therefore my view that, because mid-career change operates at the point of balance between individual identity and experience and structural opportunity and mobility, it would be worthwhile to view

it within the context of study which has two dimensions: mobility and motivation. This is an approach which those working in the field of occupational mobility would find desirable. (Graham & Llewellyn, 1976).

### PROPOSED RESEARCH

The following study is, therefore, proposed. Its aim is to examine the factors which are perceived and/or operate when a career change is contemplated and to examine the possible determinants of the decision. From this it is hoped to draw conclusions about the perceived nature of careers, of career satisfaction and of opportunity for career change in middle-life; and about the actual opportunities that exist and the processes and management of those possible changes.

### METHODOLOGY

Samples would be required which displayed certain characteristics:

- (a) A sample of those in middle life<sup>1</sup> presumably satisfied with their career and not actively seeking a change.
- (b) A sample of those in middle life<sup>1</sup> seeking advice on a career change,<sup>2</sup> (e.g. Occupational Guidance Units' clients); of those in middle life in process of training for a planned new career (e.g. some post-graduate courses; Open University studies); or of those who choose to accept the offer of redundancy as a precipitating step towards career change.

Men and women would be equally suitable for the samples, but married women returners would be excluded on the grounds that they introduce other variables which are generally outside the scope of the present study.

### Footnotes

1 To be defined

2 Respondents would be chosen who had a concept of 'career', not merely of occupation, and an attempt would be made to define this concept.



The method ideally to be adopted would seek by means of questionnaire and interview the same information from each sample and would compare it both at the time of decision and some time later. Much will depend upon the availability and size of the samples and it may ultimately prove more effective to conduct an anthropological rather than a quantitative study. The necessity of a pilot scheme is thus apparent, not only to appraise the data-collection methods and the 'manageability' of the data, but also indicate how the study should most effectively be focussed.

The following data would be sought: At this stage it is not possible to say which instrument of collection or measurement will be chosen as most appropriate.

1. ( Life-chances: The degree of inter/intragenerational  
( mobility experienced by the respondent:  
(  
(  
( - father's educational level, occupation at certain  
( ages, social class (Hall-Jones grading)  
( - number of father's children and respondent's  
( position in family.  
Influences ( - other childhood experiences.  
( - geographical location of respondent at birth and  
( at present.  
( - other major changes in life experienced (marital  
( break-down, death).  
( - respondent's educational level - training.  
( - respondent's first job, present job, at certain  
( ages.
2. ( The degree of respondent's satisfaction/dissatisfac-  
( tion with career to date:  
(  
(  
( - present job satisfaction.  
Preferences ( - level of responsibility, span of control, degree  
( of self-determination.  
( - salary; pensions; fringe benefits.  
( - success to date (rate of movement from first job).  
( - promotion prospects.  
( - characteristics of ideal job in terms of the five  
( factors above.

3. ( Other factors operating in the present situation:  
 (   
 (   
 ( - personality (assessment of self-esteem, need for  
 ( achievement, adaptability, impulsiveness, belief  
 ( in internal/external control of circumstances;  
 ( awareness of mortality; time-horizons).  
 (   
Constraints ( - patterns of occupational interests.  
 ( - present health (Life-change units scale, Holmes  
 ( and Rahe ).  
 ( - personal responsibilities (marriage, children,  
 ( mortgage).  
 ( - financial resources (savings, working wife,  
 ( other income).  
 ( - life-style.
4. ( Career opportunities available  
 (   
 (   
 ( - which career considered/decided upon - in general,  
Opportunities ( specifically. Why?  
 ( - qualifications/training required: process,  
 ( difficulties, success.  
 ( - jobs applied for: process, difficulties, success.

The influences, preferences, constraints and opportunities for each sample would be compared at the critical time of decision and some months later. By this means it is hoped to have a clearer picture of the dynamics of mid-career change and to discern whether any patterns emerge.

Of necessity the study is of an exploratory nature, but it is hoped that a further detailed examination would be made of those who had undergone major career change at a later stage.

#### TIMETABLE

10/76	-	3/77	Literature surveys and preparation.
4/77	-	5/77	Pilot study.
6/77	-	8/77	Interview sample b.
9/77	-	10/77	Analysis
11/77	-	12/78	Interview sample a.



1/78	-		Analysis
2/78	-	4/78	Second interview sample b.
5/78	-		Analysis
6/78	-		Second interview sample a.
7/78	-		Analysis
8/78	-	9/78	Writing up.

Until the nature and the size of the sample is known, this timetable cannot be realistic.

### COSTS

Fieldwork is an essential part of the study and it is expected that it will incur costs of both travel and subsistence. Until the nature of the sample is known, however, these cannot be estimated.

Because of the exploratory nature of the study it is assumed that the geographical location of the sample is not as critical as the co-operation required to give access to it and that, therefore, the bulk of the fieldwork could possibly be carried out within working distance of Loughborough.

Audrey Collin

26th February 1976.

APPENDIX TWOSome demographic changes and their implications

The tables below set out the changed expectation of life and the changed age structure of the population (with projection to the year 2001) from the beginning of this century. They are taken from Social Trends (1982) with permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

These tables indicate that 'middle-aged' people now form a larger proportion of the total population than in the early years of this century and before and that this proportion is expected to grow. Such demographic changes are likely to have encouraged the relatively recent interest in this period of the life-span and the examination of the experiences within it. Whereas the expectation of life has increased (and this must influence attitudes to ageing and the individual's personal expectation of life), the rapid economic, technological and social changes of today are simultaneously decreasing the 'expectation of life' of both jobs and marriages. (Toffler, 1971 predicts that 'serial' 'careers' and marriages will become commonplace.) This suggests that 'career change' will be the experience of many more people in the future than in the past; an understanding of the way in which people negotiate such changes is, therefore, needed.



		United Kingdom										Years	
		Males					Females						
		1901	1931	1951	1961	1971	1978	1901	1931	1951	1961	1971	1978
Expectation of life <sup>1</sup>													
From birth		48.0	58.4	66.2	67.9	68.8	70.0	51.6	62.4	71.2	73.8	75.0	76.1
From age 1 year		55.0	62.1	67.5	68.6	69.2	70.1	57.4	65.1	72.1	74.2	75.2	76.0
10 years		51.4	55.6	59.1	60.0	60.5	61.3	53.9	58.6	63.6	65.6	66.5	67.2
15 years		46.9	51.1	54.3	55.1	55.6	56.4	49.5	54.0	58.7	60.6	61.6	62.3
20 years		42.7	46.7	49.5	50.4	50.9	51.6	45.2	49.6	53.9	55.7	56.7	57.4
30 years		34.6	38.1	40.2	40.9	41.3	42.1	36.9	41.0	44.4	46.0	47.0	47.6
40 years		26.8	29.5	30.9	31.5	31.9	32.6	29.1	32.4	35.1	36.5	37.3	38.0
45 years		23.2	25.5	26.4	26.9	27.3	28.0	25.3	28.2	30.6	31.9	32.7	33.3
50 years		19.7	21.6	22.2	22.6	23.0	23.6	21.6	24.1	26.2	27.4	28.3	28.8
60 years		13.4	14.4	14.8	15.0	15.3	15.8	14.9	16.4	17.9	19.0	19.8	20.4
65 years		10.8	11.3	11.7	11.9	12.1	12.5	11.9	13.0	14.2	15.1	16.0	16.5
70 years		8.4	8.6	9.0	9.3	9.5	9.7	9.2	10.0	10.9	11.7	12.5	12.9
75 years		6.4	6.4	6.7	7.0	7.3	7.4	7.1	7.4	8.0	8.7	9.4	9.8
80 years		4.9	4.8	4.8	5.2	5.5	5.6	5.4	5.4	5.8	6.3	6.9	7.1

<sup>1</sup> Further number of years which a person could expect to live

Table Three  
Expectation of Life (at Birth and at Specific Ages)

United Kingdom											Millions
											All ages

Table Four  
Age Structure of the Population



### APPENDIX THREE

#### Evaluation of the theory of adult development proposed by Levinson et al., 1978

This work of Levinson et al. has already had a considerable influence in the literature and, given the still rudimentary state of theory about 'middle age', it must, therefore, be carefully evaluated. There are comments that need to be made about its data collection, analysis and theory construction.

The ages of the 40 men they studied ranged from 35 to 45 (p. 8)

'The variation in age ... enabled us to obtain a more vivid picture of the life in each part of the decade.'

Their theory of the life structure comprehends childhood to late adulthood (see Figure Three in Chapter Five). Reminiscence and secondary material thus appear to have been augmented by a cross-sectional approach to give them the material for their theory. The problems of the use of reminiscence in research were noted in Chapters Four and Eleven and those of a cross-sectional approach in Chapter Two. These do not seem to have deterred the researchers from drawing developmental and normative conclusions.

It would appear that the aim of the research changed with time (p. x), though without an accompanying change in the people studied. As quoted in Chapter Five they had first focussed upon the 'mid-life decade' of 35-45, but later extended this to span the late teens to the later forties.

Indeed, they go eventually beyond this upper age (pp. 33-9)

'I am on more speculative ground ... I offer the following provisional view of late adulthood.'

Nevertheless, these later periods are assertively established (p. 62).

'Although we did not study men beyond (late forties), there is evidence ... There is an Age Fifty Transition, which normally lasts ...'

Levinson et al. describe fairly fully in the body of the book how they collected their material: the sample, the lengthy initial and follow-up biographical interviews, the use of the Thematic Apperception Test, the interviews with the wives, the secondary sample. They are reticent, however, about their analysis and classification of the wealth of material so collected. The only reference to this appears to be in their appended notes (p. 347), in which they write that the beginning and end of a period for each individual was 'determined' by the staff member writing the biography.

'In some cases ... discussed and modified in our staff meeting. ... The age ratings ... usually done jointly by two persons - the one writing the biography and myself (Levinson) ... two experienced researchers will ordinarily come within a year of each other in estimating the age at which a period begins and ends in a given case. We have not yet fully codified the criteria by which these determinations should be made.'

The nature of their analysis of the material and hence their identification of the periods is a matter of significance for the validity of the theory they construct. They state (p. 318) that while there appear to be no age-linked developments in the separate biological, psychological or occupational dimensions of adult life, they become apparent 'when we look at development in terms of the evolution of life structure'. Unless the reader is able to evaluate the validity of this structure by closer knowledge of how it has been established, the significance of the age-links and the validity of the normative nature of the structure which is proposed must remain in doubt.

Although they make some references throughout to the men interviewed and include four case studies Levinson et al. use little illustrative material from their interviews. The reader is thus deprived of the basic material upon which to evaluate the often assertive statements in the text.

The concept of development (as outlined in Chapter Five) is taken as a basic assumption in this research, despite their explicit recognition of the effects of the environment upon the individual (see 1978, p. xii; Levinson, 1980, p. 288 'multiple bio-psycho-social sources'). Indeed,



Levinson (1980, pp. 273-6) finds shortcomings in an adaptation perspective. Despite the open-endedness which the impact of the environment upon the individual's life can be argued to achieve, Levinson et al. claim (p. 322) to have identified the life cycle of the species.

A further comment must be made upon the strong sense conveyed in their work that they found what they sought to find. Chapter Five quoted from their 1976 article their intention to generate hypotheses concerning 'relatively universal, genotypic, age-linked adult developmental periods'. This is re-iterated in 1978 (see p. x) and in 1980 (p. 277) Levinson writes 'I often despaired of reaching my primary goal.'

The style in which this work is reported is one of confident assertiveness reinforced by a degree of repetition of their major points. Despite the inclusions of many provisos ('speculate', 'tentative', 'I present it as empirically grounded, not as demonstrated truth', 1980, p. 289), these seem overwhelmed by the positive tone overall, as in 1978, p. 322

'... with these caveats, we energetically offer the following hypothesis ...'

There are, however, hints in their final section that they do, indeed, hold a more tentative view. They indicate (p. 321) that the periods and eras of their structure overlap and 'interpenetrate' so that while working on the developmental tasks of any period a man may also be engaged with those of other periods. They have perhaps not emphasised these sufficiently as they tried to achieve their goal. Levinson(1980 p. 289) writes

'The sciences of human life are now suffering from a lack of a vital, species-encompassing conception of the adult life course that can help us understand and deal with problems that confront us today. The present volume has tried to make a contribution to the development of such a conception.'

The strength of the research of Levinson et al. lies undoubtedly in that area of their study in which they make an exploration of the individual's experiences of 'mid-life', with its interaction of exogenous and endogenous influences, and in which they intuitively develop a structure of

the life-span to form a hypothesis for future investigation. Their weakness here stems from the lack of sufficient evidence for the reader to judge their conclusions and, I would argue, the assumptions they make about the concept of development.

While they remain in this area (which is not dissimilar to that of my own study), their research can be seen to offer many perceptive and fascinating insights into and speculations about 'mid-life'. These and the framework of alternating stable and transitional periods will stimulate further discussion and research. I have found it valuable in my own work. Its intrinsic attractions, enhanced by some seductive reporting must not, however, deflect the very real criticisms which have to be made of their study.

The flaws in their research become apparent as they move out of that area on to other ground. They embark upon speculation when they extend their structure outside the age-range of the people interviewed, that is, backwards to childhood through reminiscence (as I did in my study) and forwards to late adulthood. The possibility of aggregating the experiences of the individuals they interviewed to produce definitive, age-linked periods must be questioned. They have no grounds upon which they can claim that this life structure, portrayed with such precision, is normative and of universal, historical significance.

The real value of their work lies in its speculation on the life-span and its insights into the narrower range of 'mid-life' experience.



## APPENDIX FOUR

### A Statement about New Paradigm Research

(Reason and Rowan 1981, pp. 489-91) The New Paradigm Research Manifesto

- (1) Research can never be neutral. It is always supporting or questioning social forces, both by its content and by its method. It has effects and side-effects, and these benefit or harm people.
- (2) Even the most static and conventional research discovers and exposes rigidities and fixed patterns, which are thus enabled to change. This is so whether such change is intended or not.

### Knowing and Participation

- (3) New paradigm research involves a much closer relationship than that which is usual between the researcher and the researched: significant knowledge of persons is generated primarily through reciprocal encounter between subject and researcher, for whom research is a mutual activity involving co-ownership and shared power with respect both to the process and to the product of the research.
- (4) The shared language and praxis of subject and researcher create 'the world' to be studied.

### Knowing and Action

- (5) We know that people have the capacity for self-awareness and for autonomous, self-directed action within their world, that they may develop the power to change their world. The whole thrust of new paradigm research is to produce the kind of active knowing which will preserve and enhance this capacity and this power. Thus the knowing acquired in new paradigm research is helpful to the flourishing of people and to the politics of self-determination.
- (6) We see human inquiry not only as a systematic coming-to-know process but also as learning through risk-taking in living. Since theoretical and practical knowledge are dialectically related, we seek knowledge which can be used in living, and regard knowledge separated from action as in need of special justification. That is why we more often speak of 'knowing' than of 'knowledge'.

### Knowing and 'Softness'

(7) The old paradigm approach regarded certain kinds of research as 'soft' (loose-construing, qualitative, hypothesis-generating, informal, discovery-oriented aspects of research) and as fit only for preliminary pilot work. It was loose and subjective. The real research was 'hard' research, objective, tight and quantitative. The new paradigm approach says that beyond this one-sided objectivity there is a new kind of tight and rigorous synthesis of subjectivity and objectivity. It seeks to develop a new rigour of softness.

### Knowing and the Holistic

(8) The intense particularity of individual situations is respected and celebrated. In studying persons and groups in situations we emphasize tacit understanding, phenomenological exactitude, including acceptance of ambiguities, contradictions and imprecision, which are uniquely valuable sources of insight and change. They need to be used to the full, even though they may be painful. This points to the need for emotional support to be built in to the research process.

(9) We are interested in generalization, not in order to make deterministic predictions, but as general statements about the power, possibilities, and limits of persons acting as agents. We are interested in describing the general patterns within which the particular may exist, and accept that often the most personal and particular is also the most general.

(10) We make every attempt to do justice to the person-in-context as a whole, and find in practice that this entails the use of multi-level, multi-disciplinary models of understanding.

### Knowing and Values

(11) What we contend for most of all is awareness of what is being done to self and others, and of what follows from that - both meant and un-meant. We do not want to give up important ideas like truth and checkability, but we do want more people to recognize that these things can have human costs when they are narrowly applied. For too long social science has treated people like things, and we are going on now to treat them like people, and like ourselves.



(12) The outcome of research is knowledge. Knowledge is power. The wrong kind of research gives the wrong kind of power. The right kind of research gives the right kind of power. Research can never be neutral.

This is the ninth draft of the Manifesto. We expect further drafts to emerge as ideas crystallize.

APPENDIX FIVE  
FRAMEWORK OF INTERVIEW

Process of change

Strands of life woven together to bring you to the present : a new and distinct phase of life.

1. BIOGRAPHY

1. d.o.b.
2. d.o.b. of siblings
3. father's occupation at time you left school
4. mother's       "       "       "       "       "
5. paternal grandfather's major occupation
6. maternal       "       "       "
7. siblings'       "       "
8. date of marriage
9. d.o.b. of children
10. wife's occupation at time of marriage
11. wife's       "       now
12. major occupation of significant others

2. EXAMINATION OF SOME OF THE 'STRANDS' IN LIFE

1. education: school and date of leaving  
subjects/interests  
qualifications achieved  
attitude to education  
parents' attitude to education  
Higher/Further education - dates, levels
2. early ambitions: towards leaving school - and later -  
any dreams, plans for future? How far ahead?
3. initial job choice: what jobs considered? Why? What was  
first job? Why that job? Like it? When and  
why left? Any plans? How far ahead?
4. subsequent job history: as 3 above.
5. major interests in life (work, family, hobbies): at school,  
in first job, in last job before present phase.



### 3. THE PRESENT (NEW AND DISTINCT PHASE)

1. When first thought about entering present phase? Where did idea come from? Discussion with others? How felt about life at that time?
2. How envisaged new life about this phase? What changes would it bring about? Looking how far ahead?
3. Before making the decision to enter the phase what factors taken into consideration? / What were circumstances at time of entering phase? Health? Pressure from others? Consideration of what other people might think? What did they think? How long taken to decide?
4. How was new phase entered? Precipitating event? Advice, knowledge, other outside help, models, mentors?
5. Effect of being in new phase so far - achieving what hoped for? What aspects of life are changing? For better? For worse? What remains unchanged?

### 4. THE FUTURE

1. From vantage point of today, what is seen of the future life? Time-scale?
2. In concrete terms, when does present phase end? What will do then? What changes in life expected? For better? For worse? What unchanged? What effect on wife, family?
3. Compared with former life, what will future life be like?

## APPENDIX SIX

### The elements of a well-formed root definition used in 'soft' systems methodology (from Checkland, 1981)

Checkland observes that the well-formed root definition will include (or consciously exclude) the following considerations which relate to the properties of a formal systems model. They can be recalled by the mnemonic CATWOE.

- C CUSTOMERS the beneficiaries or victims within and/or without the system. They are the indirect objects of the main verbs used to describe the system.
- A ACTORS the agents who carry out or who cause to be carried the main activities of the system, especially its main transformation.
- T TRANSFORMATION the process by which defined inputs are transformed into defined outputs. It includes the direct object of the main activity verbs used to describe the system.
- W WELTANSCHAUUNG the outlook, framework or image (often implicit and unquestioned) which makes this particular root definition meaningful.
- O OWNERSHIP of the system, some agency with a prime concern for it and the ultimate power to cause it to cease to exist.
- E ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS features of the system's environment to which it is subject; perhaps interactions with wider systems which it has to take as given.



'MID-CAREER CHANGE':

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

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