Career Strategies in Public Relations:

Constructing an original tapestry paradigm

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Abstract

The thesis constructs a new 'tapestry paradigm' to offer an original contribution towards understanding of career strategies in public relations. It addresses a lack of academic research into careers within the occupation and sits at the intersection of critical consideration of professionalisation of public relations and emerging theories in the field of career studies. Narrative inquiry from the viewpoint of a visible insider sheds new light on how public relations careers have developed to date, and may develop in future.

Whilst not its primary focus, the thesis considers career implications of increased feminisation of the occupation and responds to calls for greater research into the intersection of work and family lives in that context. An historical perspective underpins the thesis by exploring the origins of public relations careers and researching the career experiences of female practitioners during the 1970s and 1980s.

Investigation of contemporary career strategies involves a series of twenty-one in-depth, oral interviews with British-based mid-career practitioners using an innovative visual *timeline* technique. This is supported by *bricolage* archival research to situate the participants' experiences in a wider historical and social context.

Examination of career development processes and practices is undertaken using a conceptual framework that connects social cognitive and career construction theories. A constructivist philosophy with an interpretive approach is adopted using qualitative methods to understand research participants' lived experiences. Analysis of the research findings reveals four original theoretical constructs: knotted patterns of mobility; fluidity in career middleness; multi-layered, polyphonic sense making; and a non-linear, kairotic element of time.

Construction of a new tapestry paradigm supports the identification of career strategies within public relations as being opportunistic, agentic and rhizomatic. This paradigm confronts the dominant professionalisation perspective within public relations scholarship and practice of an implicit chronological, hierarchical career system predicated on individualistic characteristics and behaviours. It accommodates jurisdictional and definitional challenges to the occupation and enables understanding of individual and collective career experiences within public relations at the micro (individual), meso (organizational/occupational) and macro (societal) levels.

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Preface

Spinning and weaving are crafts that are historically associated with women. In mythology, goddesses use their creative powers to spin the threads of life and ensure continuity across the seasons. Many seasons have passed since I began to craft the words that form this thesis.

I have laboured, as did the Fates of Ancient Greece, to weave the past, present and future into a coherent thread. Where they crafted human destiny, I examine the threads that are interwoven over the span of time into careers.

The extent to which we are in charge of our own career destiny, or whether our fate lies in the hands of wider forces is the subject of this thesis.

My interest in career strategies in public relations is tied to my own experience. Fate played a hand in my entry into public relations and at several later points in my career. Sometimes, I have felt fortunate in the choices and opportunities that have come my way. At other times, my career has been entangled in matters beyond my control, both personally and professionally.

Looking around me, I realised that I was not alone. In a changing world of work, there was little guidance in how to craft a career within public relations. This seemed to be particularly the case for women, whether I appraised the careers of those older than me, or considered my generation and younger colleagues.

Although I had joined professional bodies and gained qualifications in public relations, the occupation seemed very much a craft where 'who you know' counted more than 'what you know'. Recognising that there was a lack of scholarship in relation to careers within public relations, I decided that this would be a worthy subject for doctoral study.

The result of my weaving is presented in this thesis.

Acknowledgements

> "I believe that what we become depends on what our fathers teach us at odd moments, when they aren't trying to teach us. We are formed by little scraps of wisdom."
>
> *Umberto Eco (1989), Foucault's Pendulum*

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to everyone who has contributed towards the many interconnecting threads comprising my personal and professional career tapestry.

I am indebted to the research participants who kindly shared their career histories within this study. Their generosity stretches far beyond the canvas of this work.

With humility, I acknowledge the support of my supervisory team, Professor Tom Watson and Professor Candida Yates. Their guidance has been invaluable in helping me overcome the occasional knot in crafting my thoughts into a coherent design.

I am formed by many scraps of wisdom, not least from my much missed father. My amazing mother continues to be a source of inspiration.

Finally, I am forever grateful to the much loved few - who add colour to my world, purpose to my life and passion to my soul. We know that a kite flies against the wind, not with it.

Author's declaration

Parts of this work have been presented at the following conferences and published in the following journal articles.

Conference presentations

Yaxley, H.M.L. 2011. Exploring the origins of careers in public relations. *The proceedings of the international history of public relations conference 2011.* Bournemouth University. 6–7 July 2011. 144–162.

Paper available from: https://microsites.bournemouth.ac.uk/historyofpr/files/2010/11/IHPRC-2011-Proceedings.pdf

Yaxley, H.M.L. 2012. Life on Mars: career experiences of women in British public relations (1970–1989). *The proceedings of the international history of public relations conference 2012.* Bournemouth University. 11–12 July 2012. 485-500.

Paper available from: https://microsites.bournemouth.ac.uk/historyofpr/files/2010/11/IHPRC-2012-Proceedings2.pdf

Yaxley, H.M.L. 2016. Conducting historical interviews in a transparent age: issues and implications of a visible insider. Bournemouth University. 6–7 July 2016.

Abstract available from: https://microsites.bournemouth.ac.uk/historyofpr/files/2010/11/IHPRC-2016-Abstracts.pdf

Journal publications

Yaxley, H.M.L., 2012. Exploring the origins of careers in public relations. *Public relations review*. 38 (3), 399–407.

Yaxley, H.M.L., 2013. Career experiences of women in British public relations (1970–1989). *Public relations review.* 39 (2), 156–165.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Personal context

This doctoral research project sets out to examine career strategies in public relations, and was informed by four key threads within my own experience and interests.

First, as a public relations practitioner, my career over the past twenty-eight years encompasses three main areas of employment: within organizations, an agency, and as a freelance (self-employed) consultant, within which I have helped direct the careers of other public relations practitioners. An interest in careers has continued through more than a decade's involvement as a director of a learned society, the Motor Industry Public Affairs Association, and as an educator teaching professional qualifications and at undergraduate and post-graduate levels in the university sector.

Second, throughout my working life, I have observed a lack of formal routes into and through the field, as well as habitus[1] rather than objective rationality in advice regarding public relations careers. Career information tends to be anecdotal and presented unproblematically within the occupational field.

Third, I am interested in how careers in public relations are influenced by employers and wider society. Demand for public relations practitioners reflects a growing yet unstructured occupation that is "demographically unrigid" (Abbott 1988, p.130) allowing encroachment from other disciplines (Lauzen 1991) most notably journalism.

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[1]   Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Mayrhofer et al. (2004a, p.3) define career habitus "as a frame of thinking, perceiving and acting within career fields", which are themselves explained as "a patterned set of practices" (Mayrhofer et al. 2004b, p.873).

My own entry into public relations in 1989 was opportunistic. My father noticed an advert in the classified section of *Autocar & Motor* magazine (Figure 1) for a Public Relations Officer at Peugeot Talbot Motor Company. I was working as a researcher at the Motor Industry Research Unit[2] in Norwich and my father thought this position might be a good move, although we were not familiar with what public relations involved. Within a month, I had applied, been interviewed, appointed and relocated to Birmingham from Norfolk.

Figure 1. Public Relations Officer vacancy, Peugeot Motor Company (Autocar & Motor 1989)

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[2]   The Motor Industry Research Unit (MIRU) was a private consultancy that had been established by the University of East Anglia.

Two further in-house positions in automotive public relations followed at National Breakdown Recovery Limited (a Leeds-based motoring organization) and Toyota GB (in Redhill, Surrey). I then spent three years in leadership roles at a public relations and sports marketing agency, PRISM, embedded in the head office of Ford Motor Company in Brentwood, Essex.[3]

Throughout this period, none of my employers offered career management (beyond annual appraisals). Indeed, a member of the personnel department at Peugeot pointed to "Jaguar in that direction, and Rover in that direction" when I asked about career moves. My personal experience seemed indicative of the lack of a formal career development structure for public relations practitioners.

At this time, the world of work was being reshaped (Handy 1989). Periods of recession and recovery in the 1980s and 1990s (Jenkins 2010) meant that expectations of a life-long, organizationally-managed career with a single employer were coming to an end. Simultaneously, the growth of a knowledge-based economy (Foray and Lundvall 1998) stimulated an evolution of opportunities (Baruch 2003), whereby:

> "more and more individuals are behaving as professionals always have, charging fees not wages. They find that they are 'going portfolio'… exchanging full-time employment for independence" (Handy 1994, p.175).

This quote reflects my own career experience as I became self-employed in 2000. The turn of the millennium seemed a good time to become an independent, portfolio-worker and rely on my knowledge of, and competency in, public relations.

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[3]   I graduated with a BSc degree in psychology in 1982. Unable to secure a grant for a post-graduate teaching qualification, I found that local authority funding was available for the RSA Diploma for Personal Assistants. Subsequently I was employed full-time in secretarial and administrative roles, helped to run my family's small hotel and worked as a typist in temporary positions.

My decision involved self-efficiacy (Bandura 1977), although a belief in my own ability to execute a change was informed by socio-cultural and technological developments that facilitated this career move. I am interested in this agentic approach to careers (Sadri 1996) as a way of examining the career strategies employed by public relations practitioners within broader organizational, occupational and societal contexts.

The fourth thread supporting this doctoral project is critical reflection on the body of knowledge within public relations academia. Literature regarding public relations work has been criticised for "widely ignoring career development factors" (Wolf, 2006, p.175). Instead it has presented a professionalisation agenda (Grunig and Hunt 1984; van Ruler 2005), where the concept of career is indicated without reference to the meaning of the term, or consideration of careers studies literature.

Indeed, the "fluid and enterprising nature of public relations" (Cropp and Pincus 2001, p.196) that reflects my own career experience contrasts with claims that the occupation is a profession where a more formal organization of careers would traditionally be expected (Waters 1989).

In summary, my interest in career strategies within public relations stems from my own experience and involvement with other practitioners, alongside critical reflection of public relations scholarship. My personal context suggests that career strategies within public relations involve an opportunistic and agentic approach rather than a coherent system of professional development.

1.2. Disciplinary home

This doctoral project sits at the intersection of critical consideration of the professionalisation of public relations and emerging theories in the field of career studies in response to societal changes. Its premise is that the focus of the concept of a career on the implications of change (Herriot 1992) offers a new line of inquiry to consider the continuing relevance of a professionalisation narrative within public relations.

Over the past two decades, a body of academic research within the career studies field has examined the changing career context (Baruch 2003; Schein 2007; Tams and Arthur 2010; Valcour et al. 2007). This has shifted the emphasis from "institutions to individuals" (Savickas 2012, p.14) and signifies a move "toward dynamic models and away from static models" (Moore et al. 2007, p.31) in seeking to make sense of careers at several levels: macro (societal), meso (organizational/ occupational) and micro (individual).

Consequently, this thesis draws on emerging career theories, notably development of social cognitive theory (Bandura 2001) and career construction theory (Savickas 2012) as a framework for examining career development processes and practices (Hirsh et al. 1996) within public relations.

Construction of a new 'tapestry paradigm' in this thesis seeks to address the limitations of traditional career theories that advocate matching personality traits and personal identity to occupations (Patton and McMahon 2014) or propose organizationally-based, linear, life-span models (Dalton 1989). Whilst the notion of occupational fit and hierarchical role concepts are evident in public relations literature and practice (Gregory and Willis 2013; VanderMolen 2013; Berger and Meng 2014), their resilience and relevance in this contemporary career context is under-examined.

Career studies literature offers the opportunity to gain new understanding of professionalisation within public relations, by examining "elements that underlie the etiology of career behavior, not just its classification" (Herr 1990, p.4). This work addresses a call by Lent (2013) for research that informs proactive career strategies as a result of recent changes to the social, economic, political and technological context of work. Specifically, this doctoral study aims to provide insight into an occupation that is growing (PRCA 2016), but is subject to jurisdictional and definitional challenges (Hutton 2001; Cornelissen 2004).

The developing body of literature within career studies reflects arguments for "the demise of traditional career forms" (Storey 2000, p.21) as a result of a requirement for increased flexibility (Savickas 2012; Richardson and Kelliher 2015) within twenty-first century careers. This perspective has not been considered in relation to public relations careers. Indeed, there is a lack of examination of matters affecting practitioner employability (Fugate et al. 2004) and career development at a time of "decreasing volition for many well-educated workers" (Blustein 2011, p.4).

Given challenges to traditional professional careers (Abbott 1988) and developments of the role and nature of professionalism (Broadbent et al. 1997), this study examines alternate career forms (Arthur and Rousseau 1996; Hall 1996; Peiperl and Gunz 2007) and emerging concepts to illuminate the nature of career strategies enacted in public relations.

In particular, two primary areas within recent career studies literature inform this doctoral study. The first is Bandura's social cognitive theory (2001), which highlights the concept of agency as enabling adaptation through personal, proxy and collective efforts. This theory has been extended and

developed by many career studies theorists (Patton and McMahon 2014) to inform understanding of career behaviour at the macro, meso and micro level within a relational context (Blustein 2011).

Secondly, Savickas' career construction theory (2005) enables examination of how individuals seek meaning in their working experiences and career behaviours. His constructivist approach builds on earlier career development concepts and forms part of a body of postmodern research. It seeks to examine subjective career narratives in a "turbulent career environment" (Fugate et al. 2004, p.15). This work informs the thesis by offering insight into career sense making and decision-making behaviour.

The context in which this study takes place is the UK where the public relations industry is estimated to be worth £12.9 billion and employ 83,000 people (PRCA 2016a). This reflects a 75 per cent increase in the occupation's working population in a decade (CEBR 2005). Despite this growth and claims that public relations has become a "pervasive activity in our society" (Moloney 2000, p17), described at the end of the twentieth century as the "profession of the decade" (p.31), there has been limited research into careers by scholars within the field or by those outside it who specialise in the study of professions (L'Etang 2004).

Indeed, although it has been argued that public relations "is far from professionalized" (van Ruler 2005, p167), alternate forms of career (Tams and Arthur 2010) are under-examined. This is surprising given the considerable body of research and literature that exists in the modern field of career studies (Moore et al. 2007). Further there is a lack of academic research to inform careers advice within public relations, and prepare

practitioners[4] for the challenge of a changing career context (Baruch 2003; Tams and Arthur 2010).

This thesis offers a focus on the mid-career life-stage, which relates to the establishment period in Super's career development model (Sullivan and Crocitto, 2007) when people are said to reflect, consolidate or advance their careers by "seeking higher levels of responsibility" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.73). The intention is to address observations that knowledge of changing career paths is in its early stages (Valcour et al. 2007) and there is little understanding of the reality of "how careers are actually played out" (Schein 2007a, p.575).

An understanding of how public relations careers have developed to date, and may develop in future, has relevance for an occupation that has attracted an increasing number of women (Yaxley 2013a) during a sustained period of notable growth (Moloney 2000). Whilst this has resulted in feminisation of the occupation (Aldoory 2007), literature and practice suggest that women seeking to develop a career in public relations have faced many barriers. These include role (Dozier and Broom 1985) and vertical (Crompton 1997) segregation, gender inequities (Wrigley 2010), the concept of a 'glass ceiling' (Wrigley 2002), the role of male mentors (Tam et al 1995) and societal and organizational constraints (Hynes Huberlie 1997).

Studies continue to argue that gender has significance for career development (Daymon and Demetrious 2014) in public relations. Whilst gender is not the primary focus of this thesis, it examines the possibility of "distinct differences in how men and women enact their careers" (Sullivan and Crocitto 2007, p.298).

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[4]   Practitioners are defined as "persons engaged in the practice of a particular skill, art, or discipline" (Oxford English Dictionary 2011, p.1127).

Specifically, the thesis responds to calls for greater research into the intersection of work and family lives (Greenhaus and Foley 2007). This acknowledges that career constraints affect "working people across the spectrum of work-based privilege and volition" (Blustein 2011, p.2). In addition, literature concerning feminist theories, diversity, intersectionality and individuality has begun recently to offer a critique of established discourses within the career studies field.

Consequently, the career studies domain offers a new disciplinary home from which to examine the professionalisation of public relations. In turn, the thesis contends that the flexibility of careers within public relations provides an opportunity to offer critical insight into the career studies field.

1.3. Statement of ethics

This work complies with Bournemouth University ethical regulations. Necessary ethical consideration and approval was obtained prior to the commencement of data collection. Informed consent was secured in writing from research participants. All data has been collected, analysed and stored in a manner that ensures its security as well as participant anonymity and confidentiality.

1.4. Thesis structure

The thesis comprises thirteen chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 establishes an understanding of the public relations occupation and its historic development. It assesses definitions of public relations from a careers perspective and provides an original examination of the origins of public relations careers. This contributes towards historical knowledge of public relations through a review of biographies and other published narratives of those who worked in the field in its formative years. The chapter concludes with an

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investigation of the size and structure of the occupational field in the UK since the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter 3 uses Kanter's (1989a) framework of bureaucratic, professional and entrepreneurial career forms to support critical examination of literature and theorising regarding the scope and form of public relations work. This informs the focus of Chapter 4 on demographic changes within the occupation. Here, an initial research study of the career experiences of women working in public relations in Britain between 1970 and 1989 is presented. Finally, the chapter considers career development in relation to diversity, intersectionality and individuality.

Chapter 5 offers an overview of the establishment of the field of career studies and the recent emergence of a range of new career concepts. It assesses theories proposed from within the fields of psychology and sociology as well as organization and management studies. Conceptual developments since the 1990s offer an opportunity to examine the contemporary context of careers, with emphasis on the opportunities and challenges this presents, particularly for public relations practitioners.

Chapter 6 provides an *intermezzo* reflection on the above textural layers of knowledge. A series of schemata are presented in order to situate public relations within career studies scholarship. These support the creation of a conceptual framework of careers as inclusive social constructions. This leads to the development of a new career paradigm with tapestry proposed as an original root metaphor to inform analysis of careers.

The design of research reported in this thesis is outlined in Chapter 7. The broad research objectives for the inquiry are to identify how public relations practitioners make sense of their

career experiences, examine the strategies they use to inform career decisions and determine how they are responding to a changing career context. A constructivist philosophy offers a unifying intellectual perspective that encompasses understanding of both careers and public relations. It informs an interpretive narrative approach to research how individuals understand their work-life story. Constructivist grounded theory informs the research methodology where qualitative data is obtained through a series of face-to-face, *timeline* narrative interviews with mid-career public relations practitioners. These are supplemented by *bricolage* archival research to offer broader contextual understanding of career experiences. Ethical considerations are discussed as well as limitations of the method and the reliability and validity of the qualitative data study.

Chapter 8 presents the findings of the primary research. It provides an overview of the research participants and the chronological development of their careers. It reviews the empirical evidence obtained using the *timeline* narrative interviews and supplementary *bricolage* archival research. It concludes by looking at connections within the data across micro, meso and macro levels of analysis.

The resultant *tales of the field* of participants' individual and collective careers are examined in Chapter 9 as *woven* narratives. This enables the broad research objectives and claims of professionalisation within pubic relations to be addressed with reference to emerging career concepts.

Chapter 11 offers conclusions that situate the findings, analysis and theorising within the existing knowledge base and consider the inquiry's relevance and limitations. Recommendations are detailed in Chapter 12 with a focus on establishing a professionalised career design for public relations.

Finally a brief outro chapter reviews the researcher's active participation in the inquiry and substantiates the original contribution offered by the tapestry paradigm for the professionalisation of career strategies in public relations.

In this introductory chapter, I have declared my research interests and intentions. The premise and thesis of the study have been discussed, along with consideration of its disciplinary home and the theoretical framework for the research inquiry. An outline of the chapters that form the structure of the project has been included, as has a statement of research ethics[5].

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[5] Chapter 7 includes further consideration of research ethics.

Chapter 2. Analysing the fabric, texture, size and motifs of public relations as an occupation

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to establish an understanding of the occupation of public relations and its historic development. Structured into four sections the chapter starts by assessing definitions of public relations from an occupational perspective to inform how this field of work, and its construction as a career, is conceptualised within literature.

Next it provides an analysis of the origins of public relations careers through a review of biographies and other published narratives of those who worked in the field in its formative years. This reflects an original contribution towards historical knowledge of public relations that formed the basis of a presentation at the International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC) in 2011, and subsequent publication in *Public Relations Review* (Yaxley 2012).

Finally, the chapter investigates the occupational field in the UK since the mid-twentieth century. This involves an appraisal of the size of the working population with reference to membership of the main industry bodies. It concludes by examining the occupation's tripartite structure and its segmentation by type of organization and sector.

Within the thesis, this chapter reveals limitations in how careers are conceptualised within public relations literature and practice, and establishes historical and contemporary rationales for investigating career strategies within the field.

2.2. Defining the fabric of public relations

Public relations literature "articulates multiple visions of what public relations is and ought to be" (Cheney and Christensen 2001, p.167). Hence determining an accepted definition of public relations to inform an understanding of careers in the discipline is problematic. Coombs and Holladay (2010) say that:

> "Definitions are a point of view. They tell people what is important and, by implication, what is unimportant" (Coombs and Holladay 2010, p.4).

What is important in this thesis is establishing the scope of public relations from a career perspective. Rather than proposing a single definition of this "complex occupation" (Hodges 2006 p.81), this study adopts the position that "public relations through its own activity continually reconstructs and redefines itself" (Baerns 2008, p.155), whereby it is accepted that "public relations is what public relations does" (a phrase that Baerns attributes to Rühl 1992). Within the thesis the multi-layered nature of the occupation and careers within it are conceived as being socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann 1966) through "collective agency exercised through socially coordinative and interdependent effort" (Bandura 2001, p.1).

Although the term public relations was first used in 1882 (Verčič and Grunig 2000), Vos claims that:

> "few disciplines have struggled with defining their own institutionalized activities in quite the same way as public relations" (Vos 2011, p.121).

Further Hutton (2001, p.205) argues that public relations has failed "to define its intellectual and practical domain". Mindful of the limitations of "this definitional fuzziness" (Moloney 2000, p.59), this section examines how public relations has been conceptualised in order to determine whether this sheds light on careers in the discipline.

2.2.1. Management-oriented perspective

From an occupational perspective, scholars largely contend that public relations is a management function (Cutlip et al. 2000; Pohl and Vandeventer 2001), primarily engaged in "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" (Grunig and Hunt 1984, p.8); which Verčič et al. (2001, p.380) argue is conceptually the same as "managing relationships".

Although Harlow's extensive research undertaken in 1975 found variation in definitions over the previous seventy years, he concludes that public relations practitioners serve as:

> "a part of management, either as an internal staff member or officer or as an external professional counselor or consultant" (Harlow 1976, p.36).

Some of the industry leaders participating in his study felt that:

> "the classical concept of public relations has not changed in the half century since its emergence as a discipline" (Harlow 1976, p.38).

However, other respondents argued that the role was then entering a period of change. This indicates a tension between Harlow's aim for clear conceptualisation of public relations and the need for the occupation to be progressive and adapt to changing circumstances.

Decades later, the dominant notional definition of public relations continues to be as a "strategic management function rather than as a messaging, publicity, and media relations function" (Grunig 2006, p.151) despite an on-going challenge "in institutionalizing strategic public relations as actual practice in most organizations" (p.171). Whether public relations is, or is not, generally recognised as a strategic management function in organizations has implications for career strategies adopted by its practitioners, although as Moss and DeSanto assert:

"all too often the term 'management' or 'managerial' is used within the communication/public relations field without sufficient thought or clarity as to what it means" (Moss and DeSanto 2011, p.xv).

From a career perspective, management in public relations is viewed in developmental terms, as is evident in the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Professional Career Guide that claims to support "a natural progression" into "senior executive positions" through five hierarchic levels: technician, supervisor, manager, director and executive (PRSA 1993, p.1). Indeed, DeSanto observes that:

"time and experience in the practice are needed before it is possible for practitioners to assume management responsibility" (DeSanto 2011, p.5).

She further argues that managerial competence is necessary to "enhance not only the individual practitioner's status, but also the status of the profession" (p.6). Thus management is presented as both a way of defining public relations and a strategy for hierarchical career development.

The PRSA guide suggests that a management career path is a matter of choice whereby those who decide to specialise:

"in areas such as investor relations and speech writing are highly valued and will find that compensation for their abilities can equal or exceed that of managers" (PRSA 1993, p.1).

Although this statement indicates that the occupation offers expert non-hierarchical career options, the guide's main focus is on traditional models of career development that are critiqued later in this thesis. Despite being over two decades' old, the guide is still available through the PRSA *JobCenter* website where it is promoted as seminal. It is notable that the world's largest public relations association, with more than 22,000 members (PRSA 2016), has not updated the guide to address

developments in public relations, the world of work, or career studies.

PRSA has, however, revised its definition of public relations having undertaken an international crowd-sourcing campaign in 2011/2012 that voted to modernise and replace a twenty-year-old definition. This resulted in adoption of the following statement:

> "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (PRSA 2012).

PRSA's then Chair and CEO, Gerard Corbett (2012, n.p.) claimed that "'process' is preferable to 'management function'", which he said avoids the evocation of "control and top-down, one-way communications". However, the new systemic emphasis offers little insight for understanding the occupation or careers within it. There is also a contrast with the focus on strategic management in the values-based definition developed for the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) by Flynn et al. (2008). Aiming to ensure consistency across the country's educational institutions, the CPRS definition (Flynn 2011) sought to incorporate six theoretical frameworks, although only five are included in the final version:

> "Public relations is the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communications, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals, and serve the public interest" (CPRS 2014).

The omitted framework, reputation management, is the focus of the definition from the UK's Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) which states public relations is "the discipline which looks after reputation" (2014a). Although this definition does not specifically reference management, Butterick (2011) argues that it "equates PR with reputation management"

(p.7) and S. Oliver (2010) observes that the full CIPR definition "implies strategic management" (p.11).

Görpe and Yüksel (2011) note how reputation management became a popular term in the 1990s as a dimension of public relations, with Hutton et al (2001, p.247) observing its presence in "a growing body of academic and practitioner literature". Research by Davies and Miles (1998, p.26) found that "reputation management exists as a business role" rather than as a functional title. Similarly, Fombrun (1996) defines the chief reputation officer as the person with the highest position in an organization assuming this responsibility, which may be:

> "the chief executive officer, chief operating officer, chief marketing officer, or chief communications officer" (Reputation Institute 2012, p.2).

One career-related implication in claiming responsibility for reputation management within a definition of public relations is the suggestion of executive responsibility and potentially elevation into a key strategic role (Hutton et al. 2001), which could include achievement of executive positions, echoing the PRSA career structure discussed above.

2.2.2. Corporate communications remit

In contrast to this management-oriented perspective, marketing literature tends to define public relations as providing tactical publicity activities (Kotler et al. 2008). Kitchen (1997, p.226) terms this a "reductionist view" of public relations. It is seen as little more than a craft whereby practitioners offer a technical service or skills set as part of the marketing discipline.

Whilst Gregory and Willis (2013, p.11) argue that public relations should take "a multi-stakeholder perspective of the organization", marketing similarly encompasses "relationships and noncustomer publics" (Hutton 2001, p.214). This reveals an

overlap with a definition of public relations as relationship management (Ledingham and Bruning 2000). It may be that defining public relations as a marketing discipline enables practitioners to develop a hierarchical management career, albeit one that accepts the "field's fuzzy and continually gerrymandered boundaries" (Cropp and Pincus 2001, p.189).

This argument supports the observation by Gregory (2011a, p.92) of "a growing remit for the public relations function", which she suggests evidences its "broader meaning" in the UK where the term "is used interchangeably with corporate communications". Moloney (2000) refers to the use of replacement terminology as "fashions in nomenclature" (p.60), echoing criticism in the 1920s of the title "public relations counsel" as a euphemism (Raucher 1968, p.144). The implication of this lack of definitional clarity and potential obfuscation within the occupational argot is evident when Gregory (2011a, p.98) reports studies showing that CEOs see public relations as "one-dimensional" being "largely media relations focused". She indicates that a barrier to practitioners' career progression is their own lack of self-efficacy and observes that:

> "their ability to break into the dominant coalition is limited because they do not exhibit the pre-requisite capabilities. Overall, the research confirms that CEO's wish practitioners to have a much-enhanced role, but that practitioners need more strategic and broader business skills in order to make a full contribution at board level" (Gregory 2011a, p.98)

Moreover, research by global recruitment firm, Korn Ferry finds that functional background is less important than personal ability:

"as we have seen in our work with organizations across industries, global CEOs tend to be "agnostic" about where strategic input comes from, whether a CCO[6], a CMO[7], or other senior executives. More important is the person's ability to provide a 360-degree perspective of the landscape, an attitude and skill set that uniquely positions the savvy CCO within the leadership circle —acting more like a 'chief collaboration officer'" (Marshall and Dedrijvere 2014, p.6.)

Consequently, defining public relations as corporate communications appears to prescribe hierarchical organizational careers for practitioners. Indeed, Gregory's (2011a, p.100) arguments that "communication in all its richness and complexity is seen to be a functionally boundary less and seamless activity" and public relations practitioners "are in a good position to become the leaders of those integrated functions" may position public relations as an early career specialism leading to a more generalist corporate communications-based executive role.

2.2.3. Craft expertise

Despite the above discussion that supports hierarchical career progression for public relations practitioners, Verčič and White (2012, p.237) identify a "culture divide" between the discipline and working in senior management. They contend that entry routes into public relations from journalism and communication-based qualifications fail to offer the performance and results-oriented perspective that is valued in strategic management. This is apparent in Elmer's (2011, p.47) simple statement that "public relations is storytelling" and the longer definition proposed by Morris and Goldsworthy:

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[6]   Chief Communication Officer
[7]   Chief Marketing Officer

"Public relations is the planned persuasion of people to behave in ways which further its sponsor's objectives. It works primarily through the use of media relations and other forms of third-party endorsement" (Morris and Goldsworthy 2008, p.102).

Morris and Goldsworthy (2012, p.7) assert that their view is controversial and "outside most established definitions". They claim to reflect the opinions of "those outside the industry who rely on PR" that "may not be quite as exalted as that claimed by public relations practitioners" (*ibid*). Further, Morris and Goldsworthy (*ibid*) present the occupation as tactical and technical saying that it attracts "countless journalists, for whom a lucrative second career in PR often beckons" (p.19).

Emphasis on the skills set that journalists bring into public relations defines it primarily as a craft-based occupation. Indeed, Bailey (2012, p.192) observes "a continued role for craft skills" within public relations as a result of the development of social media. However research by Lee et al. (2015, p.413) finds that social media activities are often allocated on the basis of "the relatively cheaper cost of entry-level practitioners", rather than being indicative of craft-based expertise. In relation to careers, Duhé (2007) contends that "new media" (p.93) help to develop social connections and enhance "personal and professional stock of social capital" (p.103). However, Bridgen (2013a) cautions that this is dependent on the nature of social media usage.

Research undertaken by Siebert et al. (2001) demonstrates the "importance of social capital to career success" (p.231), specifically the role of "network structures" (p.219). Supporting this view, Dodd et al. (2015) relate social capital to career progression. Public relations practitioners seek to gain social resources ("relationships, reputation, trust") as they develop "their professional positions", whilst managers "at

more mature stages of their careers, may be more likely to seek to maintain social resources" (*ibid*, p.474).

However Marshall and Dedrijvere (2014, p.11) claim that CCOs seek "to manage new or emerging initiatives such as social media that don't have a clearly defined owner within the organization" implying that acquisition of such additional responsibilities may be envisaged as a career enhancing strategy.

Therefore, social media may benefit career development by offering new craft skills and additional management responsibilities, as well as by encouraging interactive, collective agency (Bandura 2001) through participation in online social networks. This is evident in Bridgen's (2013a, p.9) study where "'engagement' with others in social media" is deemed a critical factor in securing social capital.

In addition to media relations and social media, public relations literature identifies many other "areas of expertise" (Theaker 2013, p.39) in which practitioners may work and develop their careers. Development of specialist skills and knowledge is considered in Chapter 3 in relation to a professional form of career.

<u>2.2.4. Activist and civic practice</u>

The definitional discussion so far has largely offered an organizational focus on public relations work, the field and consequent career implications. However, a wider perspective is indicated by L'Etang, who notes that public relations:

> "takes into account a very wide range of factors, some of which are relational, some of which are organizational and some of which are environmental, encompassing local, national and international issues and contexts" (L'Etang 2008a, p.18).

Verčič et al. (2001, p.382) claim that a "concern for broader societal issues" is implicit in definitions of public

relations. They call for recognition of its role in helping organizations "respond to social demands" (*ibid*, p.380). Similarly, Brunner (2015, p.237) favours the adoption of "civic professionalism" within public relations as a means of community engagement. This reflects a "socio-cultural 'turn'" (Edwards and Hodges 2011, p.1) within the literature that seeks to shift attention to the broader role of public relations in society, while acknowledging it is already "a rather amorphous practice" (Coombs and Holladay 2014, p.127). The notion of operating in "the interests of the public good" is evident in the CIPR Royal Charter as a marker of "professional standing" (Tobin 2005, p.56), which suggests associated career advantages.

However, Demetrious (2014, p.31) believes that defining public relations is "an important point that should be scrutinised from all sides of society", which Rakow (2014, p.xiv) asserts means more than simply embracing it as "a lucrative career option". This is an implied criticism of the focus on attaining senior management positions and professional status.

Positioning public relations as a "social and cultural practice", (Edwards and Hodges 2011, p.2) indicates the potential for careers to be developed within the types of organizations that are more commonly presented as activist opponents to government or corporations (Coombs and Holladay 2014).

Indeed, Ciszek (2015, p.453) argues that activism and public relations are "conjoined processes", although she does not consider whether being an activist is a job or offers career prospects. Demetrious (2013) does argue that activism "is central to unlocking meaningful occupational reform in public relations", while Holtzhausen (2012) posits that career paths may involve a move out of corporate public relations and into activism. Similarly, Brunner and Summerfield (2015) argue that

public relations practitioners should consider explicitly the societal impact of their careers.

The intention of this section was to illuminate careers in public relations by examining how the concept is defined in the literature. Whilst achieving this aim has been complicated by the different perspectives discussed above, three main considerations within definitions of public relations emerge that help to outline the scope of the thesis. First, emphasis on management and corporate communications suggests that public relations career strategies are oriented towards hierarchical progression. Second technical competence (notably in respect of media relations and, more recently, social media), highlights a craft approach to career development. Finally, a socio-cultural turn in public relations academia expands consideration of careers beyond a traditional organizational context.

2.3. The textured origins of careers in public relations

The previous section found a lack of consensus regarding how careers within the occupation may be conceptualised. Consequently, this section sets out to determine the origins and historical nature of public relations careers. It draws on a paper given at the International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC) in 2011 and subsequently published in *Public Relations Review* (Yaxley 2012). The aim is to provide an original contribution towards knowledge of public relations careers, which is supported by Vos who states that:

> "Crafting historical explanations, far from an irrelevant academic exercise is central to how scholars understand public relations today" (Vos 2011, p.120).

In order to investigate the historical origins of careers in public relations it is helpful to provide a typology of relevant terms. As noted above, this thesis accepts public relations as a

socially constructed activity that is "still redefining itself as a field" (Tsetsura 2010, p.166). Consequently, this section considers the emergence of public relations in the form of work, which is defined as:

> "purposeful human activity involving physical or mental exertion that is not undertaken solely for pleasure and that has economic or symbolic value" (Budd 2011, p.2).

Further, it acknowledges the establishment of public relations as a recognisable job, which Brannick et al. (2007, p.6) define broadly in relation to similarities in the "work content performed by a group of people". A job is, therefore, considered to be a building block of a career (Wilensky 1961).

A third relevant concept in understanding the origins of careers in public relations is that of an occupation. Molineux (2010) notes this is a "complex and multifaceted phenomenon" (p.17) that "has meaning to the individual engaged in it" (p.20) and needs to be understood within sociocultural contexts. Occupations are associated with the division of labour (work) and an increase in specialisation of jobs within industrialised societies (Moore et al. 2007). As such, an occupation may be defined as a "line of work" (*ibid*, p.19) comprising groups of individuals who perform similar or related jobs that can be understood within a particular time and place.

Within this thesis, reference is made to public relations predominantly as an occupation rather than a profession. This allows for definition of the concept of profession as both a type of occupation (Abbott 1988) and a traditional career form (Kanter 1989a). Therefore, the notion of career can be seen as "a structural property of an occupation" and "the pattern of work related experiences that span the course of a person's life" (Greenhaus et al. 2010, p.10).

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According to Watson (2014) public relations history is dominated by a narrow US and British base of narratives written by, and focused on, male perspectives; thereby reflecting Carlyle's notion of the history of great men (Kerry & Hill 2010). This critique is evident when investigating the origins of public relations careers within the established literature and additional sources. Watson's call to research "*other* experiences and *other* voices of public relations" (2014, p.875) is addressed in Chapter 3. However, the focus of this section remains Anglo-American to reflect the historical context of the occupation's origins.[8]

Historical development of public relations in Britain was largely unstudied until publication of L'Etang's extensive consideration of its professionalisation in 2004. Her focus is on the emergence of the occupation rather than nature of careers in the field, which is also the case for earlier work that narrates a history of public relations in the US (Goldman 1948; Raucher 1968; Nolte 1979; Crable and Vibbert 1986; Cutlip 1994; Cutlip 1995; Ewen 1996).

Historically, few authors have written specifically about careers in public relations. In 1927, Edward Bernays, who with his wife Doris Fleischman conceived the term "counsel on public relations" (Lamme 2014, p.291), published *An Outline of Careers: A Practical Guide to Achievement by Thirty-Eight Eminent Americans*, which positioned public relations alongside more established occupations. A year later, Fleischman (1928), edited a "companion volume" (p.390): *An Outline of Careers for Women.* This reproduced the earlier chapter on public relations alongside others that ranged from accountancy and banking to motion pictures and secretarial work.

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[8]   Nessman (1995) notes the similarity between public relations in the UK and US.

More substantially, in 1943, Averill Broughton, a US public relations and advertising executive with his own firm, published *Careers in Public Relations: The new profession*. This offers advice as well as interviews with leading US public relations executives in order to guide "the aspirant to a new, fascinating and tremendously important vocation" (p.13). As with more general records of public relations' history, Broughton focuses on "a few colorful personalities" (Cutlip 1994, p.xvii). Although Broughton claims his "diligent research" (p.13) had not identified similar consideration, the book's legacy is minimal with source citation only by Miller (1999; 2014).

2.3.1. Press agentry to professionalisation

Documented history predominantly presents the precursor of public relations as emergence of press agentry (seeking press exposure on behalf of a client) in the early nineteenth century (Newsom et al. 2013) when:

> "America was filled with jacks-of-all-trades who lacked the proper training for the new specialized occupations that were springing up" (Cole 2004, p.54).

Henry (1972) traces the earliest use of the title of press agent to the American, W.W. Durand,[9] the third top executive within John Robinson's Circus and Menagerie in 1868 and by the late nineteenth century press agentry in US circuses offered an occupational career rather than a transitory job.[10]

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[9]   Henry (1972) uses the spelling Durant, but Slout's (2005) use of Durand is most likely the correct spelling.

[10]   Three examples illustrate this transition. John Burke was a "stock company actor, manager of a tent-show dramatic troupe, and newspaper editor" (Russell 1979 p.301), prior to 1872 after which he spent the remainder of career as press agent for Buffalo Bill Cody. Richard F "Tody" Hamilton, was a newspaper reporter and owner, became press agent and general manager for New York Aquarium in 1876 before working for P.T. Barnum's circus from 1886 until retiring in 1907 (New York Times 1916). Dexter

The role of an agent reflects the medieval occupation of *commenda*[11], which Weber (1889) relates to contemporary ideas of intermediaries acting between two parties. Press agencies were part of the transformation of journalism in the nineteenth century in the US (Muhlmann 2008) and Britain (Wiener 2015). They facilitated wider and faster reporting of news and general interest stories in the booming popular press.

From the 1870s, journalists working for the Associated Press Agency gradually became organizational advocates known as press agents (Russell 2010), who were employed as media representatives by many US organizations (Cutlip 1995; Stoker & Rawlins 2005). For example, German-born Ernest H Heinrichs, moved from England to the US where he worked in journalism, before becoming "the first industrial press agent" (Raucher 1968, p.9) for Westinghouse Electric Company in 1889, where he reported to its vice-president and general manager. Similarly, Canadian born William B Sommerville was a "faithful press agent" (Russell & Bishop 2009, p. 95), employed as superintendent of the press service of the Western Union Telegraph in the 1880s and 1890s.

According to L'Etang:

"a significant proportion of the early *[British public relations]* consultants began their careers in advertising agencies that subsequently developed public relations departments or subsidiaries" (L'Etang 2004, p.101).

Raucher (1968) observes a similar broad focus in US advertising agencies, with establishment of the first specialist editorial firm, the Publicity Bureau, by a former newspaper advertising manager, George Michaelis, in Boston in 1900.

Fellows worked exclusively as a circus press agent for forty years from 1892 (Time Magazine 1936).

[11] Postan (1978) explains that *commenda* were contracted to manage trade between merchants.

These agencies "developed to serve as intermediaries between businesses and media outlets" (Applegate 1998, p.18).

Evidence of progression from journalism to an organizational management role is found in the career of Drummond Ellsworth who, between 1884 and 1900, worked as a newspaper reporter and simultaneously as a press agent prior to joining the Publicity Bureau. His career developed from "writer to manager and then to a limited partnership" (Cutlip 1994, p.19), with responsibility for the AT&T account. He was hired by the company in 1907 to work with its recently appointed chief executive, Theodore Vail, as head of a newly created AT&T information department (Ewen 1996). Ellswroth remained there until retiring in 1930 (Heath 2005). The suggestion is that public relations careers evolved in response to forces that included "emergence of the professional field of journalism" and "division of labour" within organizations (Bentele 2015, p.40).

In presenting press agentry as the primary antecedent for public relations employment, literature has tended to ignore other potential career origins. For example, the large formal expositions used to educate the public from the late eighteenth century, which became regular features in Europe and the US in the nineteenth century (Unger 2007). In 1851, the Great Exhibition in London was organised by civil servant, Henry Cole, a "galvanic force" (Wilson 2003, p.128), who ensured that the event was promoted at a level not seen before (Briggs 1981). The 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago featured a department of publicity and promotion headed from 1890 by Pennsylvanian journalist and former army officer, Major Moses P. Handy (Cutlip 1995). At the 1904 St Louis Fair, the "press exploitation" bureau had domestic and foreign divisions; the former alone employing "76 persons, including 26 full-time

reporters and editors, 6 stenographers, and numerous clerks"
(Rydell 1993, p.22).

Such exhibitions "generated innovative public-relations
campaigns" (Boissau and Markwyn 2010, p.2) and influenced
public perceptions. Their significance, and the careers of those
employed to promote them, is under-explored in public relations
literature.

In Britain, the opportunity to develop a career is traced to
the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries.
Prior to this people predominantly worked in rural agriculture
with a shift to the majority being employed in manufacturing and
similar urban occupations occurring by the mid-twentieth
century (Baruch 2004). A similar change evident in America
(Putnam, 2000) as a result of urbanisation and migration
provides the social context in which the origins of the
occupation of public relations are said to lie (Harlow 1981). This
contextualisation addresses the call by Vos for:

> "historical explanations for the emergence of public
> relations as a social institution" (Vos 2011, p.119).

Although it is recognised that history "moves in a
seamless web" (Cutlip 1994 p. xvii), evolutionary development
of public relations has been conceptualised primarily through
"different periodization models" (Bentele 2015, p.23). The
occupation's US history is commonly presented as comprising
five distinct eras (Grunig and Hunt 1984)[12] that indicate
"dominant cultural practices" within the practice (L'Etang 2014,
p.xxi).

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[12] Grunig and Hunt (1984) refer to five US eras as: the public be
      fooled (mid-nineteenth century), the public be damned (late
      nineteenth century), public information (early twentieth century),
      propaganda and persuasion (mid-twentieth century), public
      understanding (late twentieth century)

Likewise, Nessman (2000) separates historical development of public relations in Germany into three phases (eighteenth/nineteenth century to early twentieth century; 1914–1945; 1945 onwards). L'Etang (2004) considers six overlapping periods in British public relations history between 1914 and 1998. Most recently, Bentele (2015, p.41) proposes "a stratification model for the evolutionary history of public relations" offering "layered development" (p.40)[13].

However, presentation of history as a discontinuous narrative, or "colligation" (Dray 1989, p.37) has been criticised in favour of recognising that development occurs over time and reveals evidence of overlap or repetition (Murphie & Potts 2003).

Historical continuation can be seen from a public relations career perspective. Press agents continued to work successfully in the occupation, despite other practitioners positioning themselves as professionals (by differentiating their own work as being more ethical and strategic). Indeed, L'Etang (2014) cautions against "imposing of patterns… (*as*) dominant explanations" of history, yet she also notes the relevance of trends. For example, Goode (1969) reports that an "industrial society is a professionalizing one" (p.266). This universal professionalisation (Wilensky 1964) provides a broader explanation for occupational development than the influence of individual practitioners that dominates public relations literature (Lamme and Russell 2010).

Lamme (2014, p.292) looks beyond the "usual suspects" of Lee and Bernays (see below) to reference a few of those

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[13] Bentele (2015) indicates progression from interpersonal to public and then organizational communications. He classifies emergence of the occupational field in the nineteenth and twentieth century, with "public relations developing into a social system" (p.41) as a top layer into the twenty-first century.

"lost to US public relations history" (p.299). She observes the "strikingly similar" early careers of Bernays and Fleischman and another married couple, Wilder and Buell; noting that the men entered public relations from other fields, and the women were college graduates who became journalists. Both couples ran public relations firms and published books about their work, but Wilder and Buell "did not prosper" (*ibid*). This is a rare mention in the literature of public relations as a precarious occupation. Lamme does not explain the cause of the business failure in 1928 after eleven years, nor that Katharine Buell Wilder became a successful author (Stark 1987).

Stoker (2014, p.347) reports that at this time in the US history, there was a need for "public relations experts". However, Zoch et al. (2014) note mistrust of public relations practitioners into the 1920s. Rex Harlow, whose career started in his brother's publishing firm in 1912 (Harlow 1981, p.39), observes that there was "little unity in the activities of the public relations leaders" in the early days. Nevertheless, he argues that the gradual "development of the function of public relations into a field or a profession was not to be denied" (*ibid*). Whilst Vos (2011, p.121) noted recently that there is not universal agreement over "publicity seeking as an evolutionary ancestor of PR", many other writers (Goldman 1948; MacDougall 1958; Grunig and Hunt 1984; Stoker 2014) have presented a professionalising history of the field.

2.3.2. Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays

The influence of specific societal change can be observed in the careers of two high profile practitioners who continue to be presented in public relations literature as drivers of professionalisation. In contrast to those working as circus press agents, Ivy Ledbetter Lee and Edward Bernays benefitted from

increased gentrification, urbanisation and rising educational standards within US society.

Hiebert's biography (1966) records Lee's affluent background and attendance at Princeton University. Unable to afford to complete his education as a lawyer, Lee gained a post-graduate qualification in journalism. He moved to New York in 1899 and became a financial reporter. Hiebert (1966) distinguishes Lee from fellow journalists and "circus hawker" (p.15) press agents as being gentlemanly, ambitious and educated (having undertaken a postgraduate course in political science and literature at Columbia University).

Lee's move into public relations occurred by chance. After abandoning his journalism career in 1903, Lee was offered a job as press representative of the Citizens Union (Cutlip 1994). Next, he became an independent press agent before being employed as a junior partner in the third US public relations agency. In 1905, Lee issued a Declaration of Principles that is claimed to be "the starting point of modern public relations" (Hiebert 1966, p.12). However, praise for Lee as a pioneer discounts earlier sophisticated use of public relations by other practitioners (Russell & Bishop 2009). It also ignores criticism of Lee's own treatment of truth as "something that can be merchandised to the public" (Ewen 1996, p.80).

In career terms, Lee followed the same path as Ellsworth in moving from press agent to in-house practitioner (as the full-time publicity director for the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1908). His progression into a senior management position there in 1912 is said to be "the first known instance of a public relations person being placed at the management level" (Cutlip 1994, p.54). Later Lee set up his own independent consultancy with a client list comprising high profile individuals, large and powerful corporations and foreign countries.

Despite a narrative of Lee's work as indicating the "profession of practice" (Cutlip 1994, p.44), Russell and Bishop (2009) argue that he worked as a publicist, which they do not see as an evolution of press agency nor a replacement for it. Likewise, the notion of discrete progressive phases in public relations history are countered by the observation of Stoker and Rawlins (2005, p.178) that "by 1919, publicity became less informative and more manipulative".

By 1920 the public relations occupation in the US comprised thousands of practitioners leading to concerns about its societal impact, as well as interest in how it worked (Lamme 2014). This provides the context for Lees' compatriot, Edward Bernays to distinguish his work as "counsel on public relations" (Bernays 1928, p.63) from "antisocial deviants in the field" (Bernays 1952, p.6). Bernays' 80-year-long career crossed several eras presented in public relations histories, being most closely associated with scientific persuasion (Grunig and Hunt 1984).

Bernays (1965) outlines his privileged upbringing in New York, including attendance at private schools; although he left college prematurely in 1912. Bernays began his career as a writer, before travelling to Europe and then soon returning to New York. He seems to have been restless, seeking jobs rather than a specific career. Indeed, his move into public relations came by chance. After gaining work at a medical publication, Bernays secured publicity for a play that became a cause célèbre. Again he abandons this post and moves to Europe. Next Bernays decides to return to New York and become a newspaperman. Unsuccessful in securing an opening, he takes a temporary job promoting a charity. He writes to leading theatre booking agents, Klaw and Erlanger, where he becomes a press agent from 1913-1915, before being offered a

partnership at the Metropolitan Musical Bureau promoting concert tours (Cutlip 1994).

The first world war led Bernays to work for the Committee on Public Information where he gained international publicity and media experience (Ewen 1996), that he subsequently employed in opening his own firm. Despite Bernays' claims to have created a profession (Cutlip 1994), it is clear that his route into public relations lacked intentional design. Indeed, his early career appears to reflect the twenty-first century notion of an "advantaged itinerant worker" (Pugh 2015, p.45). Nevertheless, Bernays went on to build a stable career as an independent consultant using the ideas of contemporary writers such as Lasswell and Lippmann in the 1920s and 1930s (L'Etang 2004) and publishing books to demonstrate his expertise.

2.3.3. British developments

L'Etang (2004) traces the development of public relations in Britain to local government officials after the first world war. They called for the establishment of a "press gang" (*ibid*, p.22) in response to media and public criticism, although such proposals were not implemented until a decade later. As civil servants, local government officials can be connected to Henry Cole (mentioned above) who started his career a century earlier in the Public Record Office learning "how to influence public opinion" and improve public services (Auerbach 1999, p.18).

In contrast, Meller observes that between 1854-1902:

> "vast social political and technological developments … provided the ideal environment in which a modern form of propaganda became not only possible but necessary" (Meller 2010, p.2).

This statement refers to government communications concerning the Boer and Crimean Wars. Further, Miller and Dinan (2008) argue that government intelligence officers who

were pioneers of "black propaganda" (p.16) in the first world war later used their skills in the public relations industry.

L'Etang's (2004) historical work emphasises the importance of a collective of government employees for the development of UK public relations as a professional practice at the start of the twentieth century. She highlights that there were:

> "two men in particular whose influence on British public relations was substantial: John Grierson and Stephen Tallents" (L'Etang 2004, p.32).

This seminal focus on particular men is notable in the recent UK biographies of Tallents (Anthony 2012) and Sir Basil Clarke (Evans 2013). Likewise, Kiesenbauer and Zerfass confirm that:

> "the history of public relations has researched the influence of pioneers like Arthur W Page (AT&T) in the United States, Albert Oeckl (BASF) in Germany and Lucien Matrat (Elf) in France" (Kiesenbauer and Zerfass 2015, p.422).

Lamme (2015, p.52) indicates that the tendency in such biographical "character-drawings" is to emphasise the "impact of a single individual in history". This may have merit provided that the "importance and influence of context surrounding a person and event" is included in any analysis (*ibid*). This critique is evident when examining the careers of Clarke and Tallents from their biographies. For example, with reference to public relations, Evans claims that Clarke, the son of a chemist born in 1879, had a:

> "vertiginous social rise by becoming both a celebrated journalist and a pioneer of a new profession" (Evans 2013, p.12).

Clarke is revealed to have had a confident, ambitious and often impetuous nature in pursuing a career that included working between 1914-1916 as a "journalistic outlaw" (*ibid*, p.57) and an accredited war reporter.

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In 1917, Clarke accepted a civil service appointment, which Evans (2013) claims was the UK's first public relations officer post. After a series of high profile government roles, Clarke faced redundancy and in 1924, at the age of forty-three, he established Editorial Services Limited, which Evans contends was "another landmark in public relations history" (*ibid,* p.202) as the country's first public relations agency.[14]

Two of Clarke's sons joined Editorial Services in 1933, which then employed sixty "high calibre" people (*ibid,* p.226) to service four hundred clients. However, Evans does not provide biographic or further career information of any employees. His narrative is strongly that Clarke was a sole pioneer, whilst acknowledging that today "he has mostly been forgotten" (*ibid*, p.233).[15]

The other leading contender as a "change agent in the historical record" (Lamme 2015, p.52) of British public relations is the career civil servant, Sir Stephen Tallents. Anthony (2012) claims that Tallents:

> "touched every significant public relations innovation in early twentieth-century Britain" (Anthony 2012, p.2).

Tallents' background differed significantly from Clarke's; his father was a barrister and his mother was daughter of the first Baron Ashcombe. Educated at Harrow and Balliol College, Oxford, Tallents joined the civil service in 1909, a time when

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[14] L'Etang (2004) states that Clarke founded Editorial Services with two others. She also observes that earlier firms existed and notes that Editorial Services has been described as "a straightforward press agency" rather than pioneering "modern public relations" (*ibid*, p.54). Indeed, Clarke preferred the term "publicity journalist" to describe his work (Evans 2013, p.218).

[15] After Clarke's death in 1947, the business was taken over by employee Claude Simmons, and eventually acquired by US public relations firm, Burson-Marsteller in 1966 (L'Etang 2004).

"the function of government was fast changing" (*ibid,* p.5). He worked in

> "a variety of ministries and government departments including the Board of Trade, the Empire Marketing Board, the Post Office, the BBC and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning" (Savage 1996, p.29).

Tallents' career was therefore, spent entirely within public service, where Anthony (2012, p.10) claims that the "domestication of propaganda into public relations was hastened" by modernisation in the early 1920s.

Where Evans' narrative positions Basil Clarke as a maverick pioneer, Tallents is located at the centre of a "search for models of best practice" (Anthony 2012, p.11) among a network of public relations practitioners employed by various British organizations.

Indeed, Tallents' career is linked to the influence of others such as Frank Pick, who commissioned a new aesthetic for the London Underground, and his own recruitment of talented individuals such as documentary maker, John Grierson (L'Etang 2004). Their work indicates a craft rather than a bureaucratic career approach, although L'Etang (2004, p.26) reports that Tallents' view was that "publicity should be recognized as a professional job".

A common feature of narrative histories of British public relations is a tendency to distinguish the practice from that in the US, which is presented as more commercially oriented. However, it is possible to find British examples of those who developed media-to-management careers similar to those observed in the US.

One example is Sir Miles Thomas who, after joining the British army as an armoured car driver in the first world war, became a motoring reporter (Thomas 1964). Next Thomas was appointed to the role of press officer for Morris Cars rising

through management positions to become chairman (*ibid*). He ended his career as chairman of the airline business BOAC (*ibid*).

L'Etang (2004, p.58) notes that historically the talent pool of "commercial publicists" in Britain was "very small" and into the 1930s:

> "there was an equal dearth of genuine press experience within the civil service" (L'Etang 2004, p.58).

She cites observations at this time of a career hierarchy that differentiated between press officers (who were required to have a background in the media and worked under supervision) and public relations officer posts (that were reserved for civil servants who were given responsibility for educating the public).

A similar distinction is evident among Broughton's (1943) US interviewees. These leading public relations executives predominantly had been appointed directly into senior positions in business and industry. None of them had progressed from a junior role or promotion on the basis of specialist public relations skills. Indeed, Broughton and his interviewees viewed practitioners with technical experience as support staff incapable of pursuing a career path into management.

Moreover, Broughton (1943, p.77) advocates that those considering a career in public relations "should begin to prepare for it and work toward that end", recommending that they gain a broad education and experience in journalism and/or business administration before being appointed to a senior position.

In summary, it can be seen that early careers in public relations were opportunistic and primarily *commenda* in form. The concept of *equifinality* is evident, whereby:

> "the same final state may be reached from different initial conditions and in different ways" (von Bertalanffy 1961, p. 39).

However, the antecedents of public relations careers have been presented predominantly in the literature from a narrow perspective as press agentry in the US and civil service employment in Britain. Broughton underlines the lack of strategic intent in career development within the occupation in noting that many who were established in their careers in public relations by the 1940s:

> "backed into the field, as it were, by accident, and sat down. Afterwards it seemed natural enough, and their preliminary experience seemed as though it created public relations opportunity later" (Broughton 1943, p. 77).

Overall, this examination of the origins of careers in public relations reveals the occupation was established as more than a transitory job from the late 1800s. The opportunity to pursue a career in public relations more formally can be observed by the 1930s and 1940s, both in the US and in the UK. However, the focus of literature has tended to be narrow in largely illuminating the biographies and career experiences of select male individuals.

To conclude, the origins of careers in public relations indicate a common thread that involves taking advantage of changing times, particularly as a result of increased industrialisation and government bureaucracy. This reflects the observation of L'Etang (2014) that:

> "one of the challenges of public relations history is that it is bound to socio-political and economic contexts that require a broad scope" (L'Etang 2014, p.xiii).

2.4. Measuring the size of the working population

The final two sections in this chapter investigate the occupation's size and structure, which Spilerman (1977, p.552) contends affect "career lines" (patterns of linked job sequences). This section offers a detailed appraisal of the development of the working population within public relations and membership of the main industry bodies in the UK since the mid-twentieth century. The chapter concludes in the next section by focusing on the tripartite structure of the occupation field and its segmentation by type of organization and sector.

Owing to a lack of robust data, it is difficult to undertake an accurate analysis of the population of people working within the field of public relations in the UK over time. The myriad of definitions (noted above) and inconsistency in job titles (examined in Chapter 3) further compound the challenge of assessing the size, composition and temporal changes of the occupation. Nevertheless, a literature search and examination of industry reports offers some indications of trends and their potential impact on public relations careers.

The "exponential" (Kilborn 2006, p.188) growth of public relations in the UK is undisputed, as shown in research by the two main industry bodies drawing on surveys and other published data.

In 2011, the Public Relations Consultancy Association (PRCA)[16], in conjunction with trade publication *PR Week*, issued its first PR Census report that claimed 61,600 people were employed in the UK public relations industry (Gorkana 2011). The 2013 PR Census revised this to 62,000 (PRCA 2013), reflecting a 30 per cent increase over a figure of 47,800 identified in research commissioned in 2005 by the Institute of

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[16]   In August 2016, PRCA rebranded as Public Relations & Communications Association (Ingham 2016).

Public Relations (IPR) from the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR 2005).

Gregory (2011a) discusses research studies undertaken by the IPR in 2003, 2005 (after the body obtained a Royal Charter) and 2009 that present a continued period of growth in the twenty-first century, despite the global economic downturn since 2008. Indeed, in its 2016 PR Census, PRCA (2016a) estimates the industry now employs some 83,000 people.

Likewise, PRCA and CIPR report recent increases in membership numbers. In March 2015, PRCA announced that it represents "18,000 individuals, be they under corporate in-house, consultancy or individual membership", which reflects a 50 per cent increase in just over a year (Behind the Spin 2015).[17] CIPR (2015a) reported its third year of annual growth in 2014 (up 11 per cent to 11,125 members).[18] The subsequent reduction to 10,337 members during 2015 (CIPR 2016c) was attributed in part to removal of the requirement for candidates studying CIPR qualifications to become members. This discussion indicates the importance of context when interpreting historical data regarding the overall industry size, and membership of the main industry bodies.

2.4.1. Historical tensions

West (1963, p.7) claims that "the second world war gave a big fillip to public relations" as "hundreds of clever people learned

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[17]   The 2015 figure indicates the addition "en masse" (Ingham 2015) of 3,000 members of the Government Communications Service and an unspecified number of practitioners accessing six month's free membership through a partnership with *PR Week* (Rogers 2014). In June 2016, PRCA reported that it represents "in excess of 20,000 people" (PRCA 2016).

[18]   A drop of 2.5 per cent in CIPR membership between 2010 and 2011 led to changes including free student membership to those enrolled on an accredited degree course, a reduction in level of experience required for full membership, and extension of the range of disciplines counting towards eligibility (CIPR 2012a).

… clever use of modern communication" and "acquired a taste for this fascinating and gregarious profession" before going on to work in "service and government departments" as well as in "nationalised industries and the big private corporations".

L'Etang (2015a) identifies that the IPR comprised 143 men and nine women when founded in 1948 and "by 1953, membership had grown to 376" (L'Etang 2004, p.75). Newcomers were not universally welcomed though, with Tunstall (1964) arguing that the establishment of the IPR was a defence against the:

> "influx into the public relations business of 'unqualified' people from the armed forces" (Tunstall 1964, p.157).

Growth of the UK public relations consultancy sector in the 1950s and 1960s reflected an expanding economy as well as the discipline gaining recognition as both "a field of expertise" and "a viable business" (L'Etang 2004, p.123). Indeed several advertising agencies were establishing public relations departments or subsidiary firms (*ibid*). However, from a career perspective, Tunstall (1964, p.178) argues "few successful journalists would go into this work by choice". Further he notes a correlation between the closure of publications and the take up of public relations posts by journalists and editorial personnel. In contrast West (1963, p.22) attributes a more basic motive for journalists in the higher financial rewards in public relations, alongside "good opportunities for promotion and above all a good deal of security".

At the same time, IPR members sought intellectual superiority over journalists (L'Etang 2004) and challenged criticism of the occupation, such as that made by West (1963, p.22) who states "the profession as a whole tends to breed pomposity and verbosity". Similarly, in a Parliamentary debate the then MP Harold Wilson referred to public relations as

"extremely degrading" and "a rather squalid procedure" (Hansard 1961.). In contrast, claims were made for the positive impact of the recruitment of journalists who "stepped up the general standard of public relations" otherwise populated by those from advertising or other backgrounds (Kisch 1964, p.37).

Another area of conflict is evident in a presentation at the 1953 IPR annual conference concerning hierarchical distinctions between consultants. An "advisory and executive level" of consultants offered support to clients on the basis of experience and seniority (L'Etang (2004, p.109). Next it was stated "the publicity and press relations level of consultants should concentrate on promotion", whilst an "ancillary level" (*ibid*):

> "should be retained to advise on the programme and the day-to-day work of the clients' existing public relations department as well as to carry out some executive work" (L'Etang 2004, p.109).

Such divisions are relevant as they indicate "labour market segmentation" (Okay-Somerville and Scholarios 2014, p.668) and an attempt to establish occupational boundaries that seek to delimit careers (Gunz et al. 2007).

L'Etang (2004, p.106) notes further rivalry between "agencies and their in-house counterparts". Moreover, West (1963, p.24) alludes to historic tension between "firms attached to advertising agencies" and those belonging to the newly formed Society of Independent Public Relations Consultants (SIPRC). This required owners of consultancies to have:

> "full membership or fellowship of the I.P.R., thus guaranteeing a high standard of performance and professional conduct" (West 1963, p.10).

In addition, Black (1966) alludes to on-going attempts to seek professional jurisdiction and assert control over those seeking to make a career in the occupation in stating that:

> "the close contact between the Society and the I.P.R. will do much to promote the highest possible standards in public relations consultancy practice" (Black 1966, p.10).

Such strains may reflect growing pains (Hendrick 1998) for the fledgling industry. In 1966, Black explained that IPR membership had shifted "in recent years" from being "dominated numerically by practitioners in the field of central and local government" to a majority being "engaged in industry" with those working in consultancy forming the next largest group" (p.19). Establishment of SIPRC in 1960 created a separate class of membership. This was exclusively for consultancies and in 1961 comprised "30 independents and 21 advertising agency firms" (L'Etang 2004, p.118).

Formal distinction was made between consultants and practitioners; the latter signifying those employed by advertising agencies (not eligible to join SIPRC) or focused on implementation rather than providing "expert and qualified advice" (*ibid*). The desire for differentiation is evident in a complaint by Black that:

> "it is regrettable that anyone can set up as a public relations consultant – and many do – without possessing the requisite knowledge and experience. These untrained newcomers to the field tend to bring the practice of public relations into disrepute" Black (1966, p.9).

He further argues that:

> "a consultant in other professions is a highly qualified practitioner acknowledged to be competent to give expert advice and this should apply equally in public relations" Black (1966, p.9).

The longer-term implications of such opinions and various tensions within the occupation have not been examined explicitly from a career studies perspective to date.

2.4.2. Fractured occupation

Fissures evident in the occupation finally fractured when:

> "incorporation of the IPR in 1963 was the catalyst to the formation of a separate public relations body for consultants" (L'Etang 2004, p.120).

Consequently IPR became exclusively an organization for individual members whilst PRCA was formed on the basis of company membership in 1969[19]. Estimates of how many people worked in public relations at this time vary wildly and are unreliable. West (1963, p.8) calculates that "some 300 public relations firms" may each employ up to "thirty or more executives". Further he observes:

> "almost any factory, store or commercial firm with a staff of more than a few hundred is likely to have a full time PRO" West (1963, p.7).

West calculates there were "well over" 4,000 press agents and press officers, of whom he alleges: "about four-fifths probably work in London" (*ibid* p.24). However, Tunstall (1964, p.158) writes: "there were perhaps in all 3,000 PR men and women in Britain". Moreover, Kisch (1964) asserts that the number had never exceeded 3,500, including:

> "rank and file officers, pin money socialites and subsidiary research personnel" (Kisch 1964 p.23).

Again, whereas Tunstall (1964, p.158) states that "by 1963 the IPR had a membership of 2,000", West (1963) cites and disputes an estimate by IPR of 2,500 people employed in the occupation in the early 1960s. He argues there were "about 1,500" IPR "fellows, members, associates, overseas associates and affiliates" (*ibid,* p.24). Yet, Black (1966) writes:

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[19]   L'Etang (2004) discusses how consultants had different recollections of the failure of SIPRC in the mid-1960s leading to the creation of PRCA.

"the 1965 figure of membership reached two thousand seven hundred" (Black 1966, p.16).

Michie (1998) does not provide information on the number of individuals employed in the occupation, but notes the 1967 Annual Directory of Press and Public Relations Officers listed:

"46 PR companies and 720 firms with in-house PR and publicity departments" (Michie 1998, p.12).

Despite their discrepancies, such sources offer a rough indication of 3,000-4,000 UK public relations practitioners in the 1960s. In contrast, there is a lack of comparable information for the 1970s and early 1980s**.** Howard (2011) reports that PRCA had grown from ten founding consultancy members in 1969 to 55 by 1972, although she gives no indication of the number of their employees. The 1976 Hollis International '*Who's Who in Public Relations'* lists approximately 200 British entrants and confirms the exclusion of others stating that:

"there is a large fringe area of incompetents, misfits, and charlatans claiming to be 'in public relations' who have no right by any acceptable definition to use the term" (Hollis International 1976, p.ix).

The 1970s was a turbulent period in the UK with data from the Government Statistical Service (Denman and McDonald 1996) showing that over 1 million people were unemployed in 1976 (the first time this figure had been recorded since 1940). The overall rate of unemployment rose from 2.5 per cent in 1969 to 6.2 per cent in 1977 (*ibid*). However, from a public relations perspective, Howard (2011) argues that:

"difficult industrial relations that characterised the 1970s prompted some managers to seek more professional help in improving their communication techniques and this led to a growth in consultancies" (Howard 2011, p.13).

2.4.3. Accelerated expansion – and contraction

White et al. (1988) report claims by the industry publication, *PR Week,* of annual growth in public relations of 30-45 per cent in each of the previous five years. This is counter to on-going increases in unemployment within the wider population. It implies a public relations workforce in the region of 8,000 in the early 1980s, suggesting that the industry doubled in size in the 1970s.

To extrapolate a reliable indication of the size of the industry, IPR commissioned research from Cranfield School of Management that was undertaken by White et al. (1988). The study combined a quantitative survey and existing secondary data to conclude that the occupation comprised 19,425 public relations managers and executives, which along with 15,296 support staff totalled 34,721 people. This data proposes significant expansion of career opportunities in the occupation in the 1980s, although there is gendered segregation at this time (as discussed in Chapter 4).

The analysis by White et al. (1988) reports that IPR had 2,500 members at this time, around a quarter of those eligible to join. Clearly its membership had failed to keep up with the industry's growth, which may be the result of a requirement for applicants to be at least 26 years of age, have a minimum of five years' "substantial experience" and be endorsed by two sponsors who would "vouch for their character and suitability" (IPR 1988, p.6).

A desire to extend IPR membership into the expanding industry may explain why in 1989 its criteria for associate membership were relaxed (IPR 1989b, p.2). This was followed by changes allowing entry into full membership on the basis of either an approved qualification and "four years' comprehensive experience" or ten years' experience alone (Black 1995, p.177).

It is reasonable to suppose that expansion of the occupation through to the late 1980s offered career benefits. Hogan (1989, p.100) observes "opportunities for employment and advancement are better in an expanding industry". Establishing the career consequences within the growing occupation is complicated, however, by an enduringly casual approach to demography in the literature that is rarely questioned and commonly presents data as unproblematic. For example, in respect of occupational balance between in-house and consultancy employment, White et al. (1988) deduce a ratio of 1:3 between consultancy and in-house employees.[20] However, Theaker (2001) says Peter Gummer, then chairman of public relations consultancy, Shandwick plc, stated in 1990 that:

> "The number of people working in consultancies
> outnumbered those working in-house by four to one"
> (Peter Gummer, cited by Theaker 2001, p.265)

It seems unlikely that the industry underwent such a dramatic shift in the make up of employment opportunities from in-house domination to the majority working in consultancies at this time. However, contextualising what data is available suggests that external political and economic factors had a substantial impact on employment in the consultancy sector. Kitchen (1993, p.54) observes that increasing costs of advertising had driven budgets "down the line" to public relations. This is supported by a survey of large businesses that found that 88 per cent of participants employed a consultancy in addition to their in-house team, with 46 per cent using between two and four firms *(PR Week* 1987).

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[20] The calculation by White et al. (1988) is based on circulation data from *PR Week*, an IPR survey in 1987 reporting 46 per cent of its membership worked in consultancies, and estimates from PRCA revealing its consultancy members employed 3,262 people.

Miller and Dinan (2000) report the considerable expansion of the UK public relations consultancy sector in the 1980s, which they attribute to the privatisation of state-owned concerns, government deregulation of professional and financial services, and global expansion of multinational corporations. They report a subsequent "downturn largely associated with the 1987 stock market crash", noting the industry "dramatically further expanded in the 1989–90 period" followed by a decline in consultancy fortunes as a result of the economic recession at the start of the 1990s (*ibid*, p.10).

The *PR Week* Top 150 agency listing (1991) indicates that the total number of staff employed "more than doubled" (p.35) to 4,790 in 1990 from 2,260 a year earlier. Supporting this, Howard (2011) presents figures from PRCA Yearbooks showing that its membership increased from 113 consultancies in 1985 (employing 1,942 people), to 173 firms in 1990 (4,145 employees), before contracting by 1994 to 129 member firms (2,982 employees).

This fluctuation reflects how consultancies are "assessed primarily in terms of their financial turnover" (L. Edwards 2010, p.217) whereby there is a notable variance between any rise or fall in fee income and employee numbers. For example, *PR Week* (1989, p.17) reports that one medium-sized consultancy improved from number 120 to 62 in the annual rankings "by dint of doubling its staff and increasing income by 249 per cent". Likewise, it exclaims in respect of a 168 per cent rise in income by another firm, "what's more APT achieved this with fewer staff than in 1987" (*ibid*).

Further, *PR Week* notes increasing demand for freelance staff by companies and consultancies in 1990, yet then reports an unprecedented rate of closure among consultancies in 1992.

This may not indicate an overall reduction in the size of the occupation, however, as Jefkins claims:

> "during the recession in 1991, when consultancies were losing clients and shedding staff, an increasing amount of PR was being handled in-house" (Jefkins 1992, p.22).

It is unclear how these changing fortunes affected the careers of individual practitioners. Understanding is impacted further by fluctuations, inconsistencies and omissions in available data concerning the number of people working in public relations. Indeed, Moloney (2000) critiques the lack of clarity over research methodology. He states that figures "underestimate the actual number of people doing PR" as they "appear to measure only explicit job titles and persons who self-declare" (*ibid*, p.20). However, he concludes that "the pervasiveness of PR in contemporary UK society" (p.30) that emerged as a result of an increasingly pluralistic environment in the 1990s means that the occupation had developed to become:

> "a professional, management activity done in bureaucracies and a portable set of attitudes and techniques for individuals. It is a structured industry serving other industries, a 'cottage industry' done by voluntary bodies and social activists, and 'personal kit' for celebrities and aggrieved individuals" (Moloney 2000, p.43).

This observation and earlier discussion within the section indicates that public relations does not inherently offer an "orderly career" (Wilensky 1961, p.521), which is defined as:

> "a succession of related hierarchical jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered (more-or-less predictable) sequence" (Wilensky 1961, p.523).

The relevance of this historical context for careers is examined further in the next section in relation to developments within the occupational structure.

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2.5. Identifying motifs in the occupational structure

The public relations occupation can be structured into three employment options:

1. Direct employment within organizations, generally termed "in-house" (Pieczka 2006a, p.306);
2. Employment within consultancies that provide services to organizations as clients;
3. Self-employment as independent practitioners sometimes referred to as "freelancers" (*ibid*).

This tripartite structure is examined in this section to illuminate its implications for career strategies in public relations.

The two main industry bodies traditionally segmented the occupational field, with IPR/CIPR representing individuals and membership of PRCA comprising consultancies. However, PRCA membership was extended to in-house communication teams in 2009 and individuals in 2011 (Ingham 2016), with CIPR increasing its focus in 2014 on 'bespoke memberships through employers" (CIPR 2015a, p.20). Even without the scope for dual-membership, CIPR and PRCA together account for around 30,000 individuals, which is approximately a third (36 per cent) of all practitioners based on the latest PR Census (PRCA 2016a). This limited representation presents problems in extrapolating from membership data to understand the structure of the wider occupation.

PRCA (2016b) claims to have over 270 corporations and public sector organizations among its membership, in addition to more than 400 agency firms, whilst CIPR (2015b) states that 55 per cent of its membership is employed in-house and 45 per cent in public relations consultancies[21]. Any attempt to deduce the balance between the number of public relations

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[21] The consultancy figure includes freelance/independent practitioners.

practitioners within in-house, consultancy and freelance employment more widely from this data would be statistically unreliable, and likely conflict with other available industry studies. For example, a decade ago, CIPR research asserted that:

> "82%[22] of in-house specialists are employed directly by companies, government or not-for-profits" (CEBR[23] 2005, p.14).

The remaining 18 per cent (8,600) were said to work "in out-of-house companies – such as consultancies, agencies and freelancers" (*ibid*, p.23). As a rough calculation, approximately 16 per cent (7,500) may be allocated to firms in the *PR Week* UK Top 150 agency listing for 2004, leaving 2 per cent (1,104 practitioners) in small consultancies or as self-employed. The validity of this deduction cannot be readily tested or necessarily applied to today's considerably larger industry.

2.5.1. Consultancy volatility

Pieczka (2008) argues that there has been little academic research into the consultancy sector. Available UK data for employment in consultancies has primarily focused on membership of the PRCA or large firms, many of which are global businesses, thereby further complicating analysis of the industry. The definitional problem covered in the first section of this chapter affects determination of what may constitute a public relations consultancy and figures for the size of the consultancy sector can be considered methodologically problematic. For example, Howard (2011) records three

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[22]   This figure accounts for 39,200 of the 47,800 estimated employees in the occupation at that time.

[23]   Centre for Economics and Business Research Limited (CEBR).

different sources of data, although these cannot be directly compared.[24]
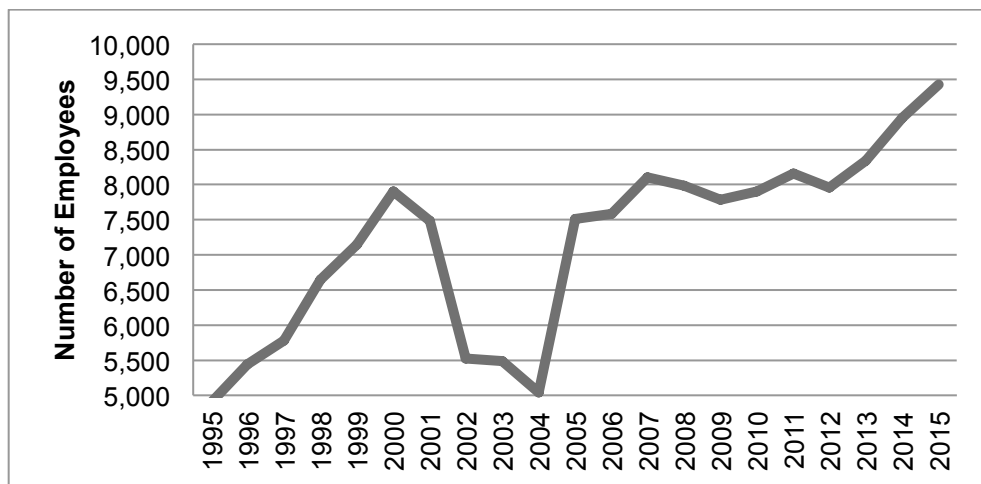
Figure 2. Analysis of number of employees in PR Week UK Top 150 Agencies (1995–2015)

Figure 2 illustrates an analysis that I undertook to review the number of employees detailed in the *PR Week* UK Top 150 agency listings (by turnover) for the calendar years 1995 to 2015. This data is acknowledged as limited owing to some estimates and instances of non-participation and omissions.[25] The findings show a 92 per cent growth of jobs over the past two decades. Most notably, in the five year period between

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[24] Howard (2011) reports from the 2004 PRCA Yearbook (4,433 employees within its 137 member consultancies), research commissioned by CIPR in 2005 (8,604 consultancy employees), and the *PR Week* UK Top 150 PR Agency listing (collectively employed 7,990 staff) in 2008.

[25] Figures for 2002–2004 omit a number of the larger consultancies owing to the introduction of the Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) Act in the US that sought to govern financial reporting. From 2005, *PR Week* provides estimated data for 23 firms. I have calculated that these would increase total employee numbers in the Top 150 listing by 2,155 in 2005; showing a negligible change since 2001. However, PRCA Yearbooks (Howard 2011) show a fall from 5,824 practitioners working in 128 member firms in 2000 to 4,433 employees in 137 companies in 2004. This equates to a reduction from an average of 46 employees per firm to 32. Hence it is likely that *PR Week* Top 150 agency listings would show fluctuation between individual years during this period if the SOX firms were included.

1995 and 2000 the number of employees reported by the Top 150 consultancies increased by 61 per cent.

The largest annual increase occurred in 1998. This reflects the influence of on-going growth in the gross economic product and election of the Labour government in 1997. Another factor is the "high level of consolidation" among consultancies[26] from the mid-1990s into the start of the new millennium (Pieczka 2008, p.16). However, a 6 per cent reduction is evident in the number of employees in the listing between 2000 and 2001. *PR Week* (2002) attributes declining fortunes of large consultancies at this time to economic conditions, the 9/11 attacks, and the dot.com bubble bursting. The scale of the impact can be seen in the example of one of the largest UK consultancies where over a quarter of employees lost their jobs in 2002[27] (*PR Week* 2003).

The career implications of this historic employment instability within the consultancy sector have not been considered in the literature. Indeed, there is a lack of research into churn throughout the occupation with little evidence of the numbers entering, switching between consultancy and in-house roles, changing jobs or leaving the occupation at any time. In 1987, a *PR Week* survey reported client complaints concerning "the frequency of personnel changes within the consultancy team dealing with their business" (p.14). A decade earlier, Hollis International stated that:

> "The rate of transfers, promotions, and other employment changes in the public relations field is extraordinarily high" (Hollis International 1976, p.ix).

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[26] As a result of mergers and acquisitions only one independent firm (Edelman) is listed in the top ten agencies for 1998 (in ninth place).

[27] Bell Pottinger/Good Relations and its sister agency, Harvard Communications cut employee numbers by 26 per cent from 455 to 337 between 2001 and 2002.

Movement within the *PR Week* Top 150 list, as well as issues such as mergers, takeovers, new entrants, name changes and agency closures, make it difficult to consider statistical trends over time. Moreover the list does not encompass "full service" (Henslowe 2003, p.10) or smaller consultancies.

2.5.2. Size of public relations functions

The global recession from 2008-2012 had limited impact on employment across the *PR Week* Top 150 agencies (Figure 2). Indeed, since 2012 the number of employees reported by these firms has increased by 19 per cent to 9,430. Based on a population of 83,000 practitioners (PRCA 2016a), the Top 150 firms therefore account for one in nine jobs. Half of these (52 per cent) are in the twenty-four agencies that list over 100 employees.[28]

Indeed, Gregory (2011a, p.94) highlights the "relatively small" size of the majority of consultancies and in-house public relations functions. PRCA (2016a) states that typically agencies employ 11-50 people and in-house teams comprise around 2-5 people. However, while 23 per cent of respondents in the CIPR 2009 survey work for organizations with fewer than five employees, 39 per cent of employers had more than 500 staff. Citing this data set, Gregory (2011a) identifies that 60 per cent of respondents in the private sector, 52 per cent in the public sector and 79 per cent in the not-for-profit sector work in teams of ten or fewer practitioners. Respective figures for departments comprising over twenty people are given as 26 per cent, 33 per cent and 13 per cent.

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[28] In 2015, the number of practitioners working in consultancies with 100 or more employees totaled 4,874, compared with 3,013 (40 per cent) in 2005. This represents a 62 per cent increase, which is considerably below the 92 per cent growth in employment for the whole *PR Week* Top 150 agency list.

Gregory's observation of this divide as an increasing trend has implications for career strategies. The growth of global public relations consultancy networks (Pieczka 2008) might facilitate international careers. Likewise securing a position within a large in-house team may offer single-employer opportunities, including transitions beyond the public relations function. In contrast, there is little chance of career development within small teams hence the majority of career moves in public relations are likely to involve a change of employer.

2.5.3. Sectors and specialisms

Gregory (2011a, p.94) notes that "public relations practitioners are employed in every industry sector in the UK", whilst referring to CIPR surveys that show an increase in favour of the public and not-for-profit sectors between 2003 and 2009. A review by Matt Tee (2011), then Permanent Secretary for Government Communications, notes a headcount of 6,848 full-time equivalent staff within the Government Communication Network (GCN) in 2010, 40 per cent being employed within arm's-length bodies (ALBs).[29] An increase in government press officers followed the election of a Labour government in 1997 (Negrine 2008), with new positions also attributable to the development of new technology, a 24-hour news cycle and introduction of the Freedom of Information (FOI) act.

The 2010 election of a coalition government resulted in a loss of jobs within government departments and through the reduction in size and ultimate closure of the Central Office of

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[29] The term arm's-length body (ALB) refers to "a wide range of public bodies, including non-ministerial departments, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), executive agencies and other bodies, such as public corporations" (National Audit Office 2016, p.5).

Information (COI)[30]. The significant growth and subsequent retraction of public relations employment within the public sector has yet to be studied. As with the earlier discussion concerning the consultancy sector, it reveals career volatility within the occupation as a result of external factors.

In the CIPR State of the Profession survey (CIPR 2016a), 61.5 per cent of respondents work in-house; 36 per cent classify their sector as private, 38 per cent as public and 26 per cent as not-for-profit/NGO. Independent practitioners account for 13.5 per cent of respondents and consultancy employees account for 25 per cent.

The report shows the largest sectors for respondents are local and central government, ALBs (armed services, emergency services and NHS), charity/voluntary, financial services/corporate, property construction and education. However, the number of respondents in each sector is relatively small and unlikely to be representative.

Perhaps surprisingly, public sector is not one of the five main areas of consultancy employment reported in the PRCA 2014 Consultancy Benchmarking survey, which are: consumer/celebrity, business to business (B2B), technology, corporate and healthcare/pharma/medical. The size and demographic composition of these sectors is not stated, and likewise, no details are provided for the twenty-nine PRCA sectoral groups that include regional networks for young practitioners (NextGen), forums for HR professionals and

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[30] Restructure of government communications starting in 2012 saw COI replaced by the Government Communication Centre (GCC); and the Government Communication Network (GCN) become the Government Communication Service (GCS). Seven communication hubs were set up in 2013 as "virtual teams across government departments and arm's length bodies" (HM Government 2013, p.53).

Finance Directors, and independent membership organizations such as Women in PR.

CIPR has eleven sector groups, and although data is not published on the demography of these, they are likely to include considerable overlap as members are eligible to join up to five groups. CIPR groups reflect a combination of industry specialisms (e.g. Construction & Property and Health & Medical), technical specialisms (e.g. Digital, Marketing Communications and Public Affairs) and sectors (e.g. Local Public Services and Not-for-Profit). In addition, some sectors have established their own independent bodies such as APComm (Association of Police Communicators) and MIPAA (Motor Industry Public Affairs Association).

Undoubtedly developments such as digital communications have created new career opportunities, with other specialisms and sectors declining or under threat. However, there is little reliable data concerning the size or demographic composition of individual sectors or specialisms, or the wider areas of practice they represent in the occupation. Nevertheless, existence of such groups indicates the potential for career specialisation (Arthur et al. 1999) and occupational fragmentation (Abbott 1988).

Practitioner groups may be viewed as specialist career communities (Parker et al. 2004) or communities of practice (Wenger and Snyder 2000) that encompass an informal group of people with "shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise" (*ibid,* p.139) and may exist as professional support networks (Mathews 1998). Career communities offer the possibility of collective agency (Bandura 2001) based around social connections rather than the traditional career path negotiated with an employer (Parker et al. 2004). These are

relatively new areas for research and hence currently under-explored.

In conclusion, this chapter has revealed difficulties in defining public relations, establishing its history and obtaining an accurate picture of the size and structure of the occupation. Although an increasing number of people are reported to work in the field, employment over time has been turbulent. Career volatility has been noted particularly within consultancies that are subject to economic, political and other socio-cultural trends.

Data produced by the main industry bodies provide limited insight into the make-up of the occupation. The occupation's tripartite structure offers "a binary choice framework" (Hardy et al. 1996 p.112) between consultancy/freelance work and in-house employment. Whilst there has been little examination of career movement within the occupational field, there is clearly considerable scope for specialisation. This may support collective agency as a strategy for career development. However, whether, when and how, career decisions are made within the fragmented occupational structure has not been researched to date.

Chapter 3. Weaving a working canvas for public relations

3.1. Introduction

This chapter weaves a working canvas for public relations careers drawing on scholarship in the field and career studies literature. Given the difficulties noted in the previous chapter in conceptualising public relations as an occupation, the following three sections apply Kanter's (1989a) frame of bureaucratic, professional and entrepreneurial careers. This enables examination of the extent to which public relations may be considered to reflect these traditional career forms and hence inform career strategies in the occupation.

Kanter (1989b, p.508) defines career forms as "the organising principle around which a career logic unfolds", observing that:

> "most people's careers once fell into one of three principal 'pure' career types" (Kanter 1989a, p.305).

Traditional career forms are viewed by Redman and Wilkinson (2006, p.284) to "continue to resonate, even when they appear to no longer 'fit' the lives and experiences of many people", although Wilton (2011, p.340) argues against an "ideal type" owing to factors regarding:

> "the nature of the work itself, the orientation of different occupational groups and the employment sector in which it takes place" (Wilton 2011, p.340).

3.2. Bureaucratic career form

Kanter (1989b, p.509) states that "bureaucratic careers are defined by the logic of *advancement*". They reflect "upward and linear career movement" (Buzzanell and Goldzwig 1991, p.469), hierarchical models of career development (Patton and McMahon 2014) and segmentation of work into senior and junior jobs (Inkson et al. 2015). Vertical progress is inherent in

the metaphor of a "career ladder" (Inkson 2004a, p.103) climbed by attaining increasingly higher levels of positions within a formal organizational structure (Kanter 1989b).

The prevalence of the bureaucratic career form within public relations discourse was noted in the previous chapter. It is evident in the Global Capabilities Framework project undertaken by the Global Alliance network of public relations organizations. The initial phase of the project involving an extensive review of scholarship, accreditation programmes and educational frameworks confirmed a two–tier hierarchical structure of occupational knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours (KSABs) indicating successional progress from "early career or entry-level roles" to "mid-career or senior roles" (Global Alliance 2015, p.4). Although entry-level KSABs are indicated as "a way to describe what is expected in a first job in public relations" (p.3), early and mid-career are not defined in relation to duration or nature of prior experience, formal organizational or occupational structures, or career life-stage theories (see Chapter 5). Indeed, initial employment in public relations does not necessarily occur early in someone's career, questioning the usefulness of 'entry-level' as a role descriptor.

3.2.1. Occupational roles

The concept of roles within public relations was first investigated by Broom and Smith (1979) and is argued by Dozier and Broom (2006, p.120) to be central in understanding the "salient features" of practitioner behaviours, and the function itself at the organizational level. From a career perspective, Inkson (2015) explains a role as a theatrical metaphor whereby personal or occupational "career scripts" (p.28) serve as "interpretive schemes and norms" (Barley 1989, p.54) in informing the particular way in which people are expected to act.

Brown (2015, p.55) extends the metaphor to argue that public relations has a "dramaturgic nature" that requires practitioners to "perform" much as an actor would. Occupational roles can therefore be envisioned as organising devices that connect the way in which careers may be defined and structured within organizations to how they are enacted by practitioners, individually and collectively. The established portrayal of public relations roles within the literature offers an occupational script that relates to the bureaucratic career form and casts practitioners as technicians or managers (Broom and Dozier 1986).

However, Brown (2011, p.91) critiques this hierarchical dichotomy as an attempt by academics to legitimise "managerial assumptions" about public relations and simplify the "hyper-complex cultural actuality" of the practice. He supports an argument that established "conventional, linear and sequential thinking" (*ibid,* p.92) does not match the requirements of contemporary public relations practitioners (Brown 2015). Kanter (1989b, p.506) made similar observations regarding the relevance of the bureaucratic career form beyond large organizations in the mid–twentieth century, noting that studies had "largely neglected" macro-societal influences.

Dozier and Broom (2006), however, state that "simplification of practitioner role behavior" (p.124) is a valid abstraction. They claim that role theory has prompted "intellectual debate" and proven to be efficacious as "a positivist, nomothetic model" (*ibid*, p.129). Notwithstanding criticism, the concept remains popular and therefore useful in examining "patterned and characteristic social behaviors" (Biddle 1986, p.68) in relation to the bureaucratic career form.

Despite Biddle's (*ibid*) contention that role theorists tend to draw on observational and phenomenological research,

inquiries into roles within public relations have used "quantitative methods extensively" (Dozier and Broom 2006, p.127), specifically surveys and "factor analysis or cluster analysis as data reduction tools". Role modelling within public relations scholarship essentially derives from initial US studies by Broom and Smith (1979) into the:

> "various ways practitioners behave when carrying out public relations responsibilities" (Broom and Smith 1979, p.3).

This original research proposed "the sequential nature of professional role development" (*ibid*) based on claims that technical services are delivered by those at the start of their career, while "seasoned practitioners often aspire to the expert prescriber role" (p.18) as managers. Whilst this was a supposition rather than an empirical finding, it underpins subsequent studies that support hierarchical bifurcation of the occupation into a "manager-technician dichotomy" (Dozier and Broom 2006, p.123).

Within this structure, technicians are positioned as those deploying technical skills, such as former journalists (Broom 1982), junior level workers (Bridgen 2013a) or those who are valued as a creative or "people person" (Berkowitz and Hristodoulakis 1999, p.97). Broom (1982) observes a tendency for women to remain in technical positions, while men are reported to have "expanded their roles" (p.21). This indicates the favouring of linear male mobility (Payne and Abbott 2005) within a bureaucratic career form.

An instrumental value for on-going role research can be inferred from Toth et al. (1998, p.146) who assert its importance in offering a broad perspective of practitioners' work and the function's "sophisticated organizational contribution". Securing a high level position within an organization's hierarchical structure

is, therefore, presented as not simply a matter for individual careers, but for the occupation itself. This goal is central in the "normative theory of excellent public relations" (Pieczka 2006b p.355) where Grunig et al. (2002) correlate public relations excellence with direct reporting to the CEO, membership of the dominant coalition (an elite group of organizational decision makers) and the function's involvement in strategic decision processes. In relation to individuals, Gregory and Willis (2013) state that:

> "Promotion is often based on personal credibility and senior managers' confidence that a contribution can be made at a higher level" (Gregory and Willis 2013, p.88).

Dozier et al. (1995) present knowledge as the means by which a strategic position can be attained. This reflects the concept of a "knowledge society" in the 1990s (Steer and Mast 2012, p.17) that emphasised strategic value in the "intangibility of human-embodied knowledge" (OECD[31] 1996, p.43). At this time organizations faced "nearly continuous changes" (Khapova et al. 2007, p.118) away from rigid bureaucratic hierarchies towards flexible and flatter structures (Stiglitz 1999). However, at a time of considerable growth within public relations, Dozier et al. (1995, p.viii) recognised the trend for organizations to "become leaner and more responsive" as an opportunity for those with aspirations for managerial careers or able to offer consultancy expertise at a senior management level.

More recently, Gregory and Willis (2013, p.98) have argued that "superior knowledge and consummate skill" are insufficient to ensure career progression into leadership roles. Instead, they allude to what Brown (2015, p.56) terms

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[31]   Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

"performative competency" in stating that practitioners need to learn how to enact:

> "the behavioural repertoires that characterise leaders in the most senior positions in organisations" (Gregory and Willis 2013, p.98).

> It is not the intention of this thesis to review nearly fifty

years of research into public relations roles[32]. However, the technician-manager hierarchy continues to be described as:

> "a quite robust framework for broadly explaining practitioner work patterns within the industry" (DeSanto 2011 p.16).

Indeed, it is an integral dimension of the longitudinal European Communication Monitor (ECM) transnational survey of communication managers since 2007. The study emphasises the seniority (age and experience) of purposefully selected participants, asserting that:

> "seven out of ten respondents are communication leaders: 44.0 per cent hold a top hierarchical position as head of communication or as CEO of a communication consultancy" (Zerfass et al. 2016, p.11).

This reflects Kanter's observation that within a bureaucratic career form there is:

> "an untested assumption that those who have attained higher levels have the 'best' qualifications simply by virtue of attaining that level" (Kanter 1989a, p.306).

3.2.2. Hierarchical structure

Traditionally the bureaucratic career form offers "a proliferation of ranks and grades" (Kanter 1989b, p.509), in contrast to the simple "two-role typology" (Gregory 2015, p.599) presented by public relations academics. In relation to the practice, L'Etang

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[32] Gregory and Willis (2013) provide an extensive overview of role theory and recent research, with an emphasis on "senior public relations leaders" (p.83).

(2004) observes that historically public relations consultancies developed a bureaucratic structure to match that of the client firm. This is evident in the *Career Advice* section of the CIPR website (2016b) which notes that "competition for jobs is fierce" and presents a matching five stage "career development plan" for in-house and consultancy employment that the "talented and industrious graduate might expect" to encounter. The tone and nature of this advice is directed exclusively to post-education entry rather than on-going career development. It also omits the independent practitioner option with a focus on careers developed either in agency or in-house, not both.

It is notable that this narrative from a professional body reflects an "individualistic model of careers" (Rosenbaum 1989, p.330), with no indication of occupational or organizational career systems or responsibilities. For example, it does not explain whether practitioners are able to pursue a logical, formal hierarchy of promotional opportunities in one organization (typical of the bureaucratic career form), if they need to "hop from job to job" (Kanter 1989a, p.298) or move between consultancy and in-house employment (Wolf 2010). Moreover, reference to competition infers a "tournament" (Rosenbaum 1989, p.336) approach to career development that favours "winners" who subsequently benefit from "more proactive development and career attention" (Hirsh 2011, p.136) from employers, thereby improving their future advancement.

Gregory and Willis (2013, p.84) report that within public relations "there are many routes to the top". Their contention reflects how the bureaucratic career form supports the notion of *equifinality* whereby "individuals at the same position can have somewhat different job histories" (Rosenbaum 1989, p.337), which in turn "can affect their future careers". This latter point

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indicates the concept of *multifinality*, which Buckley (1967, p.55) coined to signify how "similar initial conditions may lead to dissimilar end-states". Both concepts are evident in a study by Berger et al. (2007) that found "complex and multidimensional factors" (p.67) influence "multiple pathways" (p.63) within senior communication managers' careers.

Expectations of hierarchical progression are evident in manager-technician role enactment and career ladder paradigms in the public relations literature (Cutlip et al. 2000). However, within organizations, career transitions may be constrained by centralised control of "life chances" (Kanter 1989a, p.509) and narrowing of possibilities at each level (Abbott 1988). This is apparent in the traditional career pyramid that limits the number of higher-level positions (Kanter, 1989a) and prejudices those who lack "career velocity" (Rosenbaum 1989, p.334). Indeed, Kanter (1977) observes that age is a factor against which an individual's progress is assessed within bureaucratic careers. It also acts as a career barrier for older workers (Rosenbaum 1989) owing to stereotypes (Hall and Mirvis (1995).

In the career development plan published by CIPR (2016b), the highest level (as functional head, director or consultancy partner) is presented as achievable with between seven and eleven years' experience. Similarly, Wolf (2006, p.181) indicates that her "five-step career progression model" can be climbed in 11.4 years on average. This rate of advancement seems ambitious for graduates who would be their early thirties. Yet, a research population drawn from the European Association of Communication Directors (EACD) comprising "highly educated and rather young professionals" has an average age of 39.9 years (Fieseler et al. 2015, p.6). In

Super's life-career rainbow model (1980) this age range coincides with the career establishment stage (see Chapter 5).

3.2.3. Job title inflation

Rapid career advancement may be evident in claims that:

> "increasing numbers of professionals in public relations consider themselves to be strategic managers and consultants" (van Ruler 2004, p.123).

Indeed, only 30 per cent of respondents in the 2016 CIPR State of PR report (CIPR 2016c) identify themselves as non-managers. This might reflect greater opportunities as a result of the occupation's on-going growth. However, PRCA (2016a) claims that the UK occupation has a median average of 28 years of age, which suggests recruitment predominantly of young practitioners.

An alternative explanation could be "job title inflation" (Reskin and Hartmann 1986, p.89). There is no established framework for job titles within public relations and Wolf (2010, p.240) observes that in house practitioners in particular exhibit "a wide range of interchangeable and often not universally recognized titles". Similarly, in their initial 'Excellence' study, Dozier et al. note that:

> "Top communicators carried an array of job titles: vice president, directors, managers and supervisors of communication, public relations, public affairs, corporate communications and so forth" (Dozier et al. 1995, p.x).

Moreover, Gregory (2011a) identifies a need for research to investigate the relationship between practitioner seniority and the inclusion of public relations in job titles.

Martinez et al. (2008, p.19) perceive "job title inflation" as a tendency for "embellishments" with "attention-grabbing job titles" alongside "higher hierarchal designations" than may be warranted by a role's responsibilities. This is not a recent

development as Bernays notes in quoting from Mencken's scientific enquiry of the American language published in 1920 that:

> "A press agent is now called a publicist, a press representative, or a counsel on public relations, just as a realtor and mortician are used for real estate man and undertaker" (Bernays 1961, p.20).

Indeed, Mencken observes in the second edition of his book (published in 1921) a general American tendency to "gloss menial occupations with sonorous names" (Mencken 2009, p.144), which Hope suggests had a tangible value as:

> "the publicist, as a general rule, makes more money than the press agent, but the Public Relations Counsel is rich like anything" (Hope 1941, p.18).

Within a bureaucratic career form, job titles are an integral dimension of organizational and occupational structures. Martinez et al. (2008, p.19) explain that job titles are socially constructed and "set expectations about work roles" in respect of knowledge, skills, abilities (KSA), status and power levels, and responsibilities. However, Wolf (2006) notes that job titles for in-house public relations positions in particular, are "frequently ambiguous" and may not reflect "increasing responsibility and pay scale".

Certain occupations are observed by Martinez et al. (2008) to have difficulty in assigning job titles. Indeed, they argue that a dynamic job market creates:

> "more inherent variation in job titles along with more truthfulness associated with unconventional titles" (Martinez et al. 2008, p.19).

These points apply to public relations, not least as a result of new opportunities, such as those created by digital communications.

The lack of coherence and consistency in public relations job titles has career implications, particularly in failing to communicate clearly the bureaucratic career form's inherent "logic of *advancement"* (Kanter 1989b, p.509). Indeed, as Lauzen (1992, p.61) notes, public relations may be limited to "little more than a technical support function servicing other units of the organization" as a result of "encroachment" (Lauzen 1991, p.245), whereby those with a career background in other fields have responsibility for the public relations function. She reports a belief within organizations that public relations is "a highly substitutable function" (Lauzen 1992, p.65), particularly by marketing (Lauzen 1993) which could impact career progression in the field.

Such encroachment may result in a "career plateau" (Ference et al. 1977, p.602) for public relations practitioners where "the likelihood of additional career hierarchical promotion is very low". However, rather than determining any "structural influence" (Rosenbaum 1989, p.331), Lauzen (1991) concludes that encroachment results from a failure of practitioners to have the right aspirations, attitudes and attributes, and their inability to differentiate the function (Lauzen 1993). Once again this presents an individualist model of career development.

In conclusion, the extent to which public relations reflects a bureaucratic career form is limited by challenges affecting its position as a management function. These include issues identified by DeSanto (2011): definitional problems, diversity of practice, inconsistency in the function's position in organizational structures, overlap and encroachment from other functions, the small size of public relations departments, the general nature of public relations roles, varying career backgrounds (particularly journalism) and a lack of

managerial/business competencies. Based on an analysis of literature, DeSanto (2011, p.9) notes:

> "progress needs to be made if public relations is to be recognised widely as a serious and important management function" (DeSanto 2011, p.17).

However, the contention from academia and practice is that public relations does offer a hierarchical technician-to-management bureaucratic career, contingent on the motivation and ability of individual practitioners to gain experience (Berger et al. 2007; Fieseler et al. 2015), knowledge (DeSanto 2011) and model those who already "perform a mainstream managerial role within their organizations" (*ibid,* p.21).

One further consideration in respect of this career form is the challenge to the "old industrial-management model" (Murrell 1999, p.48) from decades of revision in business structures, with "restructuring, downsizings, mergers, acquisitions, outsourcings" (Simeon 2013, p.12), and newer employment arrangements designed to enhance the "strategic flexibility" of organizations.[33]

3.3. Professional career form

Kanter (1989b, p.510) says that as a result of societal and organizational changes, the bureaucratic model has "diminishing value in describing careers" compared with the professional and entrepreneurial career forms. The terms profession and professional are encountered frequently within public relations literature and practice, albeit largely without reference to, or consideration of, their descriptive or normative meanings.

Rather than examine whether public relations is, or should be, defined as a profession, or its practitioners as professionals,

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[33] Emerging career concepts are examined in Chapter 5.

the focus here is on the extent to which the occupation may be considered to reflect a professional career form.

3.3.1. Training and education

Where the employing organization is the core of bureaucratic careers, historically "professions were organized bodies of experts" (Abbott 1988, p.4). This means that the relationship between practitioners and practice is paramount.[34] Consequently,

> "the logic of professional career structures is defined by craft or skills, with monopolisation of socially valued knowledge the key determinant of occupational status, and "reputation" the key resource for the individual" (Kanter 1989b, p.516).

Professional careers tend towards stability in job title and employment over time since advancement, and increasing pay, depend on expertise developed from "ever-more demanding or challenging or important or rewarding assignments" (Kanter 1989b, p.511). Traditionally, a professional career involves:

> "long training, ordinarily in a manner prescribed by the profession itself and sanctioned by the state" (Hughes 1928, p.762).

In the process, "a set of professional attitudes and controls, a professional conscience and solidarity" (*ibid*) is assimilated. Explicit (theoretical) and implicit (practical) learning is found in the definition of a profession as:

> "an occupation in which a professed knowledge of some subject, field, or science is applied; a vocation or career, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification" (Oxford English Dictionary 2011, p.1154).

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[34] Practice reflects the "tasks and techniques shared by the occupational group" (Pieczka 2006c, p.280) and practitioners are "persons engaged in the practice of a particular skill, art, or discipline" (Oxford English Dictionary 2011, p.1127).

Public relations practitioners are increasingly qualified to degree level (PRCA 2016a). Moreover, the CIPR State of the Profession report (2015c) indicates that 15 per cent of respondents hold an undergraduate degree in public relations or communications with half having some form of professional qualification. However, L'Etang observes that historically:

> "emphasis was given to personal qualities and experience in the field rather than expertise and knowledge" (L'Etang 2004, p.190).

Indeed, Theaker (2012, p.87) reports that higher education and vocational qualifications have been "greeted with suspicion rather than as evidence of professionalisation". This may reflect wider concerns noted by O'Leary and Sloane (2014, p.2) of "over-education" of the working population, whereby:

> "individuals have higher qualifications than are necessary either to obtain or perform their current job" (O'Leary and Sloane 2014, p.2).

There has been little UK-based empirical research into the career implications of gaining a qualification in public relations. One study among the first six cohorts of Bournemouth University's pioneering undergraduate degree course (Moloney et al. 1999) found that three-quarters of participants were employed in public relations positions (equally distributed between in-house and consultancy). Over half of these said that they held strategic roles, with salary levels and job titles cited as positive indications of career progression. The degree programme and particularly its compulsory placement year, was felt to have been of assistance in their work by 98 per cent of respondents. In contrast, research by Pieczka (2006c, p.300–301) concludes that expertise in public relations is "constituted and transmitted through practice" and appears as "practical knowledge" drawn from "professional work and training".

Positioning education as preparation for public relations employment has been a long-standing source of tension within academia, the professional bodies and practitioners (L'Etang 2004, p.45). Where consultant Bill Huey (2008) criticises public relations consultancies for viewing universities as "farm systems", PRCA chief executive, Francis Ingham (2011) says that graduates need to be:

> "of much greater, immediate value to employers. Oven-ready so to speak" (Ingham 2011).

An increased expectation for academic institutes to focus on the application of knowledge for specific jobs is discussed by van der Molen (1996, p.17) who advocates greater connection between "specialised further education and recurrent career training", reflecting the "lifelong career development learning" approach proposed by Paton and McMahon (2014, p.279). This could address Abbott's (1988 p.68) general contention that theoretical education is "often irrelevant to practice", and "assimilation of professional knowledge *[occurs]* in the workplace".

Although vocational education and training is not mandated for public relations practitioners, opportunities for off-the-job professional development include 32 undergraduate and 23 masters courses offered by 35 UK universities that have been awarded full recognition by CIPR; eleven of which also partner with PRCA. Additionally, both bodies offer qualifications and training courses; whilst PRCA is involved in apprenticeship programmes launched by the government (Gov.uk 2014; 2015).

In respect of the professional career form, there is clearly potential for public relations practitioners to develop skills through academic and vocational provision, although this is neither compulsory nor connected directly to progression within an occupational career structure.

3.3.2. Expertise and reputation

A further dimension of the professional career form concerns the relationship between expertise and the reputation of individual practitioners and the wider occupation.

As already discussed, public relations has struggled to assert a "jurisdictional claim" (Abbott 1988, p.59) for its area of expertise, which Pieczka (2006a, p.327) attributes to "competition between providers of PR" as "the constant factor in undermining all attempts at professionalisation". However, Kanter (1989b, p.512) acknowledges the importance of a "marketplace" within an occupation to ensure that "mobility of the professional career" is predicated on reputation. As such competition may act as a force within the field for raising professional standards, motivating practitioners to increase their skills and driving "monopolisation of socially valued knowledge" (*ibid,* p.510).

This suggests that a professional career model offers opportunities based on personal competence without the hierarchical constraints of the bureaucratic career form. Therefore it is not surprising that professions commonly seek to prevent "occupation-to-occupation transfer" (Inkson 2015, p.25), as career opportunity depends on "demographic rigidity" (Abbott 1988, p.130), with more permeable occupations that respond to demand fluctuations having a lower status. This presents a challenge in applying a professional career form to public relations as external pressures readily affect its demography, it is subject to encroachment and criticised for having a poor reputation (Moloney 2000). Additionally, public relations has:

> "a fluid body of occupational knowledge, few barriers to entry, optional professional training" (Edwards 2015, p.35).

It also lacks a clearly defined career structure (L'Etang 2008a) and established career paths (Kiesenbauer and Zerfass 2015).

Nevertheless, J.E. Grunig (2000, p.23) believes that public relations is "a field of expert practice" and argues that "professional status" is critical to overcome negative perceptions of the occupation. He is not alone as CIPR and PRCA seek to distinguish their members on the basis of adherence to codes reflecting ethical and professional standards. This portrays the behaviour of individual practitioners as affecting the reputation of the entire occupation, and by implication, the reputation of other practitioners.

Further, Fawkes (2015) suggests that professional bodies should act as moral agents (as implied by the Charter status conferred on the CIPR) and facilitate ethical debate. This recommendation goes beyond seeing membership of a professional body as enhancing personal (and collective) reputation to present a need for practitioners to develop expertise in the role of "ethical guardian" (L'Etang 2003, p.66) and evidence the "moral and societal dimensions" (Karseth and Solbrekke 2006, p.152) of a professional career.

Kanter (1989b, p.512) notes that "the professional career's reliance on reputation stands in great contrast with the anonymity of the bureaucrat", although Gowler and Legge (1989, p.446) argue that the "construction of a reputation" is also important for career progression within organizations. Indeed, Abbott (1988, p.153) observes that newer professions commonly operate within "large and multiprofessional" workplaces, which can be applied to public relations employment.

Whilst Løwendahl (2005, p.45) lists expertise and reputation among the "strategic resources" offered by individual professionals, L'Etang (2004) argues that:

> "the vast demand for public relations services means that practitioners do not actually need full-blown professional status" (L'Etang 2004, p.221).

This suggests that aspirations evident in public relations literature and practice reflect the desire for professional status found among "middle class occupations" (Hughes 1960, p.56). This indicates how individuals seek to gain social advancement by "getting into an occupation of high prestige" (*ibid*) as well as:

> "the collective effort of an organized occupation to improve its place and increase its power, in relation to others" (Hughes 1960, p.56).

Hence, adopting a professional career form may help practitioners and the practice to obtain social legitimacy (L'Etang 2004), secure economic rewards through jurisdiction and authority (Pieczka and L'Etang 2001), and establish powerful elites (L'Etang 2004). Research by van Ruler (2005, p.162) reveals that this is the position of public relations associations that favour a model of occupational professionalism based on "exclusiveness, autonomy, and status in order to become desirable and well-paid". However, she notes that practitioners perceive:

> "general knowledge and personality are the most important characteristics for a career in public relations" (van Ruler 2005, p.167).

This indicates limitations concerning the extent to which public relations may be considered to reflect a professional career form. Moreover, Fitch and Third (2014) critique attempts to professionalise public relations as supporting "occupational closure" (p.250) and reflecting a "masculinist vision" through an emphasis on strategic management status. As such, a professional career form can be seen as inhibiting occupational diversity.

3.4. Entrepreneurial career form

According to Kanter (1989b, p.516), the third traditional career form, entrepreneurial, involves the creation of "valued outputs". This results in a concurrent increase in "power, remuneration and responsibilities" (*ibid*) for individuals, whether they establish an independent business or are employed in organizations.[35]

Where progress in the bureaucratic career comes from hierarchical movement and in the professional career derives from enhanced expertise, prospects within entrepreneurial careers emerge from identifying growth opportunities, expanding areas of responsibility, managing new projects or developing teams.

3.4.1. Risks of autonomy

Kanter (1989a) offers a wide perspective of the entrepreneurial career form arguing it is found within organizations as a result of the changing context in which careers are enacted. Within public relations, entrepreneurship could, therefore, apply beyond independent practitioners and consultancy owners to agency employees and in-house practitioners. Pinchot and Pinchot (1978) favour "making a place for entrepreneurs within organizations" through approaches that can be found within public relations,[36] such as contracting out, establishing internal profit centres and allowing workers greater autonomy to be creative and respond to societal changes.

In the 1980s, Peters and Waterman (1982) identified entrepreneurship as a characteristic of organizational

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[35]   Termed *intrapreneurs* by Pinchot and Pinchot (1978)

[36]   An example of contracting out is the launch of Essex Communications by Essex County Council (Brown et al. 2013). Shell Oil has established internal profit centres (Hutchins, 2001) and public relations practitioners employed independently by BBC "celebrity talent" have greater autonomy than those employed directly by the corporation (Arthurs 2014, p.138).

excellence; encouraging individuals to be innovation "champions" (p.202). Grunig (1992, p.220) draws on this work to substantiate "excellent public relations" as a senior management function. However, Holtzhausen and Voto (2002, p.78) argue against "the need for public relations to be part of the dominant coalition to be successful". Moreover, Holtzhausen (2012, p.220) links entrepreneurship to individuals being able "to act independently" in order to "experience personal change, role development, and job evolvement".

A fundamental aspect of an entrepreneurial career identified by Schein (1974) is creativity, which Daymon's (2000, p.17) research within public relations consultancies found to be "characterised by unconventionality, autonomy and risk". Further, Erzikova (2014, p.227) observes a "change agent role" within public relations that seeks to "increase trust at personal, organizational, and societal levels". However Buchanan et al. (1999, p.27) found that change management has a "risky and vulnerable nature" with Cartin (1999, p.36) claiming that "those who actively proposed ideas for improvement" may be viewed as "agitators, or not team players" and consequently face frequent career moves.

Similarly Peters and Waterman (1982) note that organizations may not hire or promote innovators who are deemed unlikely or unable to "fit an organizationally shaped career" (Dyer 2009, p.174). Likewise, research by Holtzhausen and Voto (2002, p.76) found that some public relations practitioners demonstrate "organizational activist behaviour" that reflects the function's "emancipatory possibilities" but which could also trigger a negative response that may be career threatening (Holtzhausen 2012). Indeed, research by Spicer (1997, p.79) reports that emotional and psychological "violence" may be encountered as a challenge to the autonomy of public

relations practitioners. As such an organizationally-based entrepreneurial career form may be problematic where acting independently or challenging existing practice is unwelcome.

Burgelman (1983, p.1352) notes difficulties in "changing the established organizational context", whilst arguing that "interlocking entrepreneurial activities of multiple participants" (p. 1349) are typical within organizations. This suggests a collaborative approach is required in the relationship "between the corporate resource provider and its entrepreneurial agents" (*ibid*, p.1363). Nevertheless, Fitch et al. (2016) underline the critical importance of "talking back" (p.280) and "learning how to speak to and respond to power" (p.285) for the development of public relations practice. This seems to support the "individualistic nature of public relations practitioners" (Daymon 2000, p.17) evident within the occupational literature. However, it ignores the risks of autonomy, for example:

> "where outside avenues for career advancement for unsuccessful internal entrepreneurs are limited" (Burgelman 1983, p.1361).

3.4.2. Rewards of independence

Whilst recognising the downside of entrepreneurial careers as reduced security and less predictability of career direction, Kanter (1989b, p.516) observes that their benefits include greater "freedom, independence and control". Indeed, Hays and Ritchey-Escovedo (2009, p.134) cite "yearning for freedom, flexibility, and a long-held desire to be their own boss" as motivators for public relations practitioners who establish consultancies. Similarly, control and family time are noted as important factors for solo practitioners (Rayburn et al. 2008).

Grunig et al. (2001) propose that women in particular may benefit from starting a public relations business, although they observe that this is not without difficulties. One option to

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enhance business development competencies could involve education. Hays and Sidlow (2008, p.117) report on a US University course in public relations entrepreneurship that is intended to support practitioners who are likely to "move in and out of entrepreneurship" during their careers. However, research into public relations practice concentrates predominantly on in-house employment or the occupation as a whole (Pieczka 2006a, p.304), whilst literature mentioning independent practice tends to be descriptive (e.g. Newsom et al. 2013).

Independent public relations practitioners may illustrate the "noticeable job traffic between PR and journalism" (Moloney 2006, p.159) rather than demonstrating an entrepreneurial dimension of public relations careers. Indeed, a study by Koch and Obermaier (2014) reports that nearly half of German freelance journalists undertake public relations work. They found such hybridisation primarily results from financial necessity, which suggests that the "PR-journalist" (ibid, p.473) may be a reluctant entrepreneur. This may also be the case for practitioners who undertake freelance work after being made redundant from employed public relations positions.

3.4.3. Personal influence

An entrepreneurial approach may be found within another dynamic career phenomenon, "the revolving doors syndrome" (L'Etang 2008a, p.111). This involves purposeful movement between "prestigious jobs" (Pieczka 2006a, p.325) in journalism, politics and public relations. It reflects a "personal influence" model (Sriramesh 1992, p210), where knowledge and influence in the form of personal reputation may be viewed as "valued outputs" (Kanter 1989b, p.516) within the entrepreneurial career form.

Personal influence is evident in Holtzhausen's (2012) observation that independent public relations practitioners may operate within networks or virtual organizations. Chell (2008, p.73) identifies such "embeddedness" as an entrepreneurial approach by which "to identify and realise opportunities". This supports the argument by Licht and Siegel (2006, p.525) that "entrepreneurs must build reputation-enhancing relationships". Moreover, Chell's research finds that:

> "successful entrepreneurs were more likely to have larger social networks" (Chell 2008, p.139).

Perhaps surprisingly, Tonge (2010) notes that managers within public relations consultancies have smaller personal networks than either directors or junior executives. However, a greater percentage of these relationships are deemed to be strong, including those with clients. Such "extrafirm ties" within the individual's "relationship constellations" may be considered as "valued outputs" (Arthur and Rousseau 1996, p.278) should managers decide to set up their own business.

There is a lack of research concerning career development and entrepreneurial intentions of practitioners employed within public relations consultancies. However, Pieczka's (2006a, p.306) study of public relations consultants identifies a focus on "chemistry" in client relationships, rather than the problem solving competence that is emphasised within a "traditional professional service" (p.303). Within the context of professional service firms (PSFs), Cohen (2015, p.368) observes that this personal influence aspect of the entrepreneurial model creates an inherent tension between the career as a "project of the self" and "business innovation and growth".

Despite limited consideration of public relations consultancies as PSFs, White (2001) observes that their area of

practice is being encroached upon by management consultancies. He notes the latter "devote resources and staff time" as "investments in practice development, knowledge management and innovation" (*ibid*, p.83). The comparison is used to emphasise a need for public relations to develop into a more:

> "attractive career option for qualified graduates and candidates who have already developed skills in another area of professional practice, such as the law" (White 2001, p.85–86).

Similarly, Lagos and Simkin (2003, p.301) advocate for public relations consultancies to address increasing competition by improving "the qualities of their personnel" through investment in recruitment and development. However, their study found resistance to training and qualifications and a preference for personal attributes, such as "good communications skills" and a 'bright, enthusiastic personality'" (*ibid)*. This applied even when consultancies present themselves as strategic management advisers, and suffer as a consequence of "frequent moves by well-regarded practitioners" (*ibid,* p.321).

To conclude this chapter, a brief comparison is offered with Cohen's (2015) examination of career management within PSFs, which also adopted Kanter's typology. The main similarity is the "coexistence of the three career logics" (p.368), although Cohen found particular practices (such as apprenticeships and the tournament approach) were institutionalised within PSFs, which is not the case in public relations. Public relations tends to reflect a dominant bureaucratic narrative of career advancement from technical to management roles. This relies on an "individualistic model of careers" (Rosenbaum 1989, p.330) with little indication of organizational or occupational career systems or

responsibilities that are commonly found within PSFs. Indeed, whilst research by Berger (2015, p.56) reports that "the hunt for talent" is the primary concern of international public relations leaders, experience and deployment of practice-based knowledge are emphasised rather than professional learning, thereby reinforcing "personal influence" (Sriramesh 1992, p.210) as a dominant career strategy.

Those working in PSFs have to "navigate through … complex settings in developing their careers" (Cohen 2015, p.369) and align their interests to those of employers/clients. This applies similarly to those developing careers within public relations. However, unlike many professional service disciplines there are few formal occupational constraints in public relations. This openness might offer greater entrepreneurial opportunities but could also diminish the occupation's credibility as a professional career form.

Consequently whilst public relations as an occupation lacks a coherent canvas on which career strategies may be crafted, a pattern has emerged. This concerns presentation within public relations literature and practice of individual practitioners as "the main agents for determining their careers" (Rosenbaum 1989 p.330). The limitations of conceptualising "careers solely through individualism's blinders" (*ibid* p.349) are examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Gauging demographic tensions within an individualistic career pattern

4.1. Introduction

The lack of a coherent working canvas within the occupation was observed in the previous chapter. This is not necessarily problematic if we acknowledge "the vast heterogeneity that characterizes both individual careers and careers en masse" (Inkson et al. 2012, p.330) that Chapter 2 intimates applies within public relations. Similarly emphasis on a need for practitioners to develop competencies, gain experience, and build a personal reputation can be justified provided we accept that "in contemporary careers individual agency is the key to continued career success" (Van der Heijden and De Vos 2015, p.4).

An individualistic career pattern positions people as responsible for managing their own career development (Bell and Staw 1989). However within public relations literature and practice this narrative tends to be crafted on "everyday career thinking" (Inkson 2004a, p.99) rather than knowledge of career studies theory.

This chapter gauges the tensions inherent in "an 'individualization' of the career" (Sturges 2011, p.151). In particular the discussion focuses on the reciprocal relationship between careers and "demographic attributes" (Lawrence and Tolbert 2007, p.400) in a public relations context. Demographic changes in the occupation are examined to move beyond the "grand career narrative" (Blustein 2013, p.13) that Savickas (2002) observes within portrayals of twentieth century careers focused on "the white western able bodied middle class male" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.135).

An initial examination of "the gendering of public relations" (Fitch 2016a, p.54) reflects:

> "an invitation to enhance and expand biographical research in the larger field of public relations history" (Lamme 2015, p.49).

Specifically, it references my original research that investigates the career experiences of women working in public relations in Britain between 1970 and 1989, a time of significant growth in female employment in the field (IPR 1989a). This research was presented at the International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC) in 2012 and published subsequently in *Public Relations Review* (Yaxley 2013a).

The chapter concludes by considering career development for those who may reflect "difference" (Edwards 2011, p.81) in ethnicity and/or other "social identity intersectionalities" (Pompper 2014, p.69). These individuals continue be under-documented in the literature and are claimed to be marginalised in public relations practice (Edwards 2015) and "discussions about career" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.392).

4.2. Beyond 'great man' traits

The "individualistic model of careers" (Rosenbaum 1989, p.330) derives from Parsons' (1909) work that encourages a process of "uniting" (p.13) "a person's aptitudes, abilities, ambitions, resources, and limitations" (p.3) with their "choice of vocation". Whilst this model was developed in an era of predominantly male employment, the "concept of fit between individuals and occupations" (Pryor and Bright 2011, p.5–6) is evident in Wolf's (2006. p.174) survey of the views of British public relations practitioners regarding "career advancement factors". This research found that "the *right personality* was often more important than formal qualifications" (Wolf 2010, p.240).

However, beyond noting "an ability 'to get along' with a wide range of people", Wolf (2006, p.179) does not examine personality characteristics further in her study.

Similarly, research by Murray and White (2005, p.355) advocates the recruitment of a "breed of person" in public relations to address concerns among CEOs of "too few high-calibre practitioners and too few quality people coming into the industry". This language echoes discourse reported by L'Etang (2004, 2015) within the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) into the 1950s. This privileged the class, gender, age, nationality and cultural background of the established membership within a narrative of "social closure" (*ibid*, p.207) around a professional legitimisation of the occupation.

More recently, a guide to *Careers in Public Relations* produced by CIPR and PRCA in 2013 includes an anecdotal style "quick quiz on a PR's typical traits" (p.7) for school leavers and graduates to assess their "fit for a future in the industry" indicating the durability of the matching concept. Despite mention of personal aspects such as "a good personality" as a hiring criterion (Wilcox 1979, p.41), practitioner "characteristics" (Todd 2014, p.789) and "personality traits" (Callision et al. 2014, p.830), public relations literature fails to connect with either trait-factor theories (Betz et al.1989) that propose career-related personality typologies (Holland 1996) or measurement techniques such as aptitude tests (first developed in the 1930s) as a means of making "predictions about an individual's suitability for future jobs" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.31).

Gregory (2008, p.216) criticises literature that lists "personal qualities" required by public relations practitioners for a "lack of precision". In her research with senior practitioners (including those working in the National Health Service), Gregory (2009) applies the SHL Universal Competency

Framework. However, she does not consider whether the identified competencies operate as indicators for recruitment or career development purposes. Indeed, the role of "personal career competencies"[37] (Arthur et al. 1995; Jones and DeFillippi 1996) has not been examined within public relations literature.

Public relations skills are identified by Jones and Lichtenstein (2000) for career development within other professional services. This point is indicated in the *Bled Manifesto on Public Relations* (van Ruler and Verčič 2002) by public relations being "part of functioning of other professionals" (p.11).

However, theories that focus on individualistic trait-factors are criticised for the "insufficient attention" (Betz et al. 1989, p.31) they pay to gender and other demographic characteristics. Rosenbaum (1989, p.329) further argues that "people often fail to see the institutional structures that affect their lives" as a result of conceptualisation of individuals as "the main agents determining their career progress". Specifically, Marshall (1989) warns against career assumptions that are based on a traditional male, sequential hierarchical model. This criticism is echoed by Cline (1989) in discussing the emphasis in public relations literature and practice on the desirability of achieving managerial status. Her observation reflects that:

> "career theories have been largely built on male models of success and work" (Gallos 1989, p.110)

More recently, Kantamneni (2013, p.98) notes how "much of the foundational work in career development viewed men as a homogenous group". This matches discussion in Chapter 2 of

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[37] Six personal career competencies are proposed: knowing why (motivation, beliefs and values), how (formal and experiential learning), whom (interpersonal relationships), what (opportunities, threats, requirements), where (entering and advancing) and when (timing and choices).

the narrow historical perspective in public relations literature that accentuates the career experiences of selective male public relations consultants and senior executives.

4.3. Gendering of public relations

Within the growing body of research concerning gender issues within public relations, historical studies have focused predominantly on the US (O'Neil 1999, Gower 2001, Horsley 2009, Patterson 2009); notably with biographies of a few prominent women (Miller 1997, Henry 1998, Martinelli and Toth 2010).

To address the lack of insight into female career development within a British public relations context, I designed a small-scale primary research study. This aimed to foreground the career actions of women working in the occupation between 1970 and 1989. It informs an examination of gendering of public relations in this section of the thesis. The study sought to explore how women customised their careers rather than impose a vertical progressive career model on their experiences. Hence, interviews were used to offer:

> "a way of understanding and bringing forth the history of women in a culture that has traditionally relied on masculine interpretation" (Fontana and Frey 2005, p.709).

It is notable that subsequent to publication of this research (Yaxley 2013a), L'Etang (2015a) revisited her doctoral research that included recorded interviews with thirteen women (out of 67 participants) working in the occupation in Britain during the post-war period. Both studies use oral history in order to:

> "fill gaps in the historical record by examining contemporary events within living memory" (McDowell 2002, p.21).

This broadening of understanding also enables consideration of the social context in which the careers of public relations practitioners are enacted.

4.3.1. A woman's history

The US literature includes reference to a few women working in public relations in the 1920s (Harlow 1981; Cutlip 1994). The most widely cited is Doris Fleischman, who is discussed in the context of being Edward Bernays' wife and a feminist (Ware 2004, Henry 2012, Fitch 2016a). Cutlip (1994) attributes Fleischman's initial employment as a journalist in 1914 to Bernays. She was promoted to assistant editor before joining her husband's firm, where she remained working as his business partner primarily behind the scenes (Ware, 2004).

Where Fleischman reflects the journalistic entry point commonly found in literature (Neff, 2001; Pearson, 2009), I have identified alternative career paths. For example, Constance Hope worked for a theatrical producer and as a secretary to classical singers in the early 1930s[38], before becoming a publicist and establishing her own agency (Bowling 1976). Hope's contemporary, Mabel Flanley had a background in dietetics (Farrer 2005) and moved from the US to Australia in 1930, before returning to work for Borden Milk Products as director of consumer relations and co-founding the first all women public relations firm in New York in 1944. Her business partner, Sally Woodward was formerly director of consumer and education relations for General Mills in Minneapolis (Yaxley 2016a). Published work by Hope (1941) and Flanley (1948) reveals a level of early female expertise missing in literature regarding the history of public relations.

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[38] Hope's father was a musical coach for leading artists (Bowling, 1976).

Donato claims that the:

"trend towards women's greater representation in public relations … began early in the post-World War II period (Donato 1990, p.129)".

Developing this US perspective, Horsley (2009) indicates individual agency as she notes that women gradually assumed positions that required "more skill and independent work" (p.10) increasingly in agencies and consultancies.

Studies of industry publications by Gower (2001) and Horsley (2009) reveal initial optimism and acceptance of the role of women in the occupation in the 1940s. However, they report occurrence of derogatory remarks about female practitioners in the mid-1950s, with their contributions omitted entirely by the end of that decade. This situation indicates the "formidable ideological and institutional constraints faced by women" (Meyerowitz 1994, p.3) in the 1950s whereby they:

"learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights — the independence and the opportunity that the old-fashioned feminists fought for" (Friedan 1963, p.16).

This narrative "tends to downplay women's agency" (Meyerowitz 1994, p.4), which as noted above, was evident in the earlier generation of female public relations practitioners. The pessimistic tone alludes to tensions between claims that females entering the field in the 1960s had positive feelings about their futures and increasing reports of complaints regarding gender inequity (Gower 2001).

A similar generational difference can be observed in Britain, where L'Etang (2006) observes that the post-war public relations industry was a patriarchal one where women tended to be excluded from "fast career progression" (p.163). Her oral history interviews indicate that women commonly advanced into public relations in the 1950s from secretarial roles (L'Etang

2015a). However, one interviewee (a university graduate) who followed this route, subsequently resigned a public relations position after being told:

> "you will never get an executive job because you are a woman" (L'Etang 2015a, p.358).

This evidence of personal agency challenged societal expectations and constraints of the time. Indeed, increasing female employment in the occupation was attributed to

> "the growth of consumer markets in which, it was felt at the time, women would naturally be more expert" (L'Etang 2004, p.257).

> From a career viewpoint, being used to "market to other

women" offers "limited opportunities" (L'Etang 2015a, p.359). This is evident in a 1959 magazine article that stated:

> "Being a public relations officer is fun and varied – just the career for an ambitious girl *[who]* will probably work in the field of fashion, beauty, household and charity enterprises" (Woman & Beauty 1959, p.33).

The language used here to attract young women to the occupation, contrasts with the narrative regarding those already established in their careers. For example, a newspaper interview with experienced female public relations consultants who represented industrial firms describes them as:

> "chromium-plated, brightly smiling women, non-stop smokers and talkers about business ethics, about soap-powders and public service" (Collier 1957).

> Although these women were not named, one seems likely

to be Mrs Gina Franklin, managing director of Link Information Services Ltd, a 40-strong, all female agency that she founded in 1950 (De Vita 2006). It has not been possible to determine details of the career route of Franklin (or her employees). However, an interview in Advertiser's Weekly (1958) reports her experience of meeting fellow female practitioners on a visit to

New York. She later became the first president of the Association of Women in Public Relations (AWPR) formed in 1962 (L'Etang 2006).

An individualistic model of career development is evident in how women employees at this time were expected to bring "special intrinsic personal qualities" (L'Etang 2015a, p.361) to their work in public relations, such as:

> "good telephone manner, attractive speech, developed dress sense, a pleasant appearance linked with a reliable character and a likeable personality" (L'Etang 2015a, p.359).

The implication is that although women required personal agency to progress from secretarial work into public relations, their career development relied on complying with structural norms of feminine personality and behaviour.

Gendered differences are evident in how prior secretarial work is seen as ensuring young women could "handle the mechanics of communication" (L'Etang 2015a, p.360), while male counterparts were given secretarial support.

In the 1960s, some women were viewed as "Girl Fridays" who worked in public relations until getting married. The workplace had been viewed as somewhere that young women could secure a rich husband since the start of the twentieth century (Sampson 1995). This suggests that women's ability to develop a career was constrained by the:

> "socio-cultural context (*where*) female employment was largely seen as a temporary and low-level activity" (L'Etang 2015a, p.360).

Additionally, L'Etang (*ibid*) reports the "invisibility" of women's work in public relations owing to their status as transient workers, their role in providing support for male colleagues and a failure to designate jobs undertaken by women in "powerful positions" as public relations.

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As noted in the previous chapter, a lack of professional visibility inhibits establishment of a personal reputation and impedes career progression. Indeed, L'Etang notes in relation to women in public relations, that historically:

> "prevailing stereotypes suggested that they were valued for their looks, clothes, presentation, performance and communication skills that were understood as innate qualities rather than as acquired expertise" (L'Etang 2015a, p.362).

4.3.2. Increasing female visibility

In the US, women working in public relations accounted for 10 per cent of practitioners in 1968 (Broom 1982), becoming the majority (58.6 per cent) by 1989 (Toth and Grunig 1993). In Britain, IPR/CIPR surveys reveal that female representation in the membership increased from 12 per cent in 1975, to 20.8 per cent in 1987, 44 per cent in 1994 and 47.8 per cent in 1998.

It is likely that relaxed entry criteria from 1989 attracted female members who are classified by White et al. (1988) as support staff (comprising 44 per cent of the estimated occupational population).

Further evidence of increased female employment is apparent in a 2:1 gender balance in favour of women reported in the *PR Week* Top 150 agency listing for 1990; although gendered role segregation is not considered.

The apparent acceptance of women practitioners within the industry at the end of the 1980s may reflect a desire to emphasise its size and by implication enhance the status of the occupation, rather than reflect equality of career opportunity. Nevertheless, the 1970s and 1980s clearly saw women enter the male dominated field in greater numbers, making this an important era for British public relations practice.

Women's employment and career advancement in the UK during the 1970s were encouraged in part by "the women's

rights movement" (Rakow and Nastasia 2009, p.253) known as second wave feminism (Henig and Henig 2001). Change was also driven by "three major pieces of legislation designed to improve the situation of working women" (Morris and Nott 1991 p.69): the Equal Pay Act in 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975, and the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act in 1978.

Summerfield (1994) cites data showing that women represented one-third of those in employment in the UK in 1961, increasing to two-fifths by 1981. Changing societal attitudes are apparent with female recruitment seen as necessary to promote economic growth. Women were encouraged to participate in higher education, which is viewed as an important aspect of reducing gender differentiation in work (Wickham 1982) and enhancing female career success (Sweet and Meiksins 2008). Consequently, the removal of structural constraints on women's careers, and their greater representation in the workplace, significantly altered the working experiences of women in the 1970s and 1980s (Hakim 2004).

In 1975, Margaret Nally became the IPR's first female president; followed by Nora Owen in 1981 and Carol Friend in 1986 (CIPR 2012b). L'Etang (2006) outlines that Nally's path into public relations came via her experience as a wartime radio mechanic, freelance journalism and secretarial work. Owen had worked in fashion journalism, reflecting traditional career routes noted above (*ibid*). Friend, however, had graduated in business studies and French before working for Air France and moving into public relations first for a property developer and then in consultancy where she co-founded PIELLE Consulting Group in 1980 (Walker 2010).

Despite their visibility in the occupation, there have been no biographies to date of these women[39] or earlier female pioneers of British public relations[40]. Moreover, there is a lack of academic research concerning female experiences of the occupation in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s.

4.3.3. Female career experiences in the 1970s and 1980s

In order to gain insight into how women developed their careers in British public relations during an important period of increased female representation, I undertook an original qualitative research study. This examined factors affecting opportunities for female advancement, the gendered nature of labour and whether women acted as agents of change in opening up career opportunities for younger female practitioners. Interviews took place in May 2012 with seven women, who began their careers in public relations as young women in the 1970s and early 1980s.[41]

The interviewees revealed an individualistic approach to their hierarchical career development, with each recounting an opportunistic entry into public relations.[42] All had secured management positions in their careers and indicated that they had not experienced role (Dozier and Broom 1995) or vertical (Crompton 1997) segregation. Indeed, the concept of a glass ceiling (Wrigley 2002) was overtly mentioned and rejected by

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[39] CIPR hosts an annual Maggie Nally memorial lecture.

[40] Lynne Franks', known as inspiring the satirical *Absolutely Fabulous* comedy, published her autobiography in 1997. She began her career as a typist, working in an advertising agency before transferring to its public relations department. She was recruited as a secretary for a publication for teenage girls, before returning to PR and subsequently setting up her own firm.

[41] The study was published in *Public Relations Review* (Yaxley 2013a).

[42] All participants continue to work in public relations (two within in-house roles; five as consultants); one had remained in a single employer (developing her role over time) whilst the others had worked for up to ten different organizations during their careers.

several respondents, with others emphasising that they made their way without encountering insurmountable barriers.

The interviewees all worked at some point in male dominated sectors, including farming, politics, trade unions, finance, transport, manufacturing and heavy industry. This contrasts with the contention that women in public relations historically were employed predominantly in female-oriented sectors (L'Etang 2004). One common thread with L'Etang's research concerns career starting-points. The interviewees all worked initially in communicative occupations (teaching, secretarial/clerical work, journalism and publishing), which they linked to public relations post facto. This connection echoes comments made by senior US male practitioners who were interviewed by Broughton (1943).

Another similarity with earlier work is how women in my study describe their movement into public relations as opportunistic, saying it had occurred "by accident", "chance", "opportunity" or "a bit of a bluff". Some had left school without knowing what they wanted to do; others were graduates.[43] None of the women previously had a clear idea of what public relations involved, but each one felt a positive fit, although retrospectively rather than as a result of any career planning.

The study's participants universally described working in public relations as "exciting". Their experience conflicts Bowen's finding (2003) of surprise among public relations undergraduates that the work was less glamorous than expected.[44] The contrast may arise from the growth or maturation of the occupation in recent decades.

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[43] None studied public relations at University since it was not taught at undergraduate level in the UK until 1989 (L'Etang 2004).

[44] Nelson (1990 p.69) uses the term "reality shock" for this negative reaction, although she contends employees are not "entirely responsible for unrealistic or unmet expectations" (p.69).

Despite a lack of evident career strategies, the recollections of each interviewee demonstrate their agentic self-efficacy[45] (Bandura 1977). This is unexpected as Sadri cites that:

> "socialization experiences of women lead to lower self-efficacy expectations with respect to a range of career-related pursuits" (Sadri 1996, p.62).

One respondent recounts, "I think an awful lot of one's career is about being in the right place at the right time"; a view that Cline (1989, p.273) criticises as "passive" and "more typical of women". However, this interviewee also stated that:

> "I woke up one day and didn't think I'd been to University – that my mother and father had scrimped and saved – for me to promote toilet cleaner, so I decided to move".

Here she demonstrates personal agency, whereby:

> "in the modern workplace, workers have to take charge of their self-development for a variety of positions and careers over the full course of their worklife" (Bandura 2001, p.11).

> L'Etang reports a similar recollection from a female

participant in her historical research:

> "The thought that my life should be restricted by some sort of external power that although I had a degree all I'm fit for as a woman is to run a cosmetic account was something I really thought was too much" (L"Etang 2015a, p.358).

More recently, Bridgen (2015, p.7) notes "the triviality or meaninglessness of public relations work" as a common reason for women opting to leave the occupation. In addition to seeking new employment opportunities in public relations proactively,

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[45] Self-efficacy is defined "as individuals' judgements of their capability to be assertive in the protection of their rights, to persist in the pursuit of their goals, and to change their situation to achieve a better fit with interests, aspirations and expectations" (Sadri 1996 p.62).

participants in my study indicate personal agency when given additional responsibility, promoted or headhunted. They report acting assertively to "jump in at the deep end", "step up further", "be feisty" and argue their case. Indeed, two women describe incidents relating to gender inequalities. One example relates to salary disparity[46] that the participant said she had resolved by "being assertive and not emotional":

> "I had to fight really hard to be paid the same as my predecessor who was male, not a graduate and not, I was told, as good at the job as I was".

The other example involves a female graduate press officer being given more holiday allowance than a non-graduate male colleague. The research participant (who worked in the same department) alludes to expectations of gender discrimination when recalling:

> "It was wrong. We would have stood up if it was the other way round, but not sure if it would have changed then".

When considering career influencers, the study found weak examples of what Bandura (2001, p.1) describes as proxy agency (reliance on others to act on your behalf) and collective agency ("exercised through socially coordinative and interdependent effort"). For example, Singh et al. (2009) identify mentoring as an influence on career success and several participants refer to women already successful in public relations as informal mentors (Eby et al. 2011). However, one interviewee relates:

> "I was headhunted by a woman who was what I'd wanted to be, but when I had the opportunity, I decided that I didn't want to do it as I'd lost faith in the agency world. I felt it had become a flippant practice only interested in promoting media coverage; it was too superficial".

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[46]   CIPR data (1975) indicates men were paid on average 40 per cent more than women in public relations at this time.

Each participant recalls being influenced by at least one male colleague and although stories are told of chauvinistic managers, for one woman, standing up to a male boss gave her confidence. Whilst existence of an old boys' network is mentioned, being a woman in a man's world is presented primarily as an opportunity to learn. Less positively, one respondent encountered "constant bullying" and men who "tried to undermine my every move"; although she recalls this experience as one of overcoming obstacles. This woman was the only interviewee to mention having a child, and although she does not present motherhood as a career barrier, she recounts an interview where she was asked whether she intended to have further children: "as it wouldn't be very convenient for us in a top job like this". She states: "I said I was not prepared to answer and was told I was risking being turned down in that case. I took the risk", concluding: "I was appointed and survived for 20 years".

Partners and husbands, when mentioned, are universally portrayed as supportive and influential. In the early years of their careers, the women say that they often deferred to their husbands' careers, but this was never presented as problematic. Additionally, reference is made to supportive peer relationships, which Cross and Linehan (2006) indicate as offering advantages over mentoring in terms of durability, reciprocity and being non-hierarchical.

Although most of the women had belonged to one or more professional network, this form of collective agency is not presented as influential in their careers; neither do they report benefiting from "communal attachments" through formal or informal organizational networking (Bandura 2000, p.77).

Participants lack of emphasis on creating co-operative relationships, where individual and communal goals can be

aligned (Mumby and Putnam 1992), contrasts with a view that "interpersonal agency" (Mann 1994, p.22) is employed by women working in public relations both to "get in" and "get on" (L.A. Grunig 2000, p.92) in their careers.

4.3.4. An individualised narrative

Two other aspects covered in my research study confirm the largely individualised narrative of the female participants. The first relates to the call by Blustein and Noumair (1996) for examination of individualisation to be embedded within a wide context of relational and cultural influences. Yeomans (2010), for example, argues that contemporary female public relations practitioners use emotional labour (Hochschild 2003) to balance their professional and social identities. However, this is not the case for women in my study.

When asked about the gendered nature of work in the 1970s and 1980s, participants did not evidence a sense of conflict. They did not object to being described as a "PR girl", and used terms such as "ballsy" and "feisty" to describe themselves. Several of the respondents use the word "fight" when discussing the experiences of their generation, which contrasts with the "warmth and social approachability" traditionally expected from female communicators (Fröhlich 2004, p.6).

Whilst acknowledging the influence of structural changes on female opportunities (such as equality legislation), the women reflect a liberal feminist perspective in taking personal responsibility for their career success (Grunig et al. 2001). This may indicate cultural influences on the women. For example, Chambers observes that women's magazines into the 1970s:

> "articulated the theme of gender inequalities as personal and individualized problems" (Chambers 2015, p.290).

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The second aspect concerns whether women working in public relations in the 1970s and 1980s see themselves as change agents in opening up career opportunities for younger female practitioners (Colgan and Ledwith 1996). Several women emphasised their independence of mind. One woman sees herself as a "pioneer" who had "opened the door" to other women, whilst another says she was a "maverick". A third jokes that "I should think I'm a monster rather than a role model". All participants observe changes as a result of more women entering the field. One woman recalls that in the early 1980s:

> "a whole lot of young girls getting into PR roles ran around with Filofaxes and champagne glasses. They did us a disservice as the ones who'd done the hard graft. The Harriets and Charlottes were always about at night – always busy, but what were they doing? I doubt they were writing a press release – they seemed to be on the phone a lot".

Another respondent says, "PR is a more girly job now". When referring to her own generation she comments:

> "it was probably more of a struggle then. Women came in as a PA and got promoted. I'm not a trail blazer, but people have learned things working for me and moved on; gone to bigger and better things. I would like to think that by example people picked things up. Younger people don't have the same attitude that they could be doing things wrong and could do better. They just want praise and approval all the time".

A further participant says that today:

> "all this technology means people live in ivory towers and few build relationships".

Another feels that:

> "the next generation haven't had to fight so hard. Maybe they don't care as much – we were passionate to do the job as well as men".

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One woman observes:

> "PR became an easy option for rich women, well dolly birds, who held parties. I don't think that is the situation now – the world is too tough".

She also says:

> "there's nothing mystical about the career I've had. I like to think I have influenced others I've picked out that I felt were worthwhile".

A final respondent recalls:

> "I was proud to see my team develop. I had a rule about employing people who were better educated than me and I got some really superb people who taught me as much as I did them".

Although not expressed explicitly, criticism of the next generation may link to the claim that:

> "the increase in women mapped onto and amplified pre-existing anxieties about both public relations' claim to be a legitimate profession and the role and influence of public relations in organizational settings and corporate structures" (Fitch and Third 2010, p.6).

In addition to evidencing an opportunistic, individualistic approach in developing their careers, it seems that the research participants were ambivalent towards younger practitioners. Further, they appear to have lacked an apparent "gender awareness" or "feminist consciousness" (Colgan and Ledwith 1996, p.29). The combination of these factors suggests that these women were not consciously, or deliberately, influential change agents within the occupation despite having experienced successful public relations careers themselves.

L'Etang's (2015, p.363) account of an earlier generation reflects similar attitudes towards younger women within public relations. Her participants refer to new recruits as "the Jennifer syndrome", "girls" and "dolly-birds". This language contrasts with responses that presented "established women … as more

powerful", and conflicts with the contention of one of L'Etang's respondents that the occupation was "a sexless trade" (*ibid*).

Chodorow (1996, p.24) suggests that generational "differences in women's interpretation of a situation" relate to "different social and cultural conditions". However, another perspective is offered by Henry (2004, p.8) who argues that the notion that "young feminists are expected to learn from the wisdom of their elders" is reflective of a patriarchal "model of authority".

Limitations of my initial research study include the fact that the women who were interviewed continue to work in public relations. Hence, they may have a level of self-efficacy and identification with the occupation that might not be found among those who left it earlier in their careers. Further, the study relies on memory of lived experience, which, although valued within oral history (Janesick, 2010), may also be problematic (O'Donoghue, 2007).

Nevertheless, the findings extend several threads identified in earlier chapters. For example, they suggest that women develop their careers in public relations in the same opportunistic and agentic manner that was observed in the early years of the occupation. Furthermore, they echo the sentiments of feeling at home expressed by the senior male US practitioners interviewed by Broughton (1943). However, despite its history of over fifty years in Britain by the 1970s, the women in this study lacked prior knowledge of public relations.

Overall this research reinforces a narrative within public relations of an individualistic approach in overcoming structural career barriers, with strong evidence of personal rather than proxy or collective agency. At a time of increasing feminisation of the male-dominated occupation, the study reveals that

women were able to experience career success.[47] However, in doing so, the research participants differentiate themselves from gendered stereotypes (L'Etang 2015a) that they attribute to a younger generation.

In the period since the 1980s, the public relations industry has been subject to the "twin processes of feminization and professionalization" (Fitch and Third 2014, p.247). It appears that the gender balance of the occupation in the UK has stabilised at approximately two females for every male (PRCA 2016a).[48] Nevertheless various gender disparities remain, including lower female representation as directors[49] and salary differential (CIPR 2016c). However, these are not unique to public relations (Government Equalities Office 2016).

It is not the intention of this thesis to focus exclusively on feminist matters relating to careers within public relations.[50] Rather, this chapter has sought to offer a counter-balance to the historical concentration on particular male individuals that has ignored other voices (Watson 2015a) and examine the inherent tension between advocacy of an individualistic approach to career development and structural constraints.

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[47] Career success can be defined as "the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences" (Judge et al. 1994, p.3).

[48] The PR Census (PRCA 2016a) indicates that women account for 64 per cent of practitioners.

[49] Data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS 2015) indicates that women account for 44 per cent of those reported as public relations directors.

[50] The thesis acknowledges the growing body of work researching gender issues within the occupation that includes: Broom 1982; Grunig 1988; Grunig et al. 2001; Aldoory and Toth 2002; Fröhlich and Peters 2007; Yeomans 2007, 2010; Elmer 2010; Bridgen 2013a, 2013b; Pompper and Jung 2013; Daymon and Demetrious 2014; Fitch et al. 2016 and Fitch 2016a.

4.4. Social identity intersectionalities

The final section of this chapter stretches the demographic canvas further with reference to public relations literature concerning those who may reflect "difference" (Edwards 2011, p.81) in ethnicity and/or other "social identity intersectionalities" (Pompper 2014, p.69).

Such work has not drawn directly on wider career studies literature, and is limited in scope. However, some observations can be made concerning its relevance for reviewing the dominant individualistic career perspective within the occupation.

Elmer (2010, p.2) offers a rare personal account of the "experiences of a public relations man" as gendered labour. He notes that there is a "denial of the power that patronage exerts" (*ibid,* p.3) on male careers within the occupation. He further suggests that men are required to demonstrate "specific styles of masculinity" (*ibid,* p.4) in the same way that women are expected to enact "self-identities as 'friendly or 'sociable' people" (Yeomans 2010, p.11).

These expectations reflect the argument made by Edwards (2015, p.34) that "PR's corporate professionalization project" presents "a market-based rationale" where the needs of clients/employers govern diversity within the occupation. This was noted in the previous section in respect of increased female employment within public relations being driven by the growth of women as consumers. In reality, "the complex identities of publics" (Vardeman-Winter et al. 2013) highlights the limitation of this instrumental approach to career development.

Further, Edwards (2015) sees the public relations occupation as engaged in seeking legitimacy within a

competitive environment. Consequently structural barriers are seen as being imposed on career development as a result of:

> "archetypal practitioner identities, which draw on knowledge, experience and personal attributes such as gender, race and class" (Edwards 2015, p.36).

As such, the concept of person-environment fit can be viewed as constraining personal agency within the occupation, unless individuals are socialised "into occupational and organizational norms" (Edwards 2015, p.57).

In terms of racial diversity, Applebaum and Walton (2015, p.7) observe an "issue of cultural disassociation" (particularly for African American public relations practitioners), alongside experiences of being offered fewer career opportunities than Caucasian colleagues. They suggest proxy agency in the form of mentoring is advantageous, whilst noting challenges in retaining multicultural professionals in the occupation.

In the UK, CIPR (2015c) reports that actions have been taken since 2009 in order to:

> "raise awareness of the value of diversity in public relations and identify the barriers facing PR practitioners" (CIPR 2015c, p.2).

However, the recorded percentage of practitioners from "non-white backgrounds" has increased only from seven to nine percent (*ibid*).

PRCA (2016a) finds a generational variation with 79 per cent of practitioners aged 18-24 years being white British, compared to 94 per cent of those aged over 65 years. It is not clear whether the primary constraint on ethnic representation is one of recruitment or retention in the UK. However, a tendency for selecting "people like us" (CIPR, 2015c, p.3), reflects "a homophily thesis which underpins preservation of the status quo" (Pompper 2014, p.81).

This discussion demonstrates how individualisation presumes that people have "some degree of volition and privilege" (Blustein 2013 p.5) in their working lives. Indeed, public relations literature and practice, as noted earlier, has emphasised personal career agency rather than a need for more radical, structural change within the occupation to address demographic inequities.

Whilst there is a growing focus on gender and race within public relations literature and practice, there has been little consideration of other diversity factors, or intersectionality of "multiple, overlapping identities" (Vardeman-Winter and Tindall 2010, p.223). One exception is a book edited by Tindall and Waters (2013) that highlights LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) issues in strategic communications. Here Tindall (2013, p.38) reports negative workplace and career experiences of public relations practitioners including "multiple barriers related to gender, age, and sexuality".

Age, disability, social class, sexual orientation, parenthood and mental health are briefly mentioned in the latest diversity report published by CIPR (2015d). Consideration of diversity is similarly a relatively new development in career studies literature, as will be raised later in this thesis.

In conclusion, this chapter has identified a number of tensions that are inherent in the individualistic career pattern proposed within public relations literature and practice. These include emphasis on trait-factor characteristics of practitioners, which is a traditional male model of career development.

My original primary research investigating female career experiences in the 1970s and 1980s confirms an opportunistic approach primarily drawing on personal agency. This individualised narrative includes an on-going criticism of younger generations and suggests practitioners do not see

themselves as change agents or routinely employ collective agency in support of others' career development.

Whilst women now represent the majority of practitioners, their increased representation in the occupation has not eliminated gender disparities. Despite calls for greater diversity within the occupation, there has been little examination of various demographic characteristics in the public relations literature, particularly from a career perspective. Nevertheless, it is evident that an individualistic focus tends to ignore the effect of structural constraints on career development regardless of practitioners' demographic identity.

Chapter 5. Crafting concepts and patterns into a career framework

5.1. Introduction

The review of public relations scholarship and practice in previous chapters identified "an implicit career system" (Sonnenfeld 1989, p.202) in the occupation. This is predicated primarily on "individualistic career behaviour" (Inkson and Elkin 2008, p.87), with little explicit investigation of factors and/or forces influencing the field's "career-opportunity structure" (Teodoro 2011, p.63) or career strategies employed by practitioners. Consequently this chapter attends to career studies literature to establish an "explanatory framework" for this thesis (Inkson and Elkin 2008, p.70).

Across two sections, the chapter reviews various lines of inquiry arising from contrasting academic perspectives (organizational and vocational scholarship) and different disciplines (predominantly sociology, psychology and organizational studies).

The first section interlocks career concepts from the "tradition of differential psychology" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.63) and sociological thinking that highlights structural forces on career development. The second section examines emerging career patterns developed from an organizational studies perspective in response to a world that is "complex, changing and inherently unpredictable" (Pryor and Bright 2011, p.4). This enables established concepts and emerging patterns to be drawn together as a supportive career framework that informs the construction of an original tapestry paradigm in Chapter 6.

5.2. Interlocking career concepts and evolving issues

Baruch et al. (2015) present career studies as an expanding field that is increasingly complex owing to diversity in theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. In seeking to organise career scholarship across its multidisciplinary boundaries, Peiperl and Gunz (2007) use Whitley's term "fragmented adhocracy" (p.41). This signifies that research in the field is "rather personal, idiosyncratic, and open to varied interpretations" (Whitley 2000, p.xxxii). Moreover, Patton and McMahon (2014, p.xiii) contend that "the emergence of postmodern influences" within the field's theoretical base contributes to a continued lack of "comprehensiveness and coherence".

Debate concerning the expansive nature of career studies scholarship contrasts with the observation of Arthur et al. (1989, p.xvi) that until the late 1970s, the academic field comprised a "loosely connected group of career enthusiasts". Although career concepts and theories had become established and adopted within practice, by the end of the 1980s fresh engagement with a diverse range of social sciences disciplines and organizational scholarship was required (*ibid*). A period of socio-economic uncertainty into the 1990s had impacted careers profoundly (Greenhaus et al. 2000). Indeed, Baruch et al. (2015) observe that:

> "globalization, technological advances, the restructuring of organizations and financial crises" (Baruch et al. 2015, p.4)

challenged the traditional "structured depiction of careers" that is epitomised by "scaling the corporate ladder" (Benko and Weisberg 2007, p.1).

Despite the emergence of new concepts within career studies scholarship in response to the "profound transformation"

of work and careers (Fournier and Bujold 2005, p.415), Lent contends that:

> "time-honored and empirically supported theories of career development continue to be relevant and useful" (Lent 2013, p.2).

Therefore, in order to situate my thesis within the historical development of the career studies field, this section examines lines of inquiry established prior to the publication of the seminal text, *Handbook of Career Theory*, edited by Arthur et al. in 1989.

5.2.1. Matching people to occupations

According to Super, the first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of vocational psychology within which:

> "the occupation was the subject, and the persons in it were the source of data on the occupation. The occupation was studied by examining the characteristics of people engaged in or succeeding in it" (Super 1969, p.2).

This approach (evident in the public relations literature examined in earlier chapters) lacks:

> "a search for elements that underlie the etiology of career behavior, not just its classification" (Herr 1990, p.4).

The distinction is useful in illustrating the need to advance understanding of public relations careers beyond an on-going focus on what the occupation entails.

> Baker and Maguire contend that:

> "modern career development can trace its beginnings to the Industrial Revolution of early twentieth century America" (Baker and Maguire 2006, p.382).

They highlight three causal factors that are also germane to the emergence of public relations at this time as an occupation (Yaxley 2012, 2013b; Yaxley and Ruck 2015):

1. Industrialisation, mechanisation of work and scientific management techniques, led to the development of vocational psychology. Bureaucratic structures within organizations necessitated employment in administrative and hierarchical management roles, as well external services provided by "a new professional middle class" (Baker and Maguire 2006, p.381).

2. Urbanisation arose from agricultural labourers and their families relocating to the "burgeoning industrial cities" (*ibid*) alongside increased immigration to America. These people (including women and children) comprised the working class, who had few rights, poor salaries and inadequate employment conditions.

3. Reform movements advanced "government regulation of industry", vocational guidance as part of compulsory public education, and philanthropic "social and education resources" (*ibid*) to improve the employment prospects of poorer citizens.

It was within this context that Frank Parsons founded the Vocational Bureau in Boston in 1906 (Jones 1994)[51]. Parsons documented his methods of "matching people to occupations" (Savickas 2007, p.80) in a book, *Choosing a Vocation*, published posthumously in 1909. Savickas observes that:

> "Parsons' matching paradigm for guiding occupational choice remains the most widely used approach to career counselling" Savickas (2000, p.56).

Assessment of individual characteristics now involves Internet-based systems (Sampson Jr. and Makela 2014) and data analytics (Davenport et al. 2010). It is further notable that evaluative variables are no longer viewed as "inherent,

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[51] Boston was also where the "nation's first publicity agency", the Publicity Bureau was founded in 1900 (Cutlip 1994 p.10).

unchanging aspects of an individual" (Gosney and Hughes 2016, p.150).

Parsons' work helping individuals to make occupational choices was part of the "progressive movement" (Zytowski 2001, p.62) that sought to improve the lives of the poor. However, development of vocational guidance as a form of applied psychology shifted emphasis onto the interests of employers as:

> "different disciplines coalesced in a generic field of personnel management" (Zickar and Gibby 2014, p.63).

Peiperl and Gunz (2007, p.42) note that this early distinction between individual and organizational "levels of analysis" continues to be evident in careers research.

The individual level of analysis that concerns "the person and his or her work history" (*ibid*) has been discussed in previous chapters, alongside focus on the organizational level in respect of career forms and role theory. However, there has been a lack of research into career systems within public relations from either an organization or occupation perspective. Likewise, there has been limited examination of the "social systems that shape careers" (*ibid*), in the occupation despite the recent "socio-cultural 'turn'" (Edwards and Hodges 2011, p.1) within public relations literature.

Patton and McMahon (2014, p.28) observe Parsons' contribution to career theory in three areas: individuals' self-knowledge, understanding of "different lines of work" and a reasoning approach that links these two areas. Where Parsons favoured qualitative interviews to help the individual decision-making process, the organizational level approach (conceptualised as trait-factor or person-environment fit theory)

drew on positivism and the use of psychometric assessment techniques.[52]

The notion of fit can be found within public relations literature and practice (see earlier chapters), although this has not been related to psychometric testing or career counselling. Berger et al. (2007) do assess traits as "success factors in the field" (p.54) through interviews undertaken for their studies by a New York public relations executive recruitment company. However they rely on quantitative analysis (including coding of open-ended responses) "to bring some parsimony to the interview data" (*ibid,* p.58). Finding considerable diversity within responses, the conclusion is drawn that:

> "factors contributing to success are complex and multidimensional" (Berger et al. 2007*,* p.67).

In on-going studies to identify characteristics of "best or outstanding leadership in public relations", Meng et al. (2012, p.19) aim to support "theoretical development, practical training, education, and future research". However, they omit possible implications for career development of individuals or for the wider occupation. Weaknesses of trait theory are recognised, yet they claim leadership traits are valid when considered alongside other situational factors. Notably, there is no attempt to assess the presence of these factors among research participants, or to determine their relevance for career development.

Nevertheless, a study by Meng and Berger (2013, p.133) conceives a "process of achieving leadership" by public relations practitioners to "progress from the technical level to

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[52] Recent revisions within career counselling reflect constructivist perspectives as considered in the next section

the top management team in the organization"[53]. Rather than drawing on established measures or methods from career studies scholarship, the researchers use an original multilevel conceptual model (based on a Meng et al. 2011 study) and assert the importance for practitioners of "increasing credibility and getting involved in the strategic decision-making process" (Meng and Berger 2013, p.162). Whilst Jones and DeFillippi (1996) observe the value of gaining credibility in relation to career competencies, claims by Meng et al. (2011) that their study offers "useful insights into operationalizing measurement scales" (*ibid,* p.163) for career development are not substantiated with reference to career studies scholarship.

The work of Berger, Meng and colleagues does not refer directly to Parson's original concept of "a matching process between self-knowledge and world of work knowledge" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.58). However, it does contend that individual differences influence the ability of public relations practitioners to attain and enact senior positions, which Super (1969) defines as "applied differential psychology" (p.2).

These studies also evidence the view of Patton and McMahon (2014) that while trait-factor and person-environment theories have not advanced significantly in recent years, they continue to be apparent in research studies. This is also true of the theory of vocational choice, developed in the 1950s by Holland (1959, p.35), which matches six personal "adjustive orientations" to corresponding "occupational environments". This typology of opportunity structure (Holland 1996), along with its evolution into a five-factor model of personality in the 1960s (Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller 2007) and the Minnesota

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[53] The study by Meng et al. (2011, p.23) references "professional expertise" and the hierarchical bureaucratic career form examined in Chapter 3.

Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) developed by Lofquist and Dawis (1975), speak to congruence between a person's characteristics and the requirements of a job or occupation.

Despite lacking any direct linkage to the above theoretical base, public relations literature emphasises the importance of practitioner personality from a number of perspectives, including historically (L'Etang 2004), as a contemporary model of practice (van Ruler 2005), in relation to ethics (Fawkes 2007), and within gender studies (Fitch and Third 2014). Similarly reference to practitioner personality is found frequently in anecdotal career advice (Stimson 2013).

It is notable that although matching theories are presented in career studies literature as a process of "occupational choice" (Greenhaus et al. 2000, p.129), entry into public relations has tended to reflect an opportunistic rather than a planned approach (as noted in previous chapters). Moreover, traditional vocational psychology theory and research has been criticised for its emphasis on career volition (Swanson 2013, p.53). This echoes observations made earlier of the failure within public relations to examine the impact of structural constraints on the individualistic model of careers.

Nevertheless, the concept of self-insight is suggested by Meng et al. (2011, p.7) as important in career development within public relations, and is explained as awareness by practitioners of their own capabilities and their understanding of "public relations environments". Arguably, the diversity of practice within public relations and its lack of definitional clarity complicate this process. Indeed, drawing on research, Bowen concludes that:

> "The public relations profession is doing a lax job in communicating its core responsibilities and activities to new and potential university majors" (Bowen 2003, p.199).

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This suggests a problem for the occupation at this initial point of career decision-making. However, Swanson (2013) argues against the "outdated notion of a single decision early in life" (p.50), indicating that career choice is a "developmental process that evolves over time" (Greenhaus et al. 2000, p.131).

5.2.2. Lifelong process of career decision-making

The vocational psychology perspective of careers includes a number of development theories that are complementary to matching models according to Patton and McMahon (2014). They explain that these life-span models originated in the 1950s and had become widely accepted within two decades. The first theory of occupational choice, developed by economist and Columbia University professor, Eli Ginzberg[54] (1952), proposed an irreversible decision-making process culminating in early adulthood (19 to 21 years of age). This indicates the post-education period evident in public relations initiatives such as PRCA apprenticeships and the Taylor Bennett Foundation[55].

The transition between education and work in the UK is described by Hodkinson (1998, p.89–90) as a "complex situation", highlighting tensions between an emphasis on "meaningful individual choice" and the "market environment" in which decision-making occurs. Referring to government literature, Hodkinson (1998, p.91) cites a view that making the "right choice places the person on the right ladder", from which "he or she then progresses upwards, in a relatively straightforward and predictable manner", unless:

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[54] Ginzberg had advised President Franklin D. Roosevelt on manpower problems concerning military personnel in the second world war (Worth 2002)

[55] The Taylor Bennett Foundation (2016) is a ten-week work-based programme of personal development training created to help ethnic minority graduates enter the UK public relations industry (PR Week 2015b).

> "a staging post is reached where a choice of further ladders exists, or if a young person 'falls off' a ladder, because an 'incorrect' decision was made" (Hodkinson 1998, p.91).

He asserts that "the actual choice process is seldom discussed in the literature" (*ibid*) as it is assumed that career decision-making is an inherently rational process.

A century after Parson's originated trait theory and over fifty years since Ginzberg innovated occupational choice theory, their ideas could be seen as driving British government policy and official career guidance. This perspective is clear in a revision of Ginzberg's theory that argues:

> "occupational choice is a lifelong process of decision-making in which the individual seeks to find the optimal fit between his career preparation and goals and the realities of the world of work" (Ginzberg 1972, p.172).

However, Ginzberg (*ibid*) observes that structural constraints restrict the career options of women and racial minority groups. For example, he states that:

> "because the employment of their husbands took precedence over their own, many women modified their career objectives" (Ginzberg 1972, p.172).

Such societal expectations were noted above in relation to my study of women entering public relations in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s.

Initial career development theories were predicated on notions of mid-twentieth century US male experiences as typified in a hierarchal ladder metaphor (Inkson 2004a). Allowing that "careers are embedded in the social landscape of a particular place and time" (Sullivan and Crocitto 2007, p.283), the contextual focus within these theories on the "typical post-World War II professional" clearly lacks relevance for contemporary careers. This limitation can be seen in the observation by Hodkinson (1998) that young people's career

opportunities in Britain are restricted by their gender, ethnic origin and geographical location. Moreover he notes that social class affects attainment of post-school qualifications, security of employment and career trajectory (*ibid*). It can be seen therefore, that consideration of macro (societal) factors challenges the emphasis in person-environment fit models solely on micro (individual) and meso (organizational/occupational) influences on career development.

Patton and McMahon (2014) claim that Ginzberg's work was prescient in recognising that career decision-making is influenced by matters beyond the control of individuals. Further, Cytrynbaum and Crites observe that an individual's lifelong career adjustment occurs:

> "against a contextual background of such factors as the general cultural and society *milieu*, [*and*] organizational climate" (Cytrynbaum and Crites 1989, p.66).

Incorporation of contextual, demographic and socioeconomic factors can be found in career theories that draw on psychological studies of adult development over the lifespan (Sullivan and Crocitto 2007). Rather than focusing career adjustment and decision-making on initial or subsequent points of transition, lifespan models present a "longitudinal or chronological" (Hartung 2013, p.83) perspective.

Dalton (1989) connects sociological models that identify the effect of cultural constraints (such as social class) to vocational development work that uses "the self-concept as the construct for examining career development" (p.91). Here, individuals are seen as progressing through a series of life-stages during which they can be conceived either as forced to adapt to the needs of society, or as engaged in forming their identity as a result of choices and interactions within the broader environment.

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This second perspective suggests a systematic ordered process of psychosocial development (Greenhaus et al. 2000). Levinson et al. (1976) present a life structure model comprising a sequence of nine eras from the ages of 17 to 65, whereby each:

> "has its own biopsychosocial character, and each makes its distinctive contribution to the whole" (Levinson 1986, p.5).

The later point echoes the findings of Broughton (1943) that experienced public relations practitioners saw connections between their current employment and earlier career experiences.[56] Further, Levinson contends that:

> "each individual life structure progresses through the successive periods in its own unique way, influenced by a multiplicity of specific biological, psychological, and social conditions" (Levinson 1986, p.12–13).

Consequently, Levinson allows for a level of flexibility and diversity that can be found in the concepts of *equifinality* and *multifinality* that were proposed previously in this thesis as applicable to careers within public relations. However, his model does not directly reference organizational or occupational structures that may formalise and enable or constrain career development.

5.2.3. Careers as multi-dimensional and dynamic

Most career studies texts provide a detailed review of career development theories and it is not the intention of this thesis to revisit these. Instead, the influential work of Donald Super will be used to examine conceptualisation of career development as a dynamic process (Moore et al. 2007).

Super published his first paper, 'Occupational level and job satisfaction'*,* in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* in 1939,

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[56]   Discussed in Chapter 2.

which Savickas (1994) contends remained relevant over half a century later. The quantitative study correlated job satisfaction with upward career movement. However the vast majority of his research participants did not evidence "social or occupational mobility" (Super 1939, p.553) and any aspiration to work at higher levels appeared to be a cause of career dissatisfaction.

Comparison can be made with a study undertaken by Broom and Dozier (1986) among members of the Public Relations Society of America who had participated previously in a survey in 1979. It was anticipated that advancing from a technical to a managerial role would offer the greatest increase in job satisfaction. However, that was found among technical staff who remained at the same level, ahead of those moving into management roles; whom Broom and Dozier conclude were not satisfied in a technical role. They also note that the:

> "technician-to-manager career ladder appears to work best for men" (Broom and Dozier 1986, p.55).

This implies that women were satisfied with lower level work. Moreover, it contrasts with the personal agency reported by the female participants in my research study (see previous chapter).

Broom and Dozier do not reference Super's earlier study or any later vocational or careers literature. Indeed, it is notable that the extensive body of work concerning public relations role theory[57] does not examine lifespan models despite presenting a chronological career pattern in the form of the technician-manager typology.

Super's (1953) subsequent theory of vocational development responded to an observation by Ginzberg that the field lacked sufficient theoretical underpinning for the guidance

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[57]   Referenced in Chapter 3.

being given by vocational counsellors. His work comprises a series of propositions that Patton and McMahon (2014) argue supplements differential psychology with reference to developmental psychology, social learning and phenomenology. They state that this inter-disciplinary approach "reinforces the importance of Super's work in highlighting the need for integration" (*ibid* p.70).

At the heart of Super's work is "the self-concept as the construct for examining career development" (Dalton 1989, p.91). Individuals are viewed as developing "conceptions of self in relation to career choice and adjustment" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.71) as they progress through a series of career stages. This perspective influenced the development of British career education and counselling in the 1970s (Watts 2001). In turn, during Super's three–year residence in the UK as a fellow at the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) in Cambridge from 1976, research studies provided empirical evidence of the limitations of US-originated psychometric tests. These were argued to favour a culturally specific view of individualistic "linear career progression based on upward mobility" (*ibid*, p.81). In contrast, academic interest within the UK offered greater "sociological awareness" of "the constraints of social structure" (*ibid*) on careers as examined later in this section.

Whilst in the UK, Super drew on his earlier work to develop the *Life-Span, Life-Space Approach to Career Development*. Published in 1980, this features a *Life-Career Rainbow* model that connects five life stages of career development (growth, exploration, established, maintenance and disengagement) and nine life roles (child, student, leisurite,

citizen, worker[58], spouse, homemaker, parent and pensioner).
The model helped to:

> "conceptualize multidimensional careers, the temporal
> involvement in, and the emotional commitment to, each
> role" (Super 1980 p.282).

It also accounts for the "fluctuating temporal importance of each
role" (*ibid)* whereby the amount of life space available for a role
expands or contracts in relation to commitment required for
other roles. The *Life-Career Rainbow* model is not prescriptive
and Super (1980, p.284) recognises that roles are not
necessarily gendered, people may not play all roles in their
lifetime, and "the sequence of the initiation and abandoning of
roles may differ".

The model has relevance for examining career strategies
in public relations as Super's focus is on "decision points",
where "significant changes" (Super 1980, p.291), "branching"
(p.293) or adjustments are required. Additionally, within each
"maxicycle" life stage (*ibid*, p.290), individuals experience
"minicycles" (Swanson 2013, p.53) when they reflect upon their
careers within the context of commitment to, or decision-making
regarding, other roles. This highlights the importance of work-
life balance, which recent research identifies as a multi-level
cultural issue within public relations (Shen et al. 2015); although
it did not provide a career studies perspective. Likewise Super's
iterative stance resembles a reflective, agile planning model
(van Ruler 2015), although this approach has not been
examined or applied within careers scholarship.

Using a theatrical metaphor (Inkson 2004a), Super (1980,
p.284) presents the community, school (college/university),
home and workplace as four "principal theaters" where the life

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[58]   Super (1980) explains that the role of worker includes the
        unemployed worker and the non-worker.

roles are enacted, and conflict may occur. I suggest that a contemporary perspective of the spatial influence on career strategies should include the online environment as an additional virtual theatre accessed via one of the other locations. This addition is relevant for public relations practitioners given, for example, their participation in social networks (Bridgen 2013a).

The *Life-Career Rainbow* model has significance for a number of concepts, including relational agency and career complexity, which are developed as central threads in this thesis. Another central thread relates to consideration of age, which Super associates with role behaviour. An example is how enacting the role of a child may have career implications for older workers with caring responsibilities for elderly parents (Earl et al. 2015). Age is aligned in the *Life-Career Rainbow* to the five life stages with growth evident between 4 to 13 years of age, exploration from 14 to 24 years, establishment spanning 25 to 44 years old, maintenance happening between 45 and 65 and disengagement occurring over the age of 65 or during retirement transition (Swanson 2013). Individuals are considered to develop career maturity over time and require career adaptability to manage transitions between the stages. They therefore:

> "construct their careers in a continuing self-evaluation within their social context" (Swanson 2013, p.54).

Patton and McMahon (2014) envision personal awareness and interest in careers develops in the growth stage, with initial vocational goals and occupational selection evolving in the exploration stage, and stabilisation and consolidation occurring between securing initial employment and career progression in the establishment stage. A process of re-evaluation may see the individual instigate a change of organization or occupation,

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which would result in a minicycle of exploration and establishment (*ibid*). The thesis developed in earlier chapters proposes considerable variety in career development within the occupation. Whilst Super's adaptive developmental model might have some relevance for public relations careers, it has not been applied to the field.

Super (1980) does not contend that lifelong career trajectories are hierarchical in form. Indeed, career diversity is evident in his observation that some people may pursue multi-occupational careers, or occupy multiple worker positions simultaneously. The overlap between independent public relations practice and freelance journalism has already been noted as an example of this (Koch and Obermaier 2014).

In terms of contemporary careers, Sullivan and Crocitto (2007, p.290) argue that younger generations[59] are more likely to pursue "alternative career paths" rather than the "linear upward movement" expected of Super's research population. This may apply in public relations given the age profile of British practitioners (PRCA 2016).

Mid-career reflection may occur even within a traditional bureaucratic career form as a result of career "plateauing" (Ference et al. 1977, p.602). This happens when the person is seen as performing effectively but not offered career development opportunities, or they may be viewed as problematic owing to poor performance or limited future potential. Those in the former group may be organizationally plateaued due to a lack of opportunities or desire to move them, or personally plateaued if they are regarded as deficient in

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[59] Sullivan and Crocitto (2007) identify Super's research population as Baby Boomers, who Reisenwitz and Iyer (2009) classify as those born between 1946-1964. They note younger demographic groups are termed Generation X (born between 1965-1976) and Generation Y (born between 1977-1988).

ability or desire for a higher level position (*ibid)*. In relation to Super's model, plateaued employees may decide to alter their life-work balance in favour of non-work roles, which Stout et al. (1988) suggest may apply similarly to those who lose out in "tournament mobility" contests (Rosenbaum 1979, p.220).

Indeed, Stout et al. (1988) observe that flatter organizational structures and other work changes mean that plateauing is a common occurrence. Additionally plateauing may result from someone reaching the top of a role performance curve, personality conflicts or organizational restructuring. Moreover, their research identifies that plateauing leads to a reduction in organizational commitment and career re-evaluation. Those in such a position become less interested in professional development to improve performance and focus more on:

> "humanistic identification with co-workers and, in the case of salespeople, with customers" (Stout et al. 1988*,* p.88).

Within public relations, this latter point may stimulate career moves between in-house and agency, or into independent practice, as intimated in Chapter 3.

Regardless of whether or not people have pursued additional opportunities in their careers, Savickas (2002) argues that they reach a point where they assess the remainder of their working lives and seek stability. He observes that this normally occurs "during midlife" (*ibid,* p.179) when security is prioritised over further career advancement. He terms this the management stage (in preference to Super's maintenance stage).

Lastly, Patton and McMahon (2014) contend that individuals plan for retirement during a disengagement stage, for example by reducing their workload. However, Super (1980) observes that people may pursue vocational and avocational

activities post-retirement. Similarly, Hartung argues that further minicycles of exploration may be prompted by:

> "increased life expectancies, early retirement options, and cost-of-living concerns" (Hartung 2013, p.96).

None of the above issues relating to Super's *Life-Span, Life-Space approach* has been researched explicitly in relation to public relations career strategies in the literature. Consequently they are considered in formulating the primary research methodology later in this thesis.

5.2.4. Addressing opportunity structures

Watts (2001) observes that sociologists influenced the history of career scholarship in Britain, whereas psychologists were prevalent in the US career studies field. For example, Ken Roberts (1968) challenged the individualistic emphasis within the applied differential psychology approach when arguing, "different attainments can be accounted for in terms of differential opportunity structures" (*ibid,* p.177).

In particular, Roberts (1968) observes disparity within bureaucratic career structures. He claims that progressive rewards encourage employment inertia among those in white-collar positions. In contrast, the need for other workers to make frequent job changes to secure career benefits is viewed as them "making a realistic adjustment to the job opportunity structure" (*ibid,* p.178).

This reflects previous discussion in this thesis regarding inequity of career opportunity within organizations and churn within public relations employment. For example, practitioners in junior or technical positions may be expected to job hop until they are deemed to have gained sufficient experience to secure management positions where financial and status rewards are accrued. Although, as noted in Chapter 3, public relations

specialists may encounter encroachment when the opportunity structure favours those from other disciplinary backgrounds.

Roberts (1968, p.180) argues that it is important to understand how social context affects "occupational role allocation and socialisation". This is evident in his claim that work has a greater "central psychological significance" for men than for women (*ibid*), which would seem to reflect the historic, gendered expectations considered above.

More recently, Roberts restates that:

> "opportunity structures are formed primarily by the inter-relationships between family backgrounds, education, labour market processes and employers' recruitment practices" (Roberts 2009, p.355).

Furthermore, he observes that while:

> "each of these structuring agents has changed over time … their combined predictive power is undiminished" (Roberts 2009, p.355).

These points connect to discussion in the previous chapter regarding the continuing lack of diversity in public relations.

Barley (1989, p.59) offers a contrasting interpretation whereby the structural nature of employment stimulates "long-term social changes", which in turn may challenge existing structural forms and stimulate new ones. He calls for career theory to be situated "at the very vanguard of organization studies" (*ibid*, p.60) through reconnection to pioneering life history research developed in the early twentieth century at the Chicago School of Sociology. This heritage relates to the work of Everett C Hughes who conducted ethnographic studies into "the careers of individuals in a wide variety of occupations and organizations" (*ibid*, p.45). Hughes looked at:

> "structural forces that constrain and shape human behavior, while remaining attuned to how individuals continually create the meaning and norms within those institutions" (Moore et al. 2007, p.19).

From this perspective, there is a need to examine how public relations practitioners make sense of their careers within the occupation's opportunity structure, and how they may be responding to a changing career context.

Hughes' work is positioned by Helmes-Hayes (1998 p.633) as "interpretive institutional ecology", owing to his focus on institutions (specifically occupations) and human ecology (the adaptive relationship between people and their structural environment). Pieczka and L'Etang (2001) refer to Hughes in their examination of public relations and professionalism where they present his theoretical approach as social interaction. This is one of two concepts that Hughes applied to:

> "a variety of phenomena at what we now call micro-, meso- and macro-levels of analysis" (Helmes-Hayes 1998, p.640).

Helmes-Hayes (*ibid*) argues that this positioning enabled Hughes to "capture in as much depth and breadth as possible" the processes operating at each of these levels in his research. Further, she says it accounts for how people interpret and modify structural factors as individuals and collectives. The second concept that Helmes-Hayes identifies within Hughes' work is "going concern" (p.638). This signifies how Hughes views the necessity of adjustment over time. Each of these aspects offers a central thread for this thesis as developed further in the next chapter.

In summary, this section has established how, in just over half a century, a number of career concepts were established that involved matching people to occupations, recognising a lifelong process of career decision-making and conceiving of careers as multi-dimensional and dynamic. The resilience of these ideas tends to ignore the impact of structural barriers to equal opportunity and fails to engage to any great extent with

the changing societal context of work. However, Gunz and Peiperl (2007, p.5) contend that reconnecting with Hughes' work led to a "ferment of activity in the mid-1970s" within the career studies field. Indeed, Lawrence et al. (2015, p.435) argue that it offered a "new vision for career research".

At the start of the 1980s, Sonnenfeld and Kotter (1982, p.19) note that the conceptual trend away from "a relatively static to a relatively dynamic theory" reflected a maturation of the field, whilst calling for greater integration of existing career theories. Lawrence et al. (2015) claim that the subsequent emergence of an interdisciplinary approach developed by a new group of scholars led to publication of the landmark text, *Handbook of Career Theory* in 1989. Undoubtedly this comprehensive book played a pivotal role in career studies at a time when traditional conceptions of work and career were "under attack" (Arthur et al. 1989, p.10).

5.3. Interpreting contemporary career patterns

Publication of the *Handbook of Career Theory* in 1989 acts as a nexus between traditional career theory and emerging concepts. Established ideas were developed when the prevailing view was that:

> "career paths were relatively stable and workers could expect to stay within one career or even with one employer throughout their working lives" (Severy 2008, p.268).

In contrast, emerging theories respond to a world that is "complex, changing and inherently unpredictable" (Pryor and Bright 2011, p.4). Hence, this section reviews how the conceptual foundations established by vocational psychologists and sociologists were developed within the field of organizational studies. It also seeks to interpret "the profusion

of concepts" that flourished since the 1990s (Baruch et al. 2015, p.4) as contemporary career patterns.

5.3.1. Organizational career development

Arthur et al. (1989) position their book within the context of the emergence in the 1970s of a "'field' of careers in organization and management studies" (p.xv). Although such work drew on the existing knowledge base from within psychology and sociology, it marked a shift to studying careers from an organizational perspective.

The 1970s are called "catalytic" by Derr and Briscoe (2007, p.528), who observe that a collegiate approach among scholars resulted in innovation, development of new theories and formation of a careers specialism within the Academy of Management (AOM). The Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was central to this movement thanks to "a group of four exceptional scholars" (Arthur 1997, p.2): Edgar Schein, an industrial psychologist, sociologist John Van Maanen, psychologist Douglas Hall and social psychologist Lotte Bailyn[60]. Their work led to three influential books[61] published between 1976 and 1978 (Moore et al. 2007), and along with Don Super, the MIT scholars are acknowledged by Arthur et al. (1989) for their intellectual contribution.

The establishment of a community of career studies scholars working at MIT, Harvard and other US universities led

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[60] Few female scholars appear in early careers studies literature. Lotte Bailyn, who obtained her PhD at Harvard in 1956 reports not attaining a "tenure track job until 1972" when she says "universities and law schools were beginning to look for women and found them in their peripheries" (Moore 2015 p.389).

[61] The three books are: 'Careers in organizations' (Hall 1976), 'Organizational careers (Van Maanen 1977) and 'Career dynamics: matching individual and organizational needs' (Schein 1978).

to the formation of a Careers Interest Group within the AOM in 1980 (Derr and Briscoe 2007). As already discussed, a link between this community and British career scholarship was enabled through Super at this time.

Arthur (1997, p.3) states that the inclusion of "organization(al)" in the titles of the seminal MIT books indicated a view that "careers should be studied within the boundaries of a single organization". He connects "institutional – organizational or societal – interpretations" of someone's career, termed *objective,* with the *subjective* career perspective that:

> "refers generally to the individual's own interpretation of his or her career situation" (Arthur 1997, p.3).

Where public relations literature has tended to concentrate on an individualistic approach to careers, Peiperl and Gunz (2007, p.43) argue that the subjective-objective "duality" is common within career scholarship. Indeed, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) affirm the impact of the organization on subjective career experiences when observing that:

> "social research has yet to discover a work setting that leaves people unmarked by their participation" (Van Maanen and Schein 1979, p.209).

The organizational studies perspective of careers is seen in Schein's (1974, p.5) development of a "taxonomy of career paths" that emphasises:

> "both individual and societal definitions of what is a worthwhile set of activities to pursue throughout a lifetime" (Schein 1974, p.6).

In "matching people not to occupations but to organizations" (Inkson 2007, p.112), Schein's aim was to go beyond the objective expectations inherent in a job title to incorporate the post holder's subjective perspective of their position using the

concept of career anchors. A career is conceived as "anchored in a set of job descriptions and organizational norms" as well as being:

> "anchored in a set of needs and motives which the career occupant is attempting to fulfil" (Schein 1974, p.6*).*

This linkage has not been examined specifically in respect of careers in public relations. However, commitment to develop a global capabilities framework and the dominant manager-technician dichotomy within the occupation relate directly to two of Schein's characteristic career anchors[62] (shown in Table 1).

Managerial competence	Anchored to the status of levels of responsibility. Job movers seek to "express the combination of interpersonal, analytical and emotional talents" (Schein 1974, p.8)
Technical-functional competence	Anchored to the "technical field or functional area" (*ibid*) whereby job movers seek to "maximise their opportunity to remain challenged" (Dalton 1989, p.93).
Security	Anchored to a particular organization or personal factors such as location, life-stage, family obligations, incremental pay scales or community commitments; whereby career development is subjugated to a need for stability.
Creativity	Anchored to a need for personal expression through creation of something new, such as a business or project, with which an individual may be identified; reflecting the entrepreneurial career form discussed in Chapter 3.
Autonomy and independence	Anchored to a need for the freedom that is commonly found outside organizations; related to freelance or consultancy work.

Table 1.   Characteristic career anchors (Schein 1974)

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[62]   Three further anchors were added to the model in the 1980s: service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge and lifestyle (Schein 1996).

Schein (1974, p.12) argues that one anchor will be a "guiding force" in someone's career. However, Dalton (1989, p.93) cautions that the typology derives from a study of highly educated participants able to "develop careers consistent with their needs and values".

Schein's research population comprised all male graduates of the Sloan School of Management, initially interviewed between 1961-1963 and followed up a decade later. Nevertheless, within this fairly homogenous sample, Schein's observations indicate that career trajectories may involve *multifinality* (considered previously) in that:

> "formal titles or career paths which are overtly similar may reflect important differences in what the career occupants are anchored to" (Schein 1974, p.13).

Two career trajectories can be identified among people anchored to seeking managerial responsibility: hierarchical progress within large organizations or a move to a more senior role in a smaller organization. Discussion earlier in this thesis reveals that both occur within public relations practice. Progression to the highest levels in organizations involves being "able to adapt to the various sub-cultures" (Schein 2004, p.270). This has relevance for public relations specialists who take on a breadth of responsibilities as board-level communication directors (Gregory 2011a). As well as being anchored to attaining greater responsibility, the need for financial or other personal stability may encourage pursuit of a more senior appointment. However, Schein (2004) proposes that those favouring the functional/technical anchor might refuse promotion if it involved giving up their specialism.

Career anchors have been studied widely with Guest and Sturges (2007) identifying consistency in proclivity over time. Lauzen (1992, p.77) mentions career anchors in relation to

"manager role aspirations" of public relations practitioners, whereby:

> "psychological predisposition and behavioural skills are necessary antecedents to the enactment of the manager role" (Lauzen 1992, p.77).

Nevertheless, the relevance of career anchors "within a contemporary working population" has been questioned (Guest and Sturges 2007, p.316), despite Schein's (1996, p.86) assertion that the twenty-first century offers "opportunities for all anchor types".

Career anchors propose "an individual differences model" (Dalton 1989, p.92) and echo Super's focus on self-concept. Schein (1971) further considers the influence of the organization on the individual in a cone-shaped conceptual model. This presents career movement in three dimensions: vertical, radial and circumferential, corresponding to rank/level, centrality (power) within an organization and functional change respectively. The dominant narrative within public relations literature and practice is one of upward progression to a pinnacle where the chief communications officer assumes a central position of power. This is located:

> "at C-Level (Executive Board) or close to it (the so-called 'marzipan layer' of the corporation)" (Watson and Sreedharan 2010, p.1).

However, there is little consideration within the field of the potential for, or career desirability of, circumferential movement into other disciplines, or indeed vertical or radial progression beyond senior public relations management positions. Moss (2011a) does observe that a lack of broad experience limits the advancement of public relations practitioners:

> "In part, at least, the explanation for the relatively small number of practitioners who appear to work as recognised members of the top management team may lie in the

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typical background and knowledge and skills profile of the majority of senior practitioners, who may often lack the type of financial and broader business knowledge and experience expected of top management decision-makers" (Moss 2011a, p.37).

The on-going relevance of Schein's model is questioned by Chudzikowski et al. (2008, p.3) who argue that it reflects assumptions of organizations as being "primarily responsible for the entire career management". In contrast, their research found an increasing frequency of career transitions across each of Schein's dimensions within contemporary careers. Further, they note that whilst vertical advancement continues to be seen as a measure of success, it no longer delivers the automatic financial rewards enjoyed by previous generations. They conclude that flatter organizational structures require individuals to make job changes:

> "more often to keep employable, flexible, and to keep up their market value but without reaching more objective and subjective career success"(Chudzikowski et al 2008, p.13).

Indeed, career development is most likely to involve a spiral move, that requires "simultaneous changes of status and function" (Nicholson and West 1989, p.190), or inter-organizational job-hopping (Kanter 1989a)[63]. Spiral movement has implications for those who wish to retain a specialist focus within public relations and progress hierarchically, as a consequence of:

> "less evidence for the existence of orderly patterns of choice and development toward well-defined goals than there is for a model of careers as made up of changing responses to unfolding opportunities" (Nicholson and West 1989, p.190).

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[63] These strategies may be indicative of an entrepreneurial or professional form of career, as discussed in Chapter 3.

This thinking can be seen to reflect the fluidity of career development that my thesis argues is inherent within public relations.

Sonnenfeld (1989, p.215) identifies public relations as an example of an occupation that adopts a "recruitment" model of career management, whereby skilled individuals "with transferrable talents" are appointed from outside the organization, rather than developed internally. This approach is viewed by Arthur et al. (1989, p.xvi) as reflecting a change to careers that are negotiated individually and not "preordained by high-level 'human resource planners'".

Hence, the lack of a structured career form within public relations might be viewed positively as enabling opportunism through the emphasis on an individualistic career system. Indeed, it is notable that significant expansion of public relations occurred at a time of challenge to the conceptualisation of careers as ordered, predictable and organizationally-managed (Arthur et al. 1989).

5.3.2. Boundaryless, protean and multidirectional patterns

Since 1990, "global macro-economic and social forces" (Dickman and Baruch 2011, p.14) have affected the "nature of the employment relationship and the shape of organizational career paths" (Slay and Taylor 2007, p.377). Moreover, recognition of careers as "multidirectional, dynamic and fluid" (Baruch 2004, p.59) has stimulated diversity in disciplinary approaches and a substantial increase in the number of concepts evident within the career studies field. Indeed, Baruch et al. (2015) claim that the result is "confusion and a sense of lack of direction" (p.4).

It is not the intention of this thesis to examine debate regarding the future direction of the "career research community" (*ibid,* p.5), nor to engage with the full scope of

scholarship or practice in the field. Instead, a study undertaken by Baruch et al. (2015, p.8) to identify conceptual terms "that characterized career scholarship between 1990-2012" is used to provide a "focus on career patterns"[64] and the "changes that have taken place in the field of career studies".

According to Baruch et al. (2015 p.10) the mid-1990s offered a "turning point" for "contemporary career patterns" with a notable emphasis on concepts relating to:

> "individuals' actions to do with managing their careers, for example, career construction, exploration or resilience" (Baruch et al. 2015 p.10).

A number of concepts already appraised in this chapter are observed to have on-going relevance, notably: anchors, plateau, stage/phase, adaptability, systems and objective/subjective. Additional terms are selected for examination in this thesis as they enable interpretation of contemporary career patterns, specifically: boundaryless, protean, multidirectional, portfolio, kaleidoscope, nomadic and customised.

Surprisingly, Baruch et al. (2015) did not find "terms in use that reflect the negative side" (p.14) of on-going societal and organizational changes that affect careers. It is also notable that their work fails to report on the limited consideration of digital developments within career studies literature. For example, Khapova et al. (2007, p.124-125) mention the relevance of the Internet for psychological, socio-psychological and sociological

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64 The term pattern is used in a variety of ways within career literature commonly without formal definition. Pryor and Bright (2011) observe "the centrality of pattern processing in human thinking" (p.54), whilst Inkson (2004b) argues that "careers are not isolated or random events but are connected with each other in patterns that evolve over time" (p.72). In this section, a selection of career concepts are examined in order to "compare, contrast and synthesize patterns" (Pryor and Bright 2011, p.52) within them.

perspectives of careers. Yet they mention briefly only a few concepts including "online personae", collaboration, "virtual communication", globalisation and "a wider marketplace for expertise". Given the significance of technological developments within public relations (Yaxley 2016b), this aspect is considered further below.

The common denominator across the terminology identified by Baruch et al. (2015) is a shift from:

> "pre-ordained and linear development to perpetually changing career paths and possibilities" (Littleton et al. 2000, p.101).

Indeed, Arthur and Rousseau (1996, p.3) introduced the "new employment principle" of a boundaryless career to contrast with "the 'bounded', or organizational, career" that was "the dominant employment form through the mid-1980s". They argue that the established hierarchical career pattern has an inherent logic that is hard to replace, but suggest that the notion of vertical progression is avoided when defining a career as "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al. 1989, p.8).

A boundaryless career reflects a pattern of "mobility across physical and psychological boundaries" (Sullivan and Arthur 2006, p.20). However, Verbruggen et al. (2015) note that research has concentrated predominantly on physical job moves between multiple organizations. Their discussion of psychological mobility highlights the importance of attitudes towards establishing new relationships and the inclination to make career transitions. This relates to the requirement within boundaryless careers for individuals to derive meaning "from outside the present employer" (Arthur and Rousseau 1996, p.6), develop personal networks and manage their own careers.

Moreover, the boundaryless concept envisages that individuals are no longer reliant on "traditional organizational career arrangements" (Arthur et al. 1989, p.6). Indeed, Inkson (2007) suggests this career pattern meets the needs of organizations for greater flexibility. As such, change may be imposed through redundancies or restructuring (Baruch 2006), "job automation via technology" (Morgan and Kunkel 2016 p.143) or the creation of alternatives to full-time employment, including:

> "part-time work, shift work, temporary work, contract work, project work, telecommuting, moonlighting, self-employment, and informal arranged jobs" (Inkson 2007, p.138).

The lack of stability within boundaryless careers can cause "career-related stress" (Baruch 2006, p.128), whilst structural constraints on contractual terms of employment may limit the advantages of career flexibility (Inkson 2007). Given the young age profile with public relations in the UK (PRCA 2016), many practitioners may never have experienced traditional organization managed careers and hence the boundaryless pattern may reflect their career expectations (McDonald and Hite 2008).

Indeed, those who welcome flexibility may enact a protean pattern, a term first used by Hall (2004) in 1976 to reflect self-determined "career orientation" (p.1). This empowers those who have a "strong internal 'compass'" (*ibid* p.3) who are "always open to new possibilities" (p.6). Where the boundaryless concept requires "career resilience" (Baruch 2006, p.128), Hall highlights adaptability and self-awareness as "metacompetencies" (2004, p.6) that favour "independent protean careers" (Hall 2002, p.311). The protean pattern may encourage adoption of the entrepreneurial career form as discussed in Chapter 3.

Similarly, Baruch (2004) argues that "blurring of boundaries in many facets of life" (p.58) results in careers that reflect a multidirectional pattern. He notes that people may take "a sideway move, change of direction, of organization or inspiration" (*ibid*, p.61) in order to enhance their employability rather than simply to secure employment. Here, the role of the organization is seen in managing "working time patterns" rather than "filling internal vacancies", and "applying career empowerment" instead of supporting hierarchical career progression (*ibid,* p.66). Cascio (2007), however, suggests increased flexibility means that organizations are faced with encroachment of personal activities into work time. The reverse is also increasingly common as Bridgen (2011) finds in relation to use of social media by public relations practitioners.

The boundaryless, protean and multidirectional career patterns have not been studied specifically in relation to public relations careers. However, earlier discussion suggests their flexibility is compatible with the fluidity of the field. Further, the inherent uncertainty within such patterns highlights concerns about career volatility, individual volition and opportunity structures. These matters have been noted earlier in this thesis.

5.3.3. Portfolio, kaleidoscopic and nomadic patterns

Boundaryless, protean and multidirectional patterns present an open, and dynamic "free agent" (Baruch 2004, p.70) perspective of career development. In comparison, Inkson (2007, p.142) purports that contemporary "careers consist of fragments". These comprise what Handy (1989, p.146) refers to as a "work portfolio" encompassing salaried or independent assignments, alongside non-paid work (including leisure, family commitments, education, business development or volunteerism). This perspective of careers is under-examined in relation to public relations.

A portfolio career pattern recognises that work is not a central life component for everyone. Guest and Sturges (2007, p.321) relate this situation to the "disengagement" of those without promotional prospects, people with family commitments, those who "prefer to live for the present" or for whom "work was marginal to their lives".

Likewise, Mainiero and Sullivan (2005, p.108) suggest a kaleidoscopic model for women who face "career interruptions, employment gaps, top-outs, opt-outs" and have long reflected a boundaryless approach to careers "out of necessity". Their research observes "self-crafted careers" (*ibid,* p.109) where women purposefully "**blend** their work and nonwork lives" and create "changing patterns" by:

> "rotating different aspects of their lives to arrange their roles and relationships in new ways" *(*Mainiero and Sullivan 2005*, p.111).

These career strategies are adopted to accommodate personal circumstances or as a response to structural barriers. In presenting the concept of kaleidoscope careers, Mainiero and Sullivan state:

> "In sharp contrast to men, the career histories of women are ***relational***. Their career decisions were normally part of a larger and intricate web of interconnected issues, people and aspects that had to come together in a delicately balanced package" (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005, p.109).

My research with women starting their careers in public relations in the 1970s/1980s (see Chapter 4) did not observe this relational pattern explicitly. Moreover, the participants' indicated purposeful agentic self-efficacy (Bandura 1977), which again runs counter to gendered expectations (Patton and McMahon 2014).

Another female perspective is offered by Bailyn (1983, p.7) who draws on her own experience as a mother to propose

a pattern of personal career agency that involves "slow burn" progression. This contrasts with the traditional "early high-energy start" for careers that might typically lead to a mid-career plateau (Bailyn 2004, p.1517).

Whilst Bailyn (*ibid*, p.1518) argues that her pattern has relevance for many women, she warns of discrimination when "youth is valued over age". This may relate to public relations given its young age profile. Moreover, it raises the issue of social identity intersectionality as discussed in Chapter 4. Cockburn (1989, p.215) similarly highlights resistance to ensuring equality of opportunity and notes the multiplicity of "disadvantage in employment". In contemporary careers, this includes constraints affecting men and women in achieving a "dual focus on career and family" (Westring et al. 2015, p.86).

Thomas (1989) says one means of addressing "constrained opportunities" (p.367) is to adopt a "tourism" (p.369) career approach, "involving movement between jobs at a given skill level" *(ibid).* This reflects Roberts' (1968) earlier observation of frequent job changes among non-skilled and blue-collar workers. The high level of churn noted previously in respect of employment within consultancies may encourage this pattern within public relations careers. However, it does not directly address structural career constraints.

Another career pattern that is noted by Thomas (1989, p.372) concerns "skilled craftsmen" who participate in an occupational "community already stratified internally along lines of prowess". This involves "moving from the periphery to the centre of an occupation" on the basis of "acquisition and utilization of knowledge, experience and social capital" (Guest and Sturges 2007, p.317). Within public relations, engagement through professional bodies or academia may offer mobility

through such an "escape route" *(ibid,* p.320), when hierarchical or other forms of career progression are limited.

Cadin et al. (2000) identify five patterns of career mobility (Table 2). These range from dependence on an employer for any change in direction to a highly agentic pattern of continuous movement. This latter nomadic concept has been conceived in different ways within the literature. For example, Makimoto and Manners (1997) originated the notion of a digital nomad to recognise how technology enhances geographical mobility. The concept is evident in Bridgen's (2011) observation of the benefits of social media in enabling remote working by public relations practitioners and in "the growing trend for co-working spaces" (Hickey 2015).

Here the focus primarily relates to working practices, rather than how digital technologies empower the nomadic model by opening up new career paths and opportunities as Cadin et al. (2000) envisage.

Sedentary	Traditional approach allowing the organization to manage career moves
Migrants	Develop careers within organizations, changing jobs or employers
Itinerants	Specialists who make career moves within a single occupation
Borderers	Alternate or work simultaneously as employees and self-employed
Nomads	Make "frequent or radical professional transitions" being "particularly led to develop idiosyncratic competencies as they break away from traditional paths and have to seize various opportunities" (Cadin et al. 2000, p.241).

Table 2.   Career mobility patterns (Cadin et al. 2000)

Schein (1996) also hints at a nomadic pattern when observing the inherent obsolescence of knowledge and skill "in a dynamically changing technological world" (p.83). Further he

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indicates that organizations increasingly expect individuals to take responsibility for continual learning to avoid being viewed as obsolete and replaceable. Consequently, a nomadic pattern may be viewed as one of radical personal reinvention to maintain employability.

However, Perera and Pudney (2011) observe that the entrepreneurial glamour and freedom associated with a nomadic lifestyle is offset, ironically, by a need to establish boundaries between personal and work time and space. This echoes discussion of risk in relation to the entrepreneurial career form in Chapter 3.

Likewise, risk is evident in nomadic global careers. Research by Essén et al. (2013, p.81) reveals that individuals may encounter problems in how they "experience and cope with their global work and career". Such difficulties were found to cause people to prioritise "family life and personal health at the expense of their professional career" (*ibid*, p.86). In addition:

> "respondents who refused the extensive travel typically ended up being assigned less prestigious positions or they were pretty much forced to look for work elsewhere" *(*Essén et al. 2013, p.81).

Nomadic global careers may be self-managed rather than resulting from "organizational offers or demand" (Reis and Baruch 2013, p.5). Peiperl and Jonsen (2007) identify a wide range of socio-cultural and political factors influencing migration within careers, some of which challenge the association of global careers with highly skilled, professional occupations. They propose three patterns within such careers: "expatriation" (*ibid*, p.351), working for multinational organizations, and seeing oneself as "a 'citizen' of the world" (possibly as a consequence of a peripatetic upbringing).

Whilst nomadic careers have not been studied in public relations, research by Valette and Culié (2015) looks at the

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inherent complexity within "career patterns characterized by increased mobility and individual proactivity" (p.1749) in the context of a high tech "French competitiveness cluster" (p.1746). Within this contemporary environment, individuals within different organizations work on "innovative collaborative projects" (*ibid,* p.1750). Their dominant attitude towards career development was termed the "organizational nomad". This applies to individuals who benefit from "inter-organizational mobility" (*ibid,* p.1753) as a result of:

> "multiple opportunities to develop collaborations, to meet new people, to exchange ideas" (Valette and Culié 2015, p.1753).

Those most active in the network report an intention to pursue an entrepreneurial career path in future, whilst others viewed collaborations as an opportunity to enhance their professional career potential with their existing employer. Three other categories reflected less agentic behaviour: feeling confined in a current role, intending to move away from the cluster or hoping to attain a more central position within it. Consequently, Valette and Culié (2015, p.1759) highlight the influence of "the situational or meso level", which they contend has been understudied, as has already been noted is the case for public relations.

Portfolio, kaleidoscope and nomadic concepts reflect the opportunity for individuals to craft a cohesive career pattern to suit their needs. However, the fragmentary nature of such careers may risk rather than benefit the multiple dimensions of someone's life. It is surprising that these emerging patterns have not been considered within public relations scholarship despite its emphasis on personal (micro level) career development.

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5.3.4. Customised careers

Emerging concepts largely emphasise the individualistic nature of contemporary careers. In contrast, Valcour (2006, p.220) situates customised careers within an organizational context as "unconventional patterns of workforce engagement".

The four variables within this career practice (Table 3), illustrate how individuals seek to customise their "control over work time" (*ibid*, p.193), periods of "interruption" (p.194), and variety in the nature of employment relationships. This approach is enacted particularly by:

> "Managers and professionals, for whom the traditional career pattern constitutes a powerful cultural schema" (Valcour et al. 2007, p.188).

It demonstrates how people use an adaptive strategy to respond to changes in the workplace whilst also being able to meet their career needs according to their personal circumstances.

Customised theme	Career details
Choice and control	Individuals "have the skills and labor marketability to work as intensely and continuously as do people following traditional careers, but they also have the resources and preferences that enable them to reject that pattern" (Valcour 2006, p.221).
Longitudinal quality	Examining the career pattern over time reveals periods that appear to reflect traditional orderly careers.
Work-life connection	In contrast to traditional career expectations of "near total separation between the work and nonwork spheres of life" (*ibid,* p.221)
Less institutionalised focus	Negotiation is required accommodate work and "preferred life patterns" (*ibid,* p.222).

Table 3.   Customised career themes

Some jobs, occupations and organizations are viewed by Valcour et al. (2007) as better suited to career customisation. An argument can be made that such patterns can be found within public relations, specifically for practitioners able to draw on an established reputation to customise their careers. However as noted earlier, employment within the function of public relations may be viewed as "highly substitutable" (Lauzen 1992, p.65).

Benko and Weisberg (2007, p.3) present another perspective on managing multifaceted patterns of careers in their proposition of a "career lattice". This proposes a "framework of mass career customization" (*ibid,* p.2) as an adaptive, scalable matrix structure that allows more flexibility than the "corporate ladder" concept (p.4). As such, it offers as a way for organizations to:

> "realign their workplace norms and practices with the realities of today's nontraditional workforce" (Benko and Weisberg 2007, p.2).

Indeed, Tulgan (2002, p.19) contends that organizations must "become even more flexible" to accommodate the needs of younger generations of employees.

Tulgan (2002) favours individually negotiated career conditions, where the value of an individual to an organization is continuously assessed. Further, he argues for "talented people to step outside the organization chart" (p.23) and pursue "more fluid career paths" (*ibid,* p.24). These would be based on a customised career model that matches individuals to project roles within organizations on an ongoing basis.

However, these types of dynamic career patterns may not be welcome within public relations as L'Etang and Powell (2013a) observe anxiety among senior public relations practitioners arising from "the absence of clearly articulated

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professional development pathways" (p.2) in the occupation. Wenger (2010) identifies such concerns as a tension between the boundaries of established practice and the dynamic nature of emerging communities of practice. In contrast, Engeström (2007a) highlights difficulties arise as a result of the concept of an individual expert or problem-oriented collaborative communities. Instead he argues that individuals should engage in a process of "negotiated 'knotworking' across boundaries" (2000, p.960)[65].

Such customised forms of working and collective agency seem relevant for public relations practitioners (L'Etang and Powell 2013b) given the open structure and tripartite nature of the occupation. However, their relevance for career development is an understudied area.

In summary, this chapter sought an "explanatory framework" (Inkson and Elkin 2008 p.70) in order to interpret contemporary career patterns within public relations. It has shown that career thinking within public relations tends to reflect the origins of career theory within vocational psychology, notably in respect of matching individuals to occupations and emphasis on micro (individualistic) and meso (occupational) levels of analysis. However, there has been little consideration of matters raised within career scholarship concerning the impact of the organization on subjective career experiences or how the social context affects opportunity structure within the occupation.

The resilience of a hierarchical management model within public relations has been shown to relate to theorising of careers from an organizational perspective, despite the individualised narrative within the occupational literature. Whilst

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[65] Knotworking involves collaboration "without rigid, predetermined rules or a fixed central authority" (Engeström 2007a, p.44).

life-long decision-making models can be connected to public relations careers, traditional views of linear progression are predicated on male career experiences. Offering a broader perspective, lifespan models indicate that either career adaptability is required to overcome societal constraints or that careers need to be structured to meet individual requirements at different life stages. Again this raises questions concerning equality of opportunity.

Turning to emerging career concepts that respond to an increasingly complex and changing world of work, a contemporary pattern emerges of a need for greater flexibility, individualisation and recognition that traditional employment may not have a central role in people's lives. Indeed, Bauman (2005) argues:

> "A steady, durable and continuous, logically coherent and tightly structured working career is however no longer a widely available option" (Bauman 2005 p.27).

Similarly, Lo Presti (2009) contends that:

> "Traditional models of career development no longer provide a comprehensive explanation" (Lo Presti 2009, p.125).

Although public relations academia and practice has failed to engage directly with recent career scholarship, this emergent thinking accommodates the fluidity of career development that this thesis argues is evident within public relations careers.

This is not to say that traditional career theories have no value in explaining public relations careers. Rather they should be augmented and located within more holistic frameworks (Lent 2013) that accommodate contemporary career patterns and address their limitations. A number of such integrated theories have been proposed within the last five years and these are assessed, alongside the construction of an original tapestry paradigm, in the next chapter.

Chapter 6. Intermezzo – Constructing an original tapestry career paradigm

6.1. Introduction

This thesis set out to address a lack of academic research into careers within public relations. In earlier chapters, as an 'insider' within the occupation and an initial 'outsider' in respect of career studies, I reflect the "dynamic nature of the researcher's position on this continuum" (Van Mol et al. 2013, p.70). In this chapter, I acknowledge my active participation in this research process (Hertz 1997), using my "authorial voice" (Tierney 1997, p.25) to evidence "personalized authority" (Van Maanen 2011, p.74) on the topic of inquiry.

Reflexivity is generally applied to the relationship between a researcher and participants in qualitative research (Finlay 2002). My intention here, however, is to attend to my central role in interpreting the primarily textural layers of knowledge presented earlier in this thesis as a "reflexive account" (L'Etang 2008b, p.324). I apply two "dimensions of reflexivity – reflection and recursion" (Hibbert et al. 2010, p.47), that offer a process of questioning and returning to "ways of doing" (p.48). This stage within the research process is an interlude, conceived as an intermezzo conceptual statement (van Ruler and Verčič 2004) middling what has gone before and the forthcoming investigation. It provides a moment to pause, yet is a conjunctive "and … and … and …" space "where things pick up speed" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.28).

In approaching the thesis topic, my "claim to speak as an authority" (Hyland 2002, p.1094) derives from my position as a "pracademic" (Posner 2009, p.12) and experience of working in public relations since 1988. Despite personal interest and

involvement in career development during this time, I initially encountered the field of career studies as an outsider in 2009.

Consequently, I apply reflexivity to my existing intellectual and practical-based knowledge of public relations in seeking to find my place within career studies scholarship (Papson 2013).

First, I attend to the knots and threads of what I have termed *pastpresentfutureness* to tie professionalisation of public relations to the study of careers within an historical context. I then unpick the influence of systems theory on career thinking in the occupation. Next, I consider career boundaries as an organising principle for critical inquiry, before developing a systematic contemporary career design. Within these reflexive sections, I create a series of original schema to (re)arrange core strands from the hypotext at macro, meso and micro levels. In the penultimate section, I develop a conceptual framework that presents career as a rhizomatic assemblage based on social cognitive and career construction theories. Finally, I establish my position as a weaver of a new career paradigm by proposing the concept of *tapestry* as an original root metaphor that illustrates the complexity of contemporary careers and informs research into career strategies within public relations.

The career literature examined in Chapter 5 presented two existing paradigms. Traditionally careers have been conceptualised as ordered, predictable and organizationally-managed (Arthur et al. 1989). An established "elitist, vertical career paradigm" (Larsen et al. 2011, p.330) reflects a mid-twentieth century perspective that portrays a normative experience of "the white western able bodied middle class male" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.135). A new career perspective later in the twentieth century responded to a world that was "complex, changing and inherently unpredictable"

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(Pryor and Bright 2011, p.4). This second paradigm proposed more individualistic, flexible career patterns that acknowledge the career experiences of a wider range of people.

This chapter constructs an original *tapestry* paradigm in response to recent academic attempts to integrate existing paradigms within holistic frameworks. It presents the concept of tapestry as a root metaphor to accommodate these "multiple meanings of career" (Collin 2007, p.560). Metaphors are "very common in career thinking" and serve to "encourage creativity and help us see things in new ways" (Inkson 2007, p.13). It is my contention that *tapestry* acts as a rich metaphor that informs an innovative paradigm for conceptualising career strategies in public relations in terms of imagery, sense-making and language.

6.2. Knots and threads of *pastpresentfutureness*

Earlier I applied an historical perspective (Lawrence 1984) to research the origins of careers within public relations and the development of career theory. My interpretation corresponds with Abbott's observation that:

> "History is first and foremost a tangled net of events. Each event lies in dozens of stories, determined and overdetermined by the causes flowing through them, yet ever open to new directions and twists. Indeed, given happenings may be seen as parts of different events within different stories. Because people and groups construct their future by interpreting their causal environment, the very knowledge of the past itself shapes the future, even though aggregate regularities and structural necessity simultaneously oblige it" (Abbott 1989, p.319).

This thinking is evident in the term *pastpresents* proposed by King (2010) to illustrate "how the past and the present continually converge, collapse and co-invent each other". Moore (2016) extends the idea into *knotted pastpresentfuture*s

by noting connections and disconnections into possible futures. This led me to the work of Urton (2002) on Andean knotted strings, *khipu*, that were used to record information within pre-Columbian civilisation. Interpreting the narrative significance of these cultural artefacts is difficult. Urton suggests that the woven strings are a personal aide-memoire with no common system to the knot-making process. This ethnographic perspective is a useful reminder that seeking to interpret the knots and threads of *pastpresentfutureness* interweaving the study of careers and the discipline of public relations may be as complex as analysing the ancient:

> "arrangements of knot types; color patterning; and spinning, plying, and knotting directions" *(*Urton 2002*, p.5).

Mindful of this challenge, I organised schematically my historically derived perspectives of public relations and career studies as parallel social phenomena (see Figure 3). Both disciplines are tied to the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, with core strands of 'great man' stories situated among the emerging professionalising classes in the US. I highlight how historical sense making tends to omit other perspectives (notably female voices).

In the lower half of the figure, I illustrate careers in public relations as crafted historically using a progressive normative hue of professionalisation. At the meso level, this narrative is used to stretch the practice away from the perceived embarrassment and disdain of origins among US circus agents and British government propagandists and towards macro level social respectability and prestige. At the micro level, professionalisation is presented as a means of pushing practitioners away from a technical craft base through linear advancement to a trusted executive position whilst retaining technical expertise.

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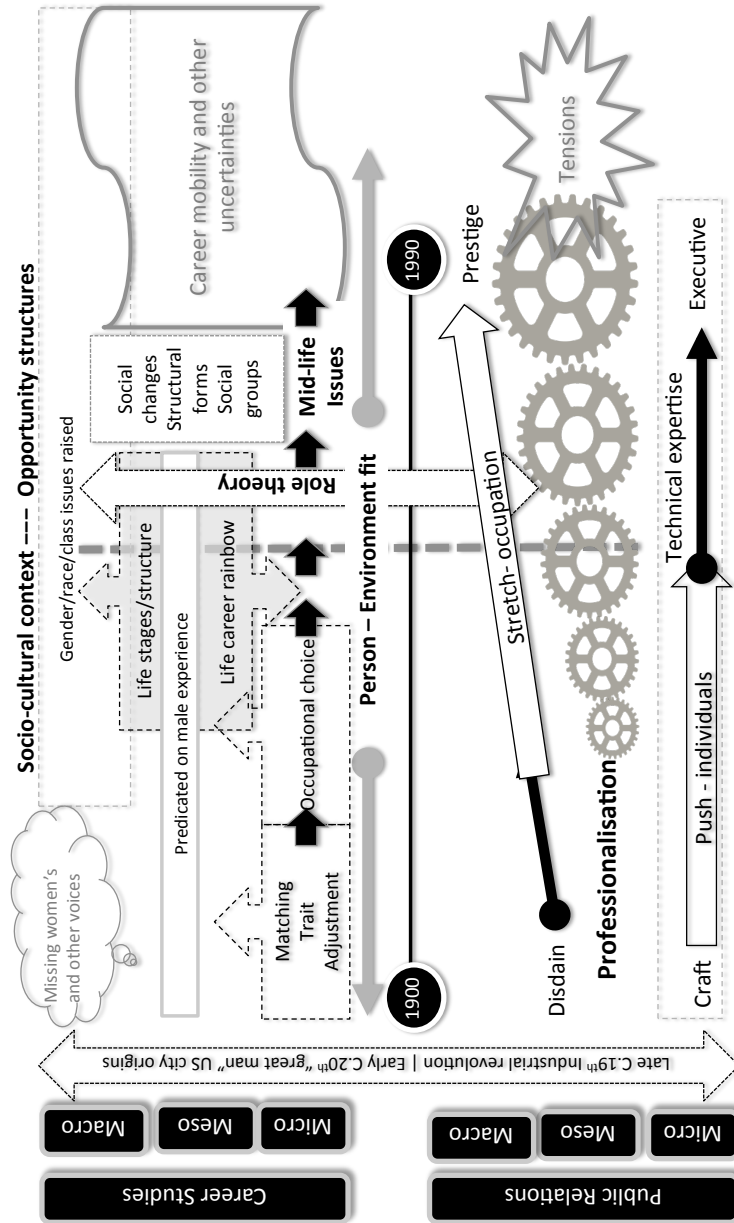
Figure 3.   **Schema illustrating historically-derived perspectives of public relations and career studies**

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My argument is that professionalisation acts as a ratchet within the "pursuit of legitimation strategies" (Bourne 2016, p.123), by focusing on social legitimacy (L'Etang 2004) and "occupational standing" (Pieczka and L'Etang 2001, p 228). This causes various career-related tensions including the relevance of conceptualising public relations as a profession in relation to practitioner employability (Fugate et al., 2004) at a time of "decreasing volition for many well-educated workers" (Blustein 2011, p.4). Consequently, I believe that a new perspective on professional careers is required if the concept is to have validity going forwards.

I present a more tangled narrative concerning career studies history. Starting in the same place and time as public relations, an initial emphasis on matching individuals to occupations shifts to more rigid role constructs predicated on male experiences where promotion offers objective and subjective rewards. Hierarchical career concepts become knitted into the fabric of twentieth century society (as did public relations). However, political and economic uncertainty, combined with greater diversity within the workforce, saw these manmade career fibres unravel.

In seeking to understand developments within career studies and their relationship with my thesis, I find graphical representation to be a valuable conceptualisation technique. The outcome illustrates my impression that although a number of fairly simple, discrete concepts are proposed within the career studies literature, as body of work there is little cohesion. I also observe how the changing socio-cultural context challenges traditional ideas. Simultaneous mapping of career thinking within public relations demonstrates the occupation's failure to recognise the impact of macro level social changes on

meso level structural career forms and the resultant uncertainties for practitioner career strategies at the micro level.

6.3. Untangling systems thinking

Inkson et al. (2015) contend that the sociological, psychological and organizational studies approaches evident in traditional and emerging career studies reflect theorising founded "on the philosophical position of logical positivism" (p.18)[66]. Scientific modern positivism is presented by Von Bertalanffy (1972) as seeking "to resolve and reduce complex phenomena into elementary parts and processes" (p.409), where his general systems theory seeks to "know both the parts and the relations between them" (p.411). His is the approach I reflect in my schemata, including Figure 4 illustrating career thinking derived from systems theory in public relations.

Within public relations scholarship, the hegemony of systems theory within a functionalist paradigm (Pieczka 2006b) is recognised as affecting practice (Gregory 2000), research (Witmer 2006) and theorising (Jahansoozi 2006); specifically the dominant Excellence theory (Grunig et al. 1992). I indicate the career influence of systems theory in my thesis through critical examination of the "normative expectations" of roles (Biddle 1986 p.70). Within the literature, role theory is used to define the occupation as a "professional activity" (Dozier and Lauzen 2000, p.4) whereby senior practitioners acquire managerial rank and centrality within hierarchical organizational structures (Gregory 2011b).

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[66]   Logical positivism emerged as an empirical approach to social sciences in the early 1920s in Vienna (Ayer 1959). We can see its influence in organizational studies as rational positivism (Yolles 2006) with an underlying management focus on efficiency, function and measurement (Turner 2006).
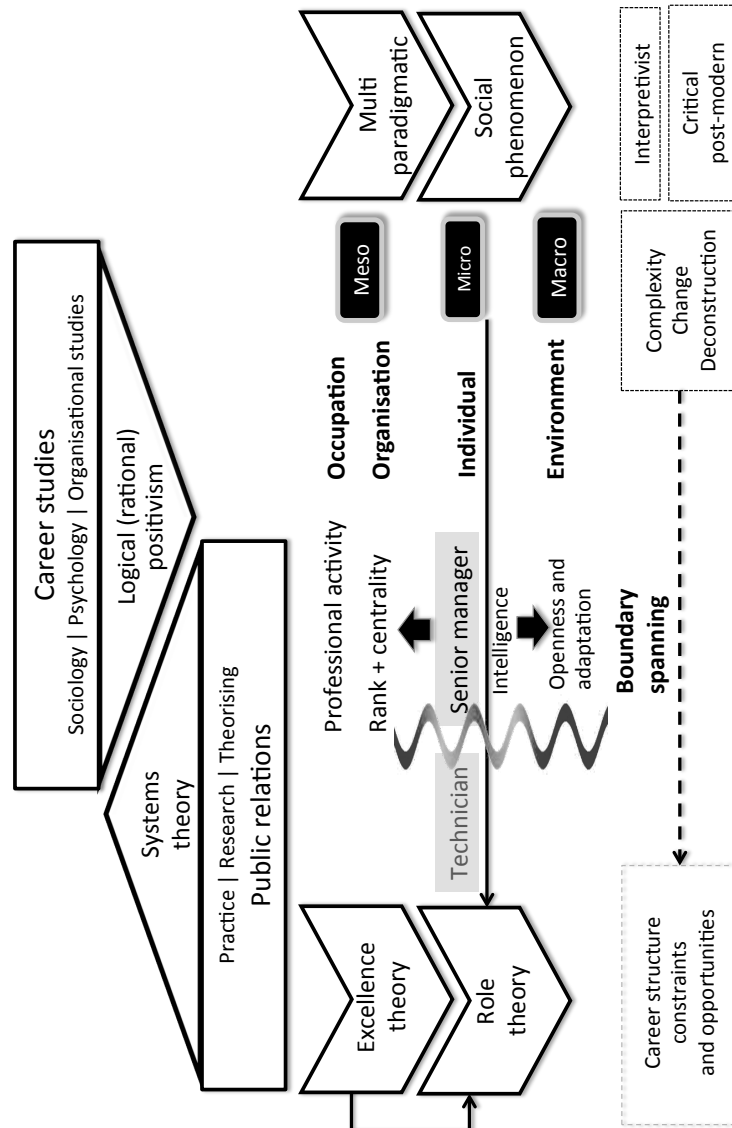
Figure 4. Schema illustrating career thinking derived from systems theory in public relations

My critique supports Mumby's (1997, p.4) argument that this "modernist project" within public relations prioritises organizational needs. Further, I accept the contention of Dozier and Lauzen (2000) that it focuses theory construction within public relations predominantly on the occupation.

Consequently, I contend that structural career enablers and constraints at these meso levels in public relations are under-examined. Instead, the dominant individualisation narrative reflects Dozier's (1992, p.345) claim that "role research operates at the micro (practitioner) level".

Further, the micro level connects meso and macro levels from a functional perspective, whereby senior public relations practitioners are positioned within strategic management as "the glue that holds excellent organizations together" (Grunig 1992, p.248) by encouraging openness and adaptation between an organization and its external environment (Pieczka 2006b).

Limitations of this "managerial, instrumental perspective" justify calls for wider study of public relations as a "social phenomenon" (Ihlen and van Ruler 2009, p.1), although the career implications of this alternative viewpoint have not been examined. Similarly, Bardhan and Weaver (2011, p.13) support a multi-paradigmatic approach to public relations scholarship as they argue that interpretivist and critical-postmodern paradigms are replacing "management and functionalist thinking". Again the relevance of this development for career strategies in the occupation is not apparent.

Interestingly Gilpin and Murphy (2010, p.80) use complexity theories to indicate a need for public relations practice to "adapt to uncertainty", yet do not consider how this dynamic operating environment affects practitioner careers. Likewise, career implications of societal changes are ignored by Ihlen and van Ruler (2009) despite their observation that:

"Contemporary everyday life is influenced by increased complexity, rapid change, globalization, and the deconstruction of social structures" (Ihlen and van Ruler 2009, p.1).

Indeed, public relations practitioners are positioned as attuned to how the "world is being fundamentally reconfigured" (Pieczka 2006c, p.282), with the discipline seen as fulfilling an organizational "boundary-spanning" role (Moss 2011b, p.113) by offering anticipatory intelligence as a strategic function (Arcos 2016).

Consequently, I am puzzled and surprised that career thinking within public relations scholarship and practice remains fixated on the orderly technician-management hierarchy that Brown (2015) argues is disconnected from practitioners' lived experiences. Moreover, Curtin (2011, p.33) refers to "a chronic identity crisis" within public relations which I suggest partly explains the resilience of a "uni-dimensional" (Baruch 2004, p.60) career model where managerial advancement is positioned as enhancing personal, organizational, occupational and societal status.

Further, organizational structures that typically support hierarchical career systems (Sullivan 1999) are said to reflect Western ideologies (Pal and Dutta 2008), a neoliberal agenda (Surma and Daymon 2014) and "male-dominated structures of control" (Acker 1990, p.141). Public relations literature offers limited examination of this career context and fails to clarify specific factors that define the career boundary between hierarchical (technician and manager) roles in practice.

My belief is that the "parsimonious two-role typology" (Gregory 2015, p.599), ease of job movement and fluidity of job titles are evidence of the lack of a formal occupational career system within public relations. That is not to say that there aren't structural constraints impacting on public relations

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careers, but the ubiquity of the managerial role[67] within practice
challenges the value of a simplistic binary career system.

6.4. Critical seams and (in)visible career boundaries

The concept of boundaries acts as a "unifying thread" (Gunz et
al. 2007, p.472) throughout career studies literature. In getting
to a point where I feel sufficiently authorised and authoritative in
situating public relations inside the career studies field, I need
to define the latter's conceptual boundaries. Literature offers a
chronological knot at the start of the last century and reveals
geographic ties[68] between the US and Europe that provide
common temporal and spatial contours between the disciplines.

6.4.1. Critical seams

Public relations literature presents a narrow, predominantly
male perspective of the discipline's origins (Yaxley 2012) and I
offer the same critique of historical development of career
theories and models. The implications of increasing female
representation within public relations were first studied in the
1980s (Broom 1982; Grunig 1988[69]; Cline 1989[70]). At the end of
the decade, Marshall (1989) issued a "feminist invitation"
(p.275) that challenged the content, structure and methods of
career theory. Likewise Gallos (1989, p.128) recognised that

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[67]   In the 2016 CIPR State of Public Relations report two-thirds of
those working in-house and 80 per cent of those working as
independent practitioners or within consultancies defined their
role as managerial.

[68]   Although a wide global scholarship base is evident in career
studies today, only seven of 39 authors in the seminal *Handbook
of Career Theory* (Arthur et al. in 1989) were located outside the
US; five were based England and one was located in France.

[69]   A special issue of Public Relations Review published in Autumn
1988 exclusively featured articles "assessing the current status of
women students, educators and practitioners" (Grunig 1988, p.3).

[70]   The Velvet Ghetto study (Cline 1989) was commissioned by
IABC (International Association of Business Communicators) in
1984. There has been no comparative research into female
experiences in Britain.

"there is much work to be done in studying and understanding women's careers". My historical research (Yaxley 2013a) into female career experiences in British public relations at this time sits alongside an increasing focus on women's careers (Burke and Vinnicombe 2013; Streets and Major 2014) and an expanding feminist critique of public relations (Daymon and Demetrious 2014).

Blustein's book, *The Oxford Handbook of the Psychology of Working* (2013), was the first text that I encountered to foreground[71] "inequity, racism, sexism, ageism and heterosexism" in the context of careers. Critical theory is a relatively recent development in management schools (Alvesson et al. 2009) and there is limited evidence of its application within career studies (Reis 2016).

In comparison, a rich critical seam has developed within public relations since the late 1980s (L'Etang et al. 2016), with dominance of the Excellence theory providing a point of reference against which critical scholarship "marked new boundaries" (L'Etang 2005, p.522). In contrast, Inkson (2007, p.11) notes that the three independent perspectives within career studies[72] "have to some extent ignored each other". Surprisingly, there is a lack of engagement with critical theory in Patton and McMahon's (2014) extensive application of career theories to women, racial/ethnic groups, LGBT individuals, and people with disabilities. They do reference social justice, albeit with limited consideration of emancipation, empowerment and complexity (Steinberg and Kincheloe 2010).

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[71] Within *The Handbook of Career Studies*, Prasad et al. (2007) examine "career issues for the socially marginalized" (p.169) to present an extensive overview and critique of "psychologically based positivist research on career issues" and call for research drawing on critical theories.

[72] As discussed previously, these are sociology, vocational psychology and organizational studies.

Critical scholarship encompasses analysis across multiple interwoven "levels and dimensions of social 'reality'" (Jónasdóttir et al. 2011, p.3) and the intersection of "complex patterns of disadvantage and power" (Crenshaw 2011, p.228). As such, it supports examination of both visible and invisible career boundaries.

6.4.2. (In)visible career boundaries

As Gunz et al. (2007, p.489) observe, "career boundaries are central to the nature of careers" in separating, surrounding and connecting what Abbott (1995, p.860) terms "social entities". Boundaries may be experienced either as barriers, enabling structures or punctuation within careers (Gunz and Mayrhofer 2012). In this respect, the presence of boundaries represents security or constraints within an opportunity structure whilst a lack of boundaries signals insecurity or freedom.

One example is the tension between academia and practice within public relations that, from my personal experience, demonstrates a career opportunity offered by the "field's fuzzy and continually gerrymandered boundaries" (Cropp and Pincus 2001, p.189). I have seen how the permeability and directionality of this particular career boundary is affected over time by a range of individual, occupational, organizational and socio-economic factors.

Career boundaries are social constructs that reflect the subjective (invisible) perspective of individuals that, when shared collectively, can evolve into objective (visible) career boundaries (Gunz et al. 2007). There is potential for these to become ordered and less permeable within career systems that favour equilibrium (Pryor and Bright 2011). This can be seen in a study by Edwards (2014) that found "discourses of professionalism" (p.4) within public relations result in:

"a system of informal credentialism which contributes to occupational closure" (Edwards 2014, p.11).

In Figure 5, I highlight the primary intersection between subjective and objective career boundaries. At the individual level, career competencies[73] are a critical subjective boundary, with the notion of career fit influencing choice and constraints of occupation/organization. Career form is shown as a connection between these meso level entities. Opportunity structure addresses individual circumstances and enabling/constraining forces at a societal level, thus connecting the boundaries of subjective and objective experience.

Macro socio-economic factors also influence organizational and occupational boundaries, and I indicate ideology as linking society and the context in which careers are enacted. In Western societies this is evident in the shift from single-employer careers to "self-managed and multiple careers" (Richardson 2000, p.202). The psychological contract between individuals and organizations concerning future expectations and power relationships (Inkson and King 2011) indicates the impact of meso level boundaries upon micro level subjective career experiences (Roper et al. 2010). One example is how organizational promises of long-term employment have changed to offers of enhanced employability[74] (Fugate et al. 2004).

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[73] Defillippi and Arthur (1996, p.127) propose that "cumulative career competencies are embodied in people's beliefs and identities (knowing-why), skills and knowledge (knowing-how) and networks of relationships and contacts (knowing-whom)".

[74] Fugate et al. (2004, p.14) define employability as "a form of work specific (pro)active adaptability that consists of three dimensions—career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital".

The schema diagram contains the following labelled elements:

Macro level: Society, Ideology, Context

Meso level: Organisation(s) — Bureaucratic, Professional, Entrepreneurial; Career form(s); Occupation(s); Social entities

Micro level: Individual(s), Circumstances, Responsibilities, Fit = Choice + Constraints, Career competencies

Opportunity structure, Psychological contract, Work-life interface, Socio-economic factors

Objective / Subjective axis; Change over time

Individual factors include demographics, personality, identity, finances, culture, education, background, personal circumstances, family commitments, mobility, volition

Occupation factors include professionalisation, barriers to entry, job design, nature of work, benefits, career opportunities, definition, flexibility, security, culture,

Organisation factors include structure, size, performance, recruitment+ employment policies, investment in career development, location

Socio-economic factors influence job availability, education provision, employment conditions, cultural expectations, technology, infrastructure

Figure 5.   Schema illustrating career boundaries as an organising principle for critical inquiry

Likewise, personal and professional responsibilities affect the work-life interface (Gregory and Milner 2009). For instance, Hakim (2006) suggests that prioritisation of family over career is a cause of horizontal and vertical occupation segregation; whilst Demetrious (2014 p.32) intimates gendered career boundaries in stereotypical portrayals of "young, nubile female, unmarried" public relations practitioners.

My contention is that public relations sits inside the career studies field as an example of an occupation responsive to what Bauman (2012, p.viii) terms "liquid modernity" where: "change is *the only* permanence, and uncertainty *the only* certainty". It also offers an opportunity for critical inquiry of the subjective and objective career (in)visible boundaries that affect the ability of both individuals and collectives to "gain control over their fate and make the choices they truly desire" (*ibid*, p.39).

6.5. Systematic contemporary career design

The final schema (Figure 6) presents my interpretation of responses to calls for interdisciplinary inquiry of "contemporary career phenomena" (Khapova and Arthur 2011, p.11). Recent developments within career literature challenge the narrative presented in Chapter 5 whereby traditional theories established within scholarship and Western society by the late 1970s were replaced by newer concepts that responded to a changing socioeconomic context. Instead, there is recognition of "the multiple perspectives of both traditional theories and recent conceptual contributions" (Pryor and Bright 2011, p.13).

The aims of contemporary multidimensional constructs are to restructure career scholarship and expand the conceptual framework of the career studies field. Patton and McMahon (2014) for instance, offer a comprehensive examination of integration and convergence developments, whilst their

Systems Theory Framework presents an intricate web of propositions that absorb and/or critique earlier theories. However, there has been no attempt to interconnect the latest constructs. Hence my intention in Figure 6 is to make sense of the tangle of concepts within four key models. The starting point in my systematic contemporary career design is: the Social Chronology Framework[75] (SCF) proposed by Gunz and Mayrhofer (2015). This is combined with elements from the Systems Theory Framework (Patton and McMahon 2014), chaos theory (Pryor and Bright 2011) and a perspective of career sustainability (Van der Heijden and De Vos 2015).

6.5.1. Place, people, progression

As with the earlier schemata, Figure 6 includes micro, meso and macro levels of analysis to illustrate that:

> "careers are central to understanding how individuals, institutions and society interact" (Gunz and Mayrhofer 2015, p.2).

This is evident in the SCF where spatial, ontic and temporal perspectives encompass:

> "the context in which the career happens, a career actor, and the time over which the career takes place" (Gunz and Mayrhofer 2015, p.4).

In Figure 6, I surround the social space in which careers are enacted with what I call a *contextual circle.* From this spatial perspective, structural forces (Le Feuvre 2010) and/or "collective experience and social interaction" (Tilly 1998, p.24) create rules that constrain or enable career actors (Gunz and Mayrhofer 2015).

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[75] The Social Chronology Framework is also referred to as Social Chronology Theorizing (SCrT). I have used the former term as Gunz and Mayerhofer (2011) state SCrT "is an organizing framework and not a fully-fledged theory". (p.254) and SCF is used in their latter work (Gunz and Mayrhofer 2015).
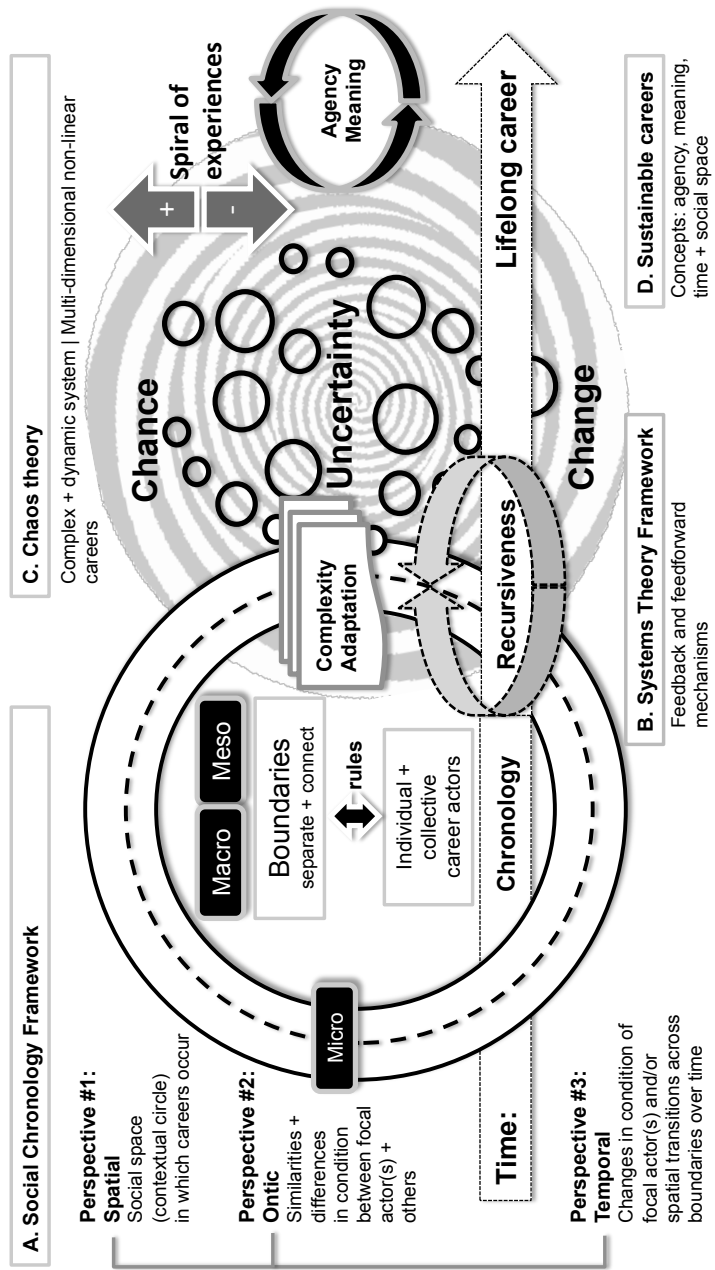
Figure 6.   Schema illustrating a systematic contemporary career design

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For instance, in seeking to normalise chartered status among its members, CIPR (2016d) is attempting to erect a professional career boundary, with the intention of influencing organizational recruitment practices.

The ontic perspective of SCF looks at similarities and differences between individuals. In encouraging comparisons, issues relating to privilege and social justice can be considered. However, I have emphasised the difficulty in determining standardised or normative criteria within public relations against which individual or collective careers can be reviewed, or compared with other occupations.

The temporal perspective indicates how social space and career actors' conditions change over time, demonstrating that "the three perspectives are not independent of each other" (Gunz and Mayrhofer 2015, p.6). For instance, Watson (2015b) observes attitudinal differences over an extended period of time among public relations practitioners towards the impact of emerging technologies on the nature of the discipline. Such variance has career implications for individuals and the occupation (Kitchen and Panopoulos 2010).

6.5.2. Accommodating career volatility

Whilst supporting this *place/person/progression* model as a useful conceptual approach, my schema additionally accommodates career volatility[76]. From the Systems Theory Framework of career development (STF) proposed by Patton and McMahon (2014), I include recursiveness[77] to indicate *pastpresentfutureness* (as discussed previously) through "feedback and feedforward mechanisms" (p.230). This relates

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[76] Career volatility is indicated in Chapter 2 as affecting the consultancy and public sectors within public relations.
[77] Patton and McMahon (2014) also relate recursiveness to the on-going influence and relevance of existing career concepts.

to the "mutuality of influence" (*ibid*, p.274) between various elements of the career design and positions individuals as reflexive (Cunliffe 2004).

Next I adopt complexity and adaptation from chaos theory (Pryor and Bright 2011) as a multi-layered linkage between the existing social space and a spiral of future career experiences. This views meso/macro levels as "complex and dynamical systems" (*ibid* p.31) and allows for "non-linear, iterative and unpredictable" (*ibid* p.28) occurrences. I illustrate the effect of change, chance and uncertainty through the inclusion of what I propose as *bubbles*[78] *of opportunity* to signify plurality of potential career outcomes.

Finally, I include four concepts proposed by Van der Heijden and De Vos (2015) as essential for career sustainability: agency, meaning, time and social space. They observe increasing career longevity and indicate blurring between work and personal time, which I show as an under/overlap of the timeline and career context. The concepts of agency and meaning reflect reciprocity between career volition and how individuals derive value within their lifelong career. Lastly I add direction to the social space (illustrated by the spiral of career experiences) to demonstrate that:

> "The rich variety of possible sequences of experience making up an individual's career implies that we may encounter examples of both a 'positive spiral', wherein career episodes over time become enriched, and a 'negative spiral', wherein career episodes may be characterized by, for instance, demotivating and/or unrewarding experiences" (Van der Heijden and De Vos 2015, p.6).

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[78] These allude to the 1918 music hall song that I remember my grandmother, Nana Ivy, singing: I'm forever blowing bubbles, the lyrics of which "speak about our hopes and dreams" (Tyler 2007, p.104).

To conclude, I propose that the systematic contemporary career design detailed in Figure 6 addresses the lack of a "predesigned manner of career management" (Kato and Suzuki 2006, p.267) within public relations and illustrates how the social space (macro-meso environment) in which careers are enacted is increasingly dynamic and uncertain. Hence my systematic contemporary career design suggests that public relations practitioners derive meaning within sustainable, lifelong careers by deploying agency in response to what may be a positive or negative spiral of experiences.

6.6. Career as a rhizomatic assemblage

I observed previously that critical perspectives within public relations scholarship largely ignore the career implications inherent in the occupation's dominant theories and practices. Prilleltensky and Stead (2013) extend this critique to career studies. They argue that established theories play an active role in maintaining "individualism and the societal status quo" (*ibid*, p.22) and pay little attention to social justice, structural and societal issues. My earlier research study suggests these criticisms might be addressed by Bandura's social cognitive theory (2001), which I connect conceptually to career construction theory and rhizomatic thinking, as explained below.

6.6.1. Rhizomatic career properties

Moving towards the end of this *intermezzo* chapter, I loop back to define myself as a rhizomatic researcher who "willingly moves from place to place, idea to idea, and concept to concept" (Clarke and Parsons 2013 p.39).

Through the schemata presented earlier in this chapter, I have attempted to make "the 'taken-for-granted' visually explicit" (Leshem and Trafford (2007, p.100). For instance, within each schema, I have indicated the:

> "unit for analysis is individual actors and interaction, situated within meso- and macro-level contexts" (Vaughan 2009, p.697).

This highlights and critiques the narrow focus of individualistic career strategies that is evident within public relations scholarship and practice.

Similarly, I have recognised boundaries within career studies as:

> "fundamental to the process by which order is generated in intellectual enquiry" (Gunz et al. 2007, p.490).

In doing so, my intention is to highlight where boundaries within traditional and contemporary conceptualisations create (in)visible physical and psychological constraints .

Seeing career boundaries as "constantly moving, mutating and connecting", I challenge the "seemingly static structures" of traditional career forms (Lawley 2005, p.36). This position reflects the first two properties of the rhizome[79] concept proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987); *connection* and *heterogeneity*. The third property, *multiplicity,* is apparent throughout the thesis and has informed my view of public relations careers as an:

> "assemblage … that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.9).

I observe the fourth property, "*asignifying rupture*" (*ibid*, p.10), in the flexible, opportunistic nature of public relations careers that, as with the roots of a rhizome, are able to restart in the same or different direction if disrupted.

The final rhizomatic properties: *cartography* and *decalcomania* refer to map making and tracing respectively.

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[79]   A rhizome is a root-like plant that spreads in all directions at once.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.15) present the former as an adaptable creation with "multiple entryways", which earlier chapters have shown applies to careers within public relations. In contrast, tracings are "infinitely reproducible" (*ibid*, p.13). As such, careers require "points of structuration" (*ibid*, p.15) to enable accurate reproduction. Whilst these can be seen in traditional career forms[80] (Kanter 1989), my contention is that public relations careers lack an established structure or "clearly defined tracks" (Bauman 2007, p.60).

As a rhizomatic researcher, I apply a critical approach in challenging the conceptualisation of careers solely in hierarchical terms. In particular, I argue that limitations of this traditional notion of career as an arboreal construction (Guerin 2013) derive from its historical roots grounded predominantly in male experiences (Patton and McMahon 2014). In contrast, I view that "the fluidity of contemporary career trajectories" is able to "better reflect women's heterogeneous circumstances and experiences" (Griffiths et al. 2006, p.155). Consequently, my contention is that career mutability offers a gender-neutral perspective.

6.6.2. Constructing an inclusive conceptual framework

In this reflexive chapter I have created a series of original schema to help synthesise the multiple perspectives that inform my thesis. I propose that the dominant role theory which defines public relations as a "professional activity" (Dozier and Lauzen 2000, p.4) reflects a traditional career paradigm that is limited by its emphasise on individualistic career strategies enacted primarily within bureaucratic organizational structures.

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[80]   I have argued that public relations literature and practice emphasise individualised career agency (entrepreneurship), a hierarchical management model (bureaucratic) and a progressive agenda (professionalisation).

Further, I have argued that critique of the hegemony of this systems theory framework within the occupation's scholarship has failed to connect with developing career literature. This is important when examining the social reality of public relations practitioners, specifically the intersection of subjective and objective career boundaries that they may encounter. Indeed, I see public relations as a responsive occupation that reflects the career mutability evident within contemporary career constructs.

Consequently, my research inquiry reflects the argument of developing career literature that a focus on stability within "foundational career theories" does not presume that people, environments or choices remain static over time (Lent 2013, p.4). Accordingly, I draw on the constructivism strand[81] of career studies in order to accommodate the "multi-layered richness and ambiguity" (Young and Collin 2000, p.1) found within the scholarship and practice of contemporary careers.

Patton and McMahon (2014, p.17) say recent "theoretical propositions" that enhance understanding of contemporary careers (such as those featured in Figure 6) are influenced by:

> "the constructivist worldview with its emphasis on holism and the individual as central to the constructivism of their lives and careers" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.17).

Further, the constructivist career perspective developed by Savickas (2007) proposes that "throughout the life course individuals are engaged in a process of meaning making" (Chandler and Kram 2007, p.253) enabling them to construct "a

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[81] Raskin (2002) observes, "terms like 'constructivism', 'constructionism' and 'constructive' are employed so idiosyncratically and inconsistently that at times they seem to defy definition" (p.2). For simplicity, I use 'constructivism' in this section.

life story that provides coherence and continuity" (Savickas 2012, p14) through a process of reflexivity.

A constructivist approach accepts public relations as "an amorphous and ill-defined, quasi-professional field" (Kruckeberg 2006, p.281) and allows for individual uniqueness to identify "a narrative thread describing a person's career path" (Pryor and Bright 2011, p.58). This is appropriate to reflect the diversity, fluidity and flexibility inherent in contemporary career thinking. In addition to a focus on the subjective, internal meanings people give to their careers, constructivism accommodates the "crucial part" played by external issues that "set the bounds for individual action" in particular "occupational and organizational career structures" and wider societal issues (Bailyn 1989, p.481). As such, micro, meso and macro level factors can be considered in my research inquiry.

I have chosen to develop an inclusive conceptual framework that connects my rhizomatic research thinking specifically to social cognitive and career construction theories. These concepts offer insight into the career strategies employed within public relations from a constructivist perspective. Social cognitive theory considers how "personal agency operates within a broad network of sociostructural influences" (Bandura 2001, p1). This presents a relational context (Blustein 2011) within which people are:

> "constantly interacting with the environment, seeking stability through on-going change" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.187).

Bandura (2000) reflects this "agentic perspective" (p.75) in his social cognitive theory that views individuals as "generative, creative, proactive and reflective, not just reactive" (Bandura 2001, p.4). This proposes that people are capable of "exploring,

manipulating, and influencing the environment" (*ibid*) in respect of both constraints and "fortuitous circumstances" (p.11).

Bandura's theory avoids reliance on *personal* agency, with the inclusion of *proxy* agency (whereby other people act as career influencers within a personal or professional context), and *collective* agency (involving communal action). This combined "relational agency" (A. Edwards 2010, p.61) is situated "within a broad network of sociostructural influences" (Bandura 2001, p.14).

Blustein (2011) indicates that such a "relational matrix" (p.2) offers mutual "emotional and instrumental support" (p.3). Therefore, agency can be seen to be altruistic rather than solely self-oriented. Similarly, Cook (2005) refers to "trust networks" (p.12) as a source of social capital and reputation. Careers are proposed thereby to develop within "webs or networks of relations and interdependencies" (Burkitt 2016, p.323) that are:

> "relatively fluid and on-going – some more enduring than others – as people enter and exit them at different points in time" (Burkitt 2016, p.323).

However, Bauman (2007, p.3) cautions that such a "matrix of random connections and disconnections" comprising "an essentially infinite volume of possible permutations" inhibits the sequential opportunities that make the concept of a career meaningful. Nevertheless, my thesis is that relational agency enables careers to be crafted as a series of multi-directional "boundary-crossing encounters"[82] (Engeström 2007b p.24) that

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[82] Inkson et al. (2015 p.218) present encounters as the first of four levels of social relationships that affect careers. Such encounters may "solidify into relationships", that in turn "are combined into complex networks" to become "part of informal and formal communities" (*ibid*). Engeström (2016, p.206) uses the term encounters to refer to "an effort to construct a temporary yet effectively collaborative knot of heterogeneous actors and their line of movement".

potentially provide transformative experiences. This perspective accommodates both:

> "how a person affects the environment and how the environment affects that person" (Zunker 2016, p.70).

Amidst this person-in-environment[83] dynamic, constructivism offers a focus on the "human meaning making process" (Raskin 2002, p.18) that occurs within a "multitude of social contexts" and an "increasingly complex array of circumstances" (p.17).

The final component of the conceptual framework informing my research inquiry addresses the means by which individuals make sense of their careers. I draw on career construction theory as it outlines a continual "social learning" process[84] (Savickas 2013a, p.148). This proposes that individuals reflect upon their "interpersonal experiences" (*ibid*) and develop psychosocial narrative constructions in order to "adapt to their situations" (Savickas 1997, p.253).

Hence, conceptualising careers in public relations as a dynamic rhizomatic assemblage informs my conceptual framework. This presents careers as inclusive social constructions whereby relational agency and social learning are proposed as transformative career strategies that enable public relations practitioners to make sense of the multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters that they experience over time.

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[83]　The person-in-environment perspective is a common paradigm in social work, where it is viewed as helping "to explain the complex interplay of physical, psychological, cognitive, social and cultural variables that shape human behavior" (Greene 2008, p.15).

[84]　I return to Savickas' career counselling process in the next chapter as it informs my primary research methodology.

6.7. Becoming a weaver of a new career paradigm

To conclude this *intermezzo* chapter, I establish my position in the thesis as a weaver of a new career paradigm. This seeks to accommodate the complexity of contemporary careers across the micro-meso-macro space and inform research into career strategies within public relations.

6.7.1. Micro-meso-macro embeddedness

I am mindful that favouring constructivism connects my research inquiry directly to career counselling (Patton and McMahon 2014) and subjective career experiences. However, I have argued that careers are affected by the practices, systems and structures of occupations, organizations and wider society. Consequently, I adopt Turner's concept of a "pattern of embedding" (2010, p.34) that views micro-meso-macro units of analysis as interwoven (Turner 2000, p.287).

In situating my work at the intersection of critical consideration of the professionalisation of public relations and emerging theories in the field of career studies in response to societal changes, I contend that individual and collective career encounters are embedded within – and are privileged or constrained by – a complex tangle of multi-directional boundaries. This thesis supports criticism of the notion of professionalisation within public relations as a progressive process (Pieczka and L'Etang 2001) that is "seeking to standardise the industry" (Hodges 2006, p.82).

Moreover, emerging theories in career studies literature raise questions regarding the contemporary relevance of the dominant narrative of a manager-technician hierarchical career structure within public relations. Indeed, I have observed career development in the occupation has been opportunistic and agentic in nature throughout its history. Additionally, I have

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challenged emphasise on individualism within public relations scholarship and practice as failing to address the micro-meso-macro embeddedness of (in)visible career boundaries.

6.7.2. Tapestry as a contemporary career metaphor

Finally, to accommodate the complexity of contemporary careers I propose an original career metaphor of tapestry as "a paradigm for constructive and critical research"[85] (Mignot 2000, p.523).

Metaphors are used to indicate many aspects of careers (Inkson and Amundson 2002), with Pryor and Bright (2017 p.207) observing craft metaphors illustrate the "iterative process of career development". Indeed, feminist scholarship has used quilting as a metaphor for collaborative female experiences (Koelsch 2012; Sermijn and Loots 2015; Robertson 2016). Throughout my thesis I have made use of an alternate craft metaphor in adopting Collin's (2007) suggestion of a "tapestry of interwoven threads" (p.560) to illuminate "the essential richness, nuances and ambiguity of a career" (p.561). She states that this concept produces:

> "a picture of the wholeness, roundness, and oneness of how people experience their lives and how they express that experience as a career" (Collin 2007, p.561).

From my first encounter with this metaphor I shared Collin's belief that it could enable the career studies field "to become broader, deeper, and more critical" along with her puzzlement that tapestry "was not already a major feature in the literature" (*ibid*, p.563). A decade later, this is still the case.

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[85] Metaphor is a "creative form which produces its effect through a crossing of images" (Morgan 1980, p.610) creating "a new semantic pertinence by means of an impertinent attribution" (Ricoeur 1984, p.ix). It has a "dominant influence" (Inkson 2002, p.17) within everyday and scholarly career discourse.

As a metaphor, tapestry has creative connotations that suit the flexible, self-directed requirements of contemporary careers (Poehnell and Amundson 2002). Moreover, the concept is used by Leeds-Hurwitz (2010, p.70) to indicate a complex picture[86] and "refer positively to cultural pluralism". Likewise, Leeds-Hurwitz advocates, "viewing the completed tapestry as a new and unique creation, of far greater value than its constituent threads alone would suggest" (2004 p.144), which matches my holistic micro-meso-macro perspective of careers. In developing this metaphor as a new career paradigm, I am encouraged by Stead's (2013) contention that "the use of fresh metaphors … will broaden and enrich our perspectives" (p.41), whilst Fraser and Nicholson (1988, p.102) suggest that the tapestry's "threads of many different hues" support a "broader, richer, more complex, and multilayered" critical inquiry.

Consequently, I position myself at this point in my thesis as becoming a weaver of a new career paradigm[87] in proposing tapestry as an original root metaphor. It provides an innovative way to conceptualise career strategies and enables my primary research to examine the "implicit beliefs that shape an individual's understanding of a situation" (Bjursell 2015, p.173) within the context of contemporary careers.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.3) observe, "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life". Specifically, root metaphors help to "structure our ways of conceptualising the world" and are "so embedded within language or culture that we scarcely realise

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[86] Historically tapestries were "eminently suitable for the production of individualized designs" including narrative, "of which the finest were of enormous scale, material richness and iconographic complexity" (Campbell 2001, p.14). This representative quality enables the surface imagery of a tapestry to accommodate multiple metaphors (Inkson 2002), whilst its structural form offers further scope for metaphorization.

[87] I use the word paradigm to indicate "a way of thinking about a set of problems" to guide research (Bailer-Jones 2009, p.109).

they are metaphorical" (Martin 2011, p.103). I envisage that as public relations practitioners craft their careers they create conceptual tapestries that comprise "patterns of symbolic construction" (Gowler and Legge 1989, p.450).

The structural underpinning of a tapestry allows for customised or formalised patterns to be crafted. From the front, these could represent a traditional design, a recognisable historical panorama or a personalised pictorial representation. As a career metaphor, this representational image contributes an objective (visible) perspective, whilst the tapestry's reverse offers a more complex view of crossing threads, knots and tangles that indicates a subjective (invisible) perspective.

My contention is that tapestry acts as a rich metaphor that envisions career patterns are constructed, deconstructed, reconstructed and co-constructed (Savickas 2012) as woven narratives with reference to individuals' subjective perspectives. This process enables individuals to make sense of career experiences and supports analysis of agentic career strategies.

The final aspect of the innovative career paradigm that is informed by the tapestry metaphor relates to its linguistic potential. Throughout this thesis, I have included tapestry related terms found within career studies literature. I have also developed use of such idioms further with a creative approach in my own writing. I believe that foregrounding this language within a new career paradigm would be useful in challenging the established metaphorical lexicon evident within existing career paradigms.

Whilst I have clarified the scope of the tapestry metaphor in relation to my thesis, I am certain that it has potential to be developed further as a result of the primary research inquiry, and subsequently by other researchers and practitioners within public relations and the broader career studies field.

Chapter 7. Research design

7.1. Introduction

This doctoral inquiry aims to contribute critical insight into existing academic and practitioner knowledge of the professionalisation of public relations by opening up a new line of inquiry via the career studies domain. The chapter initially provides an overview of the earlier chapters to inform the research design, and is subsequently structured into seven sections. The first sets out the research philosophy and approach. The following two sections detail the two methods of primary research: *timeline* narrative interviews and *bricolage* archival research. The fourth section considers research ethics, followed by discussion of research design limitations. The chapter concludes with consideration of researcher positionality and explanation of the analytical method used to examine the data.

Literature underpinning the thesis was reviewed in the preceding five chapters. Chapter 2 commences with an examination of definitions of public relations that reveals inconsistencies and a lack of clarity. A prevalent management perspective suggests the occupation offers a hierarchical, bureaucratic career system. Yet definitions also highlight technical competence, which indicates a craft approach to career development. Further, a socio-cultural turn in public relations academia encourages consideration of public relations careers beyond a traditional occupational perspective.

The chapter then reports my investigation into the origins of careers in public relations. This observes professional and bureaucratic career paths in public relations were conceivable from the start of the twentieth century. However, early practitioners tended to reflect an entrepreneurial, opportunistic

and primarily *commenda* (agentic) form of career. I also note historical under-reporting of the career experiences of women and those employed in support functions.

Chapter 2 concludes with analysis of the occupational field in the UK since the mid-twentieth century. Whilst this reveals a lack of robust data, there is clearly an expanding, increasingly female, working population and a complex, fluid tripartite structure. From a career perspective, claims of increasing professionalisation are challenged by employment volatility and various tensions evident over time within the occupation.

Chapter 3 applies Kanter's (1989a) frame of bureaucratic, professional and entrepreneurial career forms to suggest that a lack of occupational constraints within public relations enhances entrepreneurial career opportunities for practitioners, yet also diminishes its credibility as a profession. It concludes that despite discussion of a basic technician-management hierarchical dichotomy in practice and scholarship, public relations lacks a coherent framework on which career strategies may be crafted.

With practitioners expected to be responsible for their personal career development, Chapter 4 examines implications of this individualistic approach. My research study of career experiences of women in British public relations in the 1970s and 1980s confounds expectations in the literature by offering evidence of preference for personal rather than proxy or collective agency in overcoming gendered career barriers. In addition, although there is increasing recognition within public relations of diversity and intersectional inequities, the inherent tension between opportunity structure and advocacy of an individualistic approach to career development within the occupation remains under-examined.

Chapter 5 attends to career studies literature, encompassing both traditional theories and emerging career concepts that respond to an increasingly complex and changing world of work. Consequently I suggest that resilience within public relations of the hierarchical management model and a professionalised career narrative indicates failure to engage directly with career scholarship, most specifically concerning recent conceptual developments.

Progressing the thesis further, Chapter 6 presents a series of schemata in which I tie professionalisation of public relations to career studies within an historical context, unpick the influence of systems theory on career thinking in the occupation, focus on career boundaries as an organising principle for critical inquiry and develop a systematic contemporary career design.

Attention is paid to macro, meso and micro career constraints and enablers from which I sought to make sense of individual and collective career strategies within a contemporary context. As a result, I conceptualise careers in public relations as a rhizomatic assemblage based on social cognitive and career construction theories. My thesis suggests a new career paradigm that proposes tapestry as an original root metaphor. This accommodates the complexity of contemporary careers and informs research into career strategies within public relations.

The remainder of this chapter builds on the literature and conceptual framework examined thus far. It presents a research design conceived to identify how public relations practitioners make sense of their career experiences, examine the strategies they use to inform career decisions and determine how they are responding to a changing career context.

7.2. Research paradigm and methodology

The disciplinary home of this thesis is the intersection of critical consideration of the professionalisation of public relations and emerging theories in the field of career studies in response to societal changes. This is a valid topic of inquiry because it extends the existing academic knowledge base, helps develop theories and has potential to inform approaches to assist career development within public relations (Young and Borgen 1990).

Research paradigm		
Ontology	Relativist	Multiple realities
Epistemology	Subjective	Multiple interpretations
Philosophy	Constructivist (Social constructionism)	Multiple interactions/conceptualisations
Approach	Interpretivist narrative	Multiple ways of knowing/constructed meanings
Reasoning	Inductive/Abductive	Multiple insights/explanations
Axiology	Value laden ethics	Multiplicity/reflexivity/feminist sensibilities
Research methodology		
Strategy	Constructivist grounded theory	Public relations occupation / Sample of participants
Purpose	Discover and understand	Career strategies employed by public relations practitioners in the UK
Sensitising concepts	Sense making, decision-making, responsiveness, relationships, agency, learning, transformation, time and boundary-crossing	
Time horizon	Cross-sectional	April-October 2015
Method/data	Qualitative	Timeline narrative interviews and bricolage archive research
Researcher position	Insider	Close proximity, similarity, visible

Table 4.   Research paradigm and methodology

Focus of the inquiry is on "analysis of the reality of everyday life" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p.33) that is known through "continually interacting and communicating with others" (p.37) and "structured both spatially and temporally" (p.40). Key choices within the research paradigm and methodology, as shown in Table 4[88], are explained and justified in this section.

7.2.1. Socially constructed reality

I adopt a constructivist philosophy with an interpretive approach to examine "human reality as socially constructed reality" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p.211). This is "particularly appropriate" for career research that seeks to understand lived experiences (Cascio 2007, p.563) as it enables "the researcher to look for the complexity of views" (Cresswell 2014, p.8) in "how people define their own sense of career" (Ornstein and Isabella, 1993 p.243). My research beliefs are evident in how constructivist philosophy:

> "assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings) and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (Denzin and Lincoln 2013 p.27).[89]

Constructivism allows for contextualisation "to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants" (Cresswell 2014 p.8), which is important in researching career strategies employed within public relations. Young and Collin (2004)

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[88] Table 4 draws on the "methods map" proposed by O'Gorman and MacIntosh (2015, p.50) combined with elements from the research 'onion' developed by Saunders et al. (2000).

[89] Heron and Reason (1997) also highlight the importance of axiology, in terms of "what is intrinsically worthwhile" (p.286), which Lincoln and Guba (2013, p.87) state as "the influence of a value system". In the case of constructivism, researchers are advised to "make a careful inventory of their own values and how those values color their perceptions in the research context" (Mertens 2015, p.78), which I have done in considering the research ethics and researcher positionality later in this chapter.

contend constructivism encompasses social constructionism[90], which is indicated by Cohen et al. (2004, p.409) as how careers involve "an iterative and on-going process" of "interaction with others". This demonstrates "agency as a relational rather than an individual phenomenon" (Burkitt 2016, p.323) whereby:

> "individuals derive their capacities to produce certain actions or effects from social activity itself" (Burkitt 2016, p.327).

Gordon and Pellegrin (2008, p.104) discuss the relevance of social constructionism "to both the practice and study of public relations", with James (2009, p.116) identifying a number of scholars who "approach public relations from a broadly social constructionist epistemology". This is reflected in her work on strategic communication (James 2014), and applied within crisis management (Hearit and Courtright 2003; Heide 2009). Indeed, Tsetsura (2010, p.172) presents social construction "as an overarching framework" for "understanding public relations as an activity and as a field".

Constructivist philosophy offers a unifying intellectual perspective that encompasses understanding of careers and public relations as "constructive action-in-context" (Holstein and Gubrium 2013, p.256). It informs an interpretivist narrative approach, which is evident within careers studies (Savickas 2012) and "holds that meaning is a matter of history, culture, and character" (Fisher 1985, p.351). Narrative research allows examination of "text and context" (Colyar and Holley 2010, pp.71) found within a "chronological narrative of an individual's life" (Cresswell 2014, p.204). Further Bujold (2004) argues that

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[90] Tsetsura (2010) notes that although some scholars make a distinction, "social construction, constructionism and constructivism are sometimes used interchangeably" (p.164). My approach is to indicate the term used by specific authors and where relevant to clarify meaning in this context.

career development is a creative process, encompassing how research participants organise and articulate their career experiences as they "seek to connect people and events into a temporally coherent whole" (Alleyne 2015, p.40).

This interpretivist "experience-centred narrative research" approach (Squire 2008, p.41) is compatible with the subjectivist epistemology, where a participant's "lived life" and "told story" (p.45) are subject to "comprehensive analyses and interpretations" (Patterson 2008, p.37). Consequently, professionalisation and emerging career concepts may be found within the "rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.78) generated through construction, deconstruction, reconstruction and co-construction of an individual's "career story" (Savickas 2012, p.16).

7.2.2. Constructionist approach to grounded theory

My relativist ontology reflects a "constructionist approach to grounded theory" (Charmaz 2000, p.510) as I recognise "that social reality is multiple, processual, and constructed" (Charmaz 2014, p.13). The research methodology is informed by the argument that:

> "Grounded theory not only is a method for understanding research participants' social constructions but also is a method that researchers construct throughout inquiry" (Charmaz 2008, p.397).

Mills et al. (2006a, p.8) confirm that this helps to "inductively distil issues of importance for specific groups of people" whilst bringing "the centrality of the researcher as author to the methodological forefront"[91] (p.9).

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[91] I discuss my positionality within the research design later in this chapter

Rather than following a rigid traditional grounded theory approach[92], my investigation involves:

> "interweaving the literature … as another voice contributing to the researcher's theoretical reconstruction" (Mills et al. 2006b, p.5)

This is indicative of evolved grounded theory as recommended by van Rensburg and Ukpere (2014). Accordingly, I reflect the view that:

> "when we try to make sense of events, we begin with some framework, however minimal" (Klein et al. 2006, p.88).

As Carr (1986) articulates:

> "as we encounter them, even at our most passive, events are charged with the significance they derive from our retentions and protentions" (Carr 1986, p.122).

Hence, whilst my research is predominantly inductive, adopting constructivist grounded theory adds:

> "an abductive sensemaking process of manipulating, organizing, pruning and filtering data in an effort to produce information and knowledge" (Kolko 2010, p.17).

Consequently, qualitative research is undertaken in this inquiry as it "involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" (Denzin and Lincoln 2013, p.6-7) incorporating a variety of investigative practices. These enable me to investigate the "social construction of the self" in the form of individual careers, and "inquire into the make-up of social entitles" (Carr 1986, p.127) reflecting the micro/meso/macro dimensions of embeddedness discussed previously.

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[92] Glaser and Strauss (1967), who originated grounded theory as "the discovery of theory from data" (p.1), stipulate that, "an effective strategy is, at first, literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study" (p.37).

Specifically I apply two methods of qualitative research: *timeline* narrative interviews and *bricolage* archival research, which are discussed in detail next in this chapter.

7.3. Timeline narrative interviews

This section considers the main research method used to illuminate career strategies in public relations, *timeline* narrative interviews. Justification is provided for the choice of method to address a set of broad research objectives, ahead of explanation of the interview process and sample population. First, I underpin this research with reference to an initial study of career experiences of women working in public relations in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s.

7.3.1. Life on Mars - a pilot study[93]

The intention of the earlier study[94] was to offer original insight into female career development within an historical British public relations context of increasing feminisation of the occupation. In methodological terms it served as an opportunity to pilot research using an interpretive constructivist approach to capture subjective career experiences.

The research method involved semi-structured oral history interviews with seven women (six by telephone and one by Skype), identified through membership organizations and a snowball technique. Primary focus was participants' gendered career experiences, although the study was not conceived as

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[93] The original presentation of this work at the International History of Public Relations Conference in 2012 was titled *Life on Mars* to reflect Gray's book *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus* (1992) and the title of a BBC television series that looked back to this period when male attitudes were "positively archaic" (BBC press office 2005).

[94] For clarity, in this chapter I use the word 'study' to refer to the earlier examination of women's experiences in public relations (see Chapter 4), and 'inquiry' for the main doctoral investigation.

feminist scholarship[95]. Four research questions informed an interview guide, although once participants were invited to tell their stories, responses flowed freely with minimal researcher involvement.

Findings confirmed the usefulness of Bandura's (2000) social cognitive theory. They also contributed to the historical underpinning of the doctoral thesis and were incorporated into a journal paper (Yaxley 2013a)[96]. Lessons from this study helped to inform the main doctoral research inquiry, conceptually and practically. Continuities include the research ontology, epistemology and a qualitative approach that, from a researcher's perspective, worked well. Changes were made to the demographic composition of the research population, the methods for profiling participants, and the nature of the interviews as detailed below.

7.3.2. Main method and research objectives

The "unique purpose of the inquiry" (Seibold et al. 1994, p.397) is to discover and understand career strategies employed by public relations practitioners in the UK. Charmaz (2014) recommends using "initial research interests" (p.32) to derive sensitising concepts as "a place to *start* inquiry" (p.31), whilst

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[95] The study meets few of the criteria that Seibold (2000, p.151) observes are typically "required for feminist research". Although the research is undertaken by a woman and concerns female experiences, interaction between researcher and participant was limited, power relationships were not considered, the bibliography was not informed extensively by feminist literature and there was no intention for "critical activism" (p.152) or "to improve the lot of women" as an outcome of the research.

[96] The journal article published from this initial study (Yaxley 2013a) has been cited by Fitch (2016a, 2016b) in relation to feminisation of the occupation; Bridgen (2013b, 2015) regarding respondents' denials of gender inequality; Edwards (2015) concerning transmission of cultural capital; St. John III et al. (2014) and L'Etang (2015a, 2015b) in relation to historical role of women in public relations.

Bowen (2006) draws on "a thorough review of literature" (p.15) to derive sensitising concepts within a conceptual framework. My initial research interests are encapsulated in three broad research objectives (RO):

RO1:   To identify how public relations practitioners (PRPs) make sense of their career experiences;

RO2:   To examine the strategies that PRPs use to inform career decisions;

RO3:   To determine how PRPs are responding to a changing career context.

From the literature, my conceptual framework proposes that careers are social constructions that involve "relational agency" (A. Edwards 2010, p.61) and "social learning" (Savickas 2013a, p.148) as transformative career strategies enabling public relations practitioners to make sense of the multi-directional "boundary-crossing encounters" (Engeström 2007b p.24) that they experience over time.

Therefore, my sensitising concepts are: sense making, decision-making, responsiveness, relationships, agency, learning, transformation, time and boundary-crossing. These act as "interpretive devices" (Bowen 2006, p.2) to help guide the inquiry and subsequent data analysis, where they "give way to themes" (p.8) required for theory development.

This research inquiry is exploratory and does not seek to test existing theory or offer generalised findings. Narrative inquiry is "dependent on the context of the teller and the listener" (Hunter 2010, p.44). Here, it provides depth of focus on a single occupation, public relations, through examination of career experiences of a sample population of practitioners. Qualitative face-to-face narrative interviews offer a flexible interactive method (Denzin and Lincoln 2013) best suited to generating rich data. This "interpretive practice" investigates

"the context of meaning making" (Holstein and Gubrium 2013, p.255), wherein Roberts (2002) contends individuals "make sense of [*their*] social existence" (p.6).

An active interviewing approach seeks to give "accurate voice" to participants' career narratives (Savickas 2012, p.16). Using open-ended semi-structured interviews, I anticipate hearing "fragments of memories, feelings, events and ideas" that may be "neither completely coherent nor completely linearly structured" rather than "a coherent story with a beginning, a middle, and an end" (Sermijn et al. 2008, p.634). I also recognise the importance of "leaving room for context" (Herman and Vervaeck 2005, p.109), which is considered later in the chapter in relation to archival research.

7.3.3. Timeline interview process

From a constructivist perspective, participants are viewed as active co-researchers (Janesick 2010), challenging the traditional "question-and-answer approach" where "the interviewer defines the agenda" (Hollway and Jefferson 2000, p.28). In narrative interviews the interviewer is "a good listener and the interviewee is a story-teller rather than a respondent" (*ibid*, p.31). Further, McIlveen and Patton (2007) see "self-constructive storying" (p.69) as a process where the individual is "the creator of life themes, the teller of the stories, and the enacting body" (p.73).

Savickas advocates a constructionist narrative approach within career counselling to encourage individuals to "unfold their stories" (2011, p.37) and "*reflect* on life *themes*" (2013b, p.659). As considered later in this chapter, my position in the inquiry is as an academic researcher, not a career counsellor. However, both viewpoints envision the interview as "a relational, conversational encounter" where individuals "study

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their lives in depth, in progress, and in narrative" (Savickas 2011, p.41).

An interview guide was designed around six career aspects[97] allowing open-ended flexibility. Next a pilot interview was undertaken with a close contact. However, this lasted under 30 minutes and failed to generate rich data. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) state that pilot studies may reveal "mistaken attempts" (p.26) and on reflection, despite the pre-existing relationship, the encounter lacked rapport. When discussing the experience, the participant, an ex-journalist, said they expected to be asked questions about their career requiring concise responses, whereas I anticipated a fluid narrative as had occurred in the earlier study.

Rather than risk repeating this disappointing situation, I employed the memo writing technique advocated by Charmaz (2014, p.162) as "a crucial method in grounded theory" to provide "an interactive space for conversing with yourself". I used Borton's (1970) simple reflexive idea answering the questions: "What? So what? Now what?"[98] (Thompson and Thompson 2008, p.98). This revealed that the earlier telephone interviews were inherently more conversational at the beginning and participants seemed empowered to take the lead in sharing experiences that I had explained were outside my direct knowledge. I identified a need to address perceptions of power within the interview relationship (Mills et al. 2006a) and provide greater clarification of the research process at the start of the face-to-face interviews.

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[97] The career aspects covered: (1) entry into public relations; (2) subsequent career experiences and choices made; (3) people who had influenced career moves; (4) themes, threads and patterns; (5) reflection on career to date and (6) future directions.

[98] The three questions stimulate consideration of what has happened, analysis of the event or issue, and formulation of an action plan including further learning requirements.

I researched interactive interviews further and discovered the work of Adriansen (2012, p.40) on "timeline interviews as a method for doing life history research". She states:

> "The method allows the interviewee to participate in the reporting of the interview which may give raise to ownership and sharing of the analytical power in the interview situation" (Adriansen 2012, p.40).

Adriansen presents the approach as "an organising principle" where "linearity and coherence" (*ibid*) should not be assumed, which I did not view as an issue. However, she urges caution in using the method "for interviewing elites or for conducting insider interviews where positionality can be at play" (*ibid*). Nevertheless, I was attracted by the simplicity and informality of the approach for which "the basic ingredients are a large piece of paper and a number of coloured pens" (*ibid*, p.43). I sensed that a creative technique would appeal to public relations practitioners, clarify expectations and rebalance the power relationships by involving participants in graphically (re)constructing their career experiences.

After repeating the pilot interview with a successful outcome, I designed a *timeline* interview guide and incorporated the method in the remaining interviews. These were completed between April and October 2015. They ran from 66 to 215 minutes and were recorded for transcription and analysis. Initiating a brief friendly conversation, I sat alongside the participant to avoid any barriers of desk or table, thereby reducing physical and psychological distance. Digital recording was commenced following completion of ethical formalities and explanation of the *timeline* career-drawing method. This involved presenting A3 paper and coloured pencils as tools for

illustrating the career narrative. I made a fold[99] line across the middle of the page (landscape) indicating this as chronological time, whilst noting the page could be used horizontally, vertically or however the participant wished, with additional sheets available to be appended to the first or subsequent pages.

Each interview began with a common open question: "How did you first come to work in public relations?". To encourage a free flow of recollection and cartography, I largely avoided taking notes[100] and asked as few clarification questions as possible. When the narrative and *timeline* drawing ended, participants were asked to look ahead to the future direction of their careers. A final recursive element involved inviting participants to loop between their current and younger selves to feedback and feedforward reflexively. After checking all career aspects in the interview guide had been covered, the formal interview was concluded.

The use of the visual *timeline* technique proved effective in encouraging participants to "think-out-loud" (Rapley 2001, p.317), helping them to recollect experiences recursively and make sense of these. It supported construction, deconstruction, reconstruction and co-construction (Savickas 2012) of career patterns and themes during the interview and subsequent analysis, enriched the research method and created a useful physical representation of the narrative[101].

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[99] Adriansen (2012) draws the line in pen, but I wanted my action to be less visible in the timeline. Likewise she chose pens where I opted for coloured pencils, as these seemed more creative and allowed for alteration using an eraser.

[100] I kept a reflexive research journal where I subsequently recorded observations, feelings and follow up tasks, for example to add context to the conversation.

[101] Some candidates took photographs of the timeline map as they said they felt this would be useful to keep.

7.3.4. Research population

The research design includes a two-part process to identify and select the research population. Respondents were chosen to offer a 'mid-career' perspective on their extensive chronology of experience and decision-making. The meaning of 'mid-career' within public relations is debatable as the occupation has a fluid tripartite structure, and lacks either a robust occupational career system or an established job title framework. Turning to career studies literature, Super's development model (1980) indicates the Establishment stage (spanning 25 to 44 years of age) as a time when people reflect, consolidate and advance their careers (Swanson 2013). However, Savickas (2002) proposes assessment of the remainder of someone's working life occurs in the Management stage[102] (spanning 45 to 65 years of age). To accommodate both of these stages and allow for variation in age of entry into the occupation, a criterion of 10-20 years' career experience within public relations was chosen to define mid-career.

Gunz and Mayrhofer (2015 p.5) argue that any research inquiry will focus on a few of the "endless" personal characteristics of the "focal person whose career is under consideration". I chose to include male and female participants to enable focus on gendered and generic mid-career experiences. Other personal, social and professional characteristics were reviewed to ensure participant heterogeneity and multiplicity of career experience where feasible and appropriate within the research population. Although participants were required to be UK based, they did not need to be British nationals and could have current or previous international experience or responsibilities. The first

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[102]   Super (1980) used the term maintenance for this stage.

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part of the recruitment process involved a wide search using a snowball process initiated through public relations communities (online and professional bodies) and other channels.

Initially I had intended to select research participants who were not well known to me to avoid any possible complications arising from existing personal or professional relationships. However, this restriction was revised as it became apparent that in order to ensure participant heterogeneity, additional theoretical sampling[103] would be required. Therefore, where particular demographic or career experiences were lacking within the research population, I invited existing contacts to participate in the study.

Respondents were asked to provide a detailed personal/career profile using a pro-forma research information sheet. The second part of the sampling process reviewed the profiles to select a research population that aimed to be sufficient to "extract thick, rich data" (Onwuegbuzi and Leech 2007 p238), without generating information that is "repetitive and, eventually, superfluous" (Mason 2010, p.2). As both the researcher and participants are experts in the topic, a smaller sample can be justified (*ibid*), although this is countered by my wish to ensure participant heterogeneity. Hence the uniqueness, complexity, and intrinsic value of each respondent's profile (Stake 2000) informed sampling decisions in this inquiry. Consequently, the research design includes a research population of twenty-one interviewees as detailed in the next chapter. Reflection on the limitations of the *timeline* interviews, alongside ethical considerations and method of analysis are considered later in this chapter.

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[103] Theoretical sampling selects participants to address gaps that "hinder theoretical development" (Achterberg and Arendt 2008, p.68).

7.4. *Bricolage* archival research – an underpinning canvas

This section explains how archival research is used to supplement *timeline* narrative interviews in understanding career strategies in public relations. The role of archival research in the inquiry is justified as "gathering referential adequacy materials" (Greene 2014 p.8) for verification purposes as well as to contextualise research participants' careers. In essence, *bricolage* archival research is presented as a contemporary "eclectic process" (Kincheloe 2004 p.2).

7.4.1. Role of archival research in the inquiry

The research inquiry investigates career experiences of public relations practitioners over a 10-20 year period using *timeline* narrative interviews. Thomson (2012, p.101) confirms that "personal narratives illuminate the lived experience and meanings of historical events", yet he cautions that:

> "Every source is a constructed and selective representation of experience, and part of the historian's task is to consider the factors that shape the source and their relevance for our analysis" (Thomson 2012, p.102).

Mindful of these considerations, I use archival research to contextualise, authenticate, evaluate and interpret research participants' career narratives. My intention is not to "check against inaccurate narration" (Wang 2002, p.142) and I am not concerned about "inconsistent stories" (Cahn 1993, p.2475) within the interviews. Rather, archival research is used to facilitate understanding of:

> "narrative accounts and interpretations in a broader context - personal, historical, social, institutional, and/or political" (Hatch and Wisniewski 1995, p.116).

Prior to the inaugural International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC) in 2010, there was limited historical scholarship in the field (Watson 2015a), and there

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continues to be a lack of focus on historical methods. Indeed, Gunn and Faire (2012, p.1) argue this is a widespread omission in "social, cultural and political history". L'Eplattenier (2009) confirms this is specifically the case for archival research despite its "privileged position as a taken-for-granted historical method" (King 2012, p.13).

Further, Watson (2015a, p.17) observes "the major research challenge" of accessing historical materials within public relations. There are few dedicated archives in the UK, one physical exception being material from the CIPR dating back to 1947 that is stored at the History of Advertising Trust (HAT) in Raveningham, Norfolk. I obtained permission from CIPR to use this resource on two occasions. However "burrowing deep" (King 2012, p.18) within the archive is difficult as there is little information on its contents, materials are not available digitally, archivists facilitate access to curated artefacts and the investigative process is immensely time-consuming. In respect of online archives (such as that provided by The Museum of Public Relations, 2016), various multi-media resources are available, although these are limited in volume and predominantly of US origin. Given these limitations, I decided to develop an original online research methodology using a "systematic search" strategy to access digital and digitised materials/information (Yakel 2010, p.102).

7.4.2. *Bricolage* archival research process

The focus of literature regarding contemporary archival research has tended to be on the practicalities of access (Yakel 2010) or the challenges of building a digital infrastructure (Gilliland and Mckemmish 2004) to catalogue unimaginable volumes of records (Thomas and Johnson 2013). In contrast, Mussell (2013, p.79) looks at the process of "history as a digital practice", indicating that:

"Digital resources, tools and technologies have become integral instruments through which we interrogate and understand the past. As these instruments continue to change, so too does the practice of history" (Mussell 2013, p.79).

It is my contention that what I call *bricolage* archival research encompasses this practice of "digital scholarship" (*ibid)* as a method to overcome the limitations of working with traditional and online curated archival resources.

This qualitative, interpretive approach was conceived to address questions arising from the career narratives of research participants, as well as to contribute socio-cultural context, insight and background shade and/or colour. Kirsch and Rohan (2008, p.2) observe how "archival and historical research" generates:

"tales of fascinating discoveries, unexpected leads, and early hunches leading to a scholarly project" (Kirsch and Rohan 2008, p.2).

However, rather than relying on what may "seem merely intuitive, coincidental, or serendipitous" (p.4), they emphasise the importance of a research process involving:

"Genuine curiosity, a willingness to follow all possible leads, an openness to what one may encounter, and flexibility in revisiting research questions and the scope of a project" (Kirsch and Rohan 2008, p.5).

This is consistent with the inquiry's strategy of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2014). It also encompasses a *bricolage* approach that reflects use of the French word by Lévi Strauss (1962, p.17) in respect of utilising "whatever is at hand". The craft-based analogy indicates a habit of collecting and retaining "many sets of tools and materials" simply because "they may always come in handy" (*ibid*).

As an archival research process, *bricolage* accommodates "the complexity of the lived world" (Kincheloe 2004, p.2). My

interest is in developing it as an improvised method (Denzin and Lincoln 2013) of reflexivity and meaning making that involves engaging in "fluid, eclectic, and creative approaches to inquiry" (Rogers 2012, p.5).

In practice, my *bricolage* archival research process looks for "multiple perspectives, voices, and sources" (*ibid*, p.7) to "develop complex understandings" (p.8) and construct a richer narrative than is evident from the *timeline* narrative interviews alone. It enables a "multi-layered and polyphonic narrative inquiry to elucidate an authentic representation" (Eaves and Walton 2013, p.67) of career strategies in public relations.

The technique I developed comprises three interconnected stages. The first involves annotating participants' career narratives at points where additional archival research would add value. These notes are collated using thematic analysis to identify common threads, which I then tie together into an outline to guide online research. Alleyne (2015, p.165) stresses that outlining is a means of organising ideas "into a coherent form and making explicit the connections between the various parts". I view the outline as an assemblage of knots and strings akin to the Andean *khipu* (Urton 2002) discussed in the previous chapter. These are then untangled using *bricolage* archival research.

The second stage is an organic and ad-hoc process involving various digital tools and materials (search engines, databases and so forth) to work with and within the "infinite archive" available online (Turkel et al. 2013 p.61). Wibberley (2012) argues that *bricolage:*

> "allows for bite-size chunks of research to be carried out that have individual meaning … which can then be pieced together to create a more meaningful whole" (Wibberley 2012, p.1).

Bricolage archival research collects fractals "that are nonlinear, contextually specific, and irregular in their manifestation" (Kincheloe 2005, p.331). In contrast, traditional systematic scholarship advocates logical pre-determined steps involving:

> "a clear stated purpose, a question, a defined search approach, stating inclusion and exclusion criteria, producing a qualitative appraisal" (Jesson et al. 2011, p12) .

In respect of the *bricolage*, its "logic consists in the establishment of necessary connections" between the "odds and ends" that are the traces of "the history which produced them" (Lévi Strauss 1962, p.35). My role as a *bricoleuse*[104] is to understand the context and value of the found materials that:

> "have *had a use* … and *can be used again* either for the same purpose or a different one if they are at all diverted from their previous function" (Lévi Strauss 1962, p.35).

During the third stage I employ the memo writing technique advocated by Charmaz (2014) to monitor, record, assess and interpret the found information before deciding how it can be woven into, or crafted alongside, the narrative analysis of the *timeline* interviews. This act of deconstruction and reconstruction involves reworking the knots and threads of *pastpresentfutureness* emerging from the research participants' narratives to construct a richer understanding of lived career experiences. As such, *bricolage* archival research acts as an underpinning canvas to the insight gained from the *timeline* narrative interviews. I consider the ethical considerations, limitations and analytical approach of the *bricolage* archival research process in the following sections of this chapter.

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[104] Wheeler (2015, p.1) makes a compelling case that "female researchers engaged in the act of bricolage ought to describe themselves as bricoleuse(s)", as "bricoleur, borrowed as it is from French, is a gendered term and is the masculine form of the noun".

7.5. Research ethics

Having discussed the two methods of primary research, this section considers research ethics. It confirms compliance with Bournemouth University regulations and explains how informed participant consent was secured. Ethical matters pertaining to undertaking the *timeline* narrative interviews and *bricolage* archival research are reviewed.

7.5.1. Ethics review

As a post-graduate researcher, I completed the required ethics e-modules and complied with Bournemouth University regulations[105]. The research inquiry received ethical consideration and necessary approval prior to the commencement of data collection.

7.5.2. Informed participant consent

Three documents were sent to prospective participants to ensure informed consent was secured:

1. **Participant briefing sheet** - detailing the research process, its purpose, criteria for participation (and withdrawal at any time), confidentiality, plus details of data collection, usage, storage and destruction;
2. **Participant Profiling Form** - obtaining personal and career profiling information;
3. **Participant Consent Form** - confirming understanding of the project, data usage and confidentiality processes.

Interview participants were asked in person to re-read the briefing sheet and a further consent form was discussed and signed by the researcher and participant.

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[105] The relevant University regulations are: 8A – Code of Practice for Research Degrees (Policy, Procedure and Guidelines and 8B – Research Ethics Code of Practice: Policy and Procedure (RECP)

7.5.3. Interview considerations

An ethical matter arose regarding the researcher's responsibility for participants' emotional well-being and shared confidences within the *timeline* narrative interview. Three types of situation were encountered. First, some participants asked for advice on their future career direction, suggesting they saw the researcher's role extending into career counselling. Additionally, on several occasions participants criticised employers or co-workers, discussed personal issues or shared frustrations with their current situation. Finally, in one case, the participant was visibly upset when expressing disappointment in how their career had developed.

The first situation arose consistently at the conclusion of the interview, enabling me stop the recording, fold up the timeline drawing, and confirm that I was happy to converse on a personal basis. In respect of shared confidences, participants were assured at the start of the interviews that nothing they said would be directly attributed to them. As explained in the final section of this chapter, anonymity and confidentiality are ensured throughout the methods of analysis and presentation of findings. In addition, participants' wishes are respected when they indicated something was not for inclusion in the thesis. In respect of emotional well-being, the incident happened during the final part of the interview when the participant reflected back to the start of their career. I stopped the recording to allow time and space for them to recover their composure. Rather than restarting the interview, we had a chat over a cup of tea and talked about more general issues and future plans.

In writing a memo reviewing this situation, I noted Fawkes' (2015, p.1) position "that uncertainty is a healthy state to be in when reflecting on ethical situations". Although Roberts (2002, p.105) observes that oral history interviews "may recover

memories that are painful and unpleasant", it is difficult to be sure in advance of participants' emotional reactions. Indeed, Hunter (2010) states:

> "the process of telling the narrative is believed to have the potential to change the participant's experience" (Hunter 2010, p.44).

Similarly, Seibold (2000, p.149) reports that in her study an "empathetic relationship" developed in interviews that "tended to be relaxed and in the form of conversations". She writes that:

> "participants revealed highly personal aspects of their lives far beyond my expectations, and quite possibly theirs too" Seibold (2000, p.149).

Seibold notes that such experiences are "emotional" and "cathartic" (*ibid*) for participants. I would add that as a researcher, I was affected by the participant's distress even though the encounter ended positively.

I had been careful in the interviews to ensure that research participants understood that I am not a qualified career counsellor. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, there are similarities in approach between my research and career counselling interviews. The thesis draws on career construction theory proposed by Savickas (2012, p.13), which he has developed into a model of career counselling termed "life design". This includes four elements used in interviews: construction, deconstruction, reconstruction and co-construction (*ibid*). Although the *timeline* narrative interviews involve each element, they did not replicate the specific format advised by Savickas (*ibid*, p.16), as my purpose was not to counsel participants. For instance, I did not seek to analyse or change "the client's thinking", their impressions of the "sequence of episodes" or propose future "career transitions" (*ibid,* p.17).

It is notable that although Savickas (2011) alludes to "professional ethics" (p.110), and indicates a need to ensure

that career counsellors' "interpretations are ethical as well as aesthetic", he does not directly discuss ethical practice or considerations in his work. In particular, Savickas (2013b,[106] p.660) seems to ignore how "personal revelation" (Seibold et al. 1994) places an ethical responsibility on an interviewer and raises ethical and procedural questions that are not addressed explicitly in his work[107].

7.5.4. Digital research considerations

The inquiry did not encounter any ethical concerns in relation to the *bricolage* archival research. All digital or digitised sources were in the public domain, although access occasionally required login or subscription (for example with *PR Week*).

P. Oliver (2010, p.133) outlines a number of ethical considerations regarding digital research focusing on "the identity of people in the virtual world", privacy, securing consent, undertaking surveys, and participation in discussion forums/social media. None of these apply in this case. However, limitations concerning *bricolage* archival research are considered in the next section.

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[106] Addressing the American Psychological Association, Savickas (2013b) may have presumed that a professional audience would implicitly appreciate the role of ethics in career counselling.

[107] Savickas (2003a) introduces and concludes a special edition of the *Career Development Quarterly* for the 90th anniversary of the National Career Development Association. Each paper within it responded to a SWOT analysis of the career counselling "profession" (Savickas 2003b, p.87) and looked ahead to the following decade. Not one of these considers ethics. This is surprising given Savickas's observation of "deprofessionalization" as a threat to the counselling occupation in the face of "growing number of career coaches and Internet entrepreneurs" (*ibid*, p.88). It is outside the scope of this thesis to consider such matters further, offer comparisons with professionalisation of public relations or examine specialist or general career counselling available for public relations practitioners.

7.6. Research design limitations

As the inquiry addresses a lack of prior academic research into careers within public relations, it is necessary to delimit its scope. The choice of research paradigm, methodology and methods has been justified earlier in this chapter. This section assesses key limitations concerning these decisions that have not already been considered.

7.6.1. Limitations of the research paradigm

The consistent thread running through the choices made for the research design is multiplicity. This informs the research methodology and ensures cohesion between the inquiry's conceptualisation and implementation. However, the intent to "illuminate and understand in depth the richness" (Jones et al. 2014, p.11) within public relations careers must be balanced by research "do-ability" (Marshall and Rossman 2011, p.4).

Acknowledging multiplicity is not to reject a need for clarity, reliability or validity in researching a complex phenomenon. However, I recognise the limitations of my position as expressed by Cilliers (2005):

> "our knowledge of complex systems is always provisional. We have to be modest about the claims we make about such knowledge." (Cilliers 2005, p.259)

Adopting an alternative empirical position might have offered statistical evidence of variables influencing career strategies within a wider research population. However, this objectivist perspective would be reductionistic (Unger 1996) and dependent on *a priori* assumptions. It would not, therefore, be suitable to achieve the inquiry's purpose.

7.6.2. Limitations of the research methodology

Charmaz (2014) addresses in some depth various misconceptions and issues concerning grounded theory,

including her constructivist perspective. I support her considered justification of the "versatility and potential" (*ibid,* p.337) of constructivist grounded theory as a research strategy in seeking to "construct an *interpretive rendering*" of the topic of inquiry. However, it should be noted that the strategy positions researchers "as part of what they study" (*ibid*, p.320) meaning that they "influence the research process and product" (Charmaz 2013, p.306). I acknowledge my subjectivity openly throughout this thesis.

Although Charmaz argues that grounded theorists "do not force preconceived ideas and theories on our data" (2014, p.32), to reduce this risk I use bracketing (Tufford and Newman 2010) as detailed in the next section.

Additionally, the cross-sectional time horizon of my investigation offers a limited focus on the topic of inquiry. In contrast longitudinal research would have allowed study of real-time decision-making and facilitated tracking of career development over an extended period. In reality selecting participants in anticipation of future career decisions would be problematic, and difficulties in undertaking long-term research are acknowledged widely within the career studies field (Sullivan and Crocitto 2007).

7.6.3. Limitations of research methods

All methods of research have "trade-offs" (Patton 2002, p.223), and my choices are informed by the purpose of the inquiry. Two qualitative methods are used to understand research participants' lived experiences, with *bricolage* archival research chosen to supplement *timeline* narrative interviews.

The intent of qualitative research is "not to generalize findings" beyond the context of the particular inquiry (Cresswell 2009, p.193). Reliability is accounted for within the analytical approach discussed later in this chapter. The inquiry's credibility

lies in "enabling individuals (and groups) to have a voice and an interpretation of their lives" (Roberts 2002, p.105). Its validity depends on how this authentic narrative is rendered in the analytical process. Abrams (2010, p.13) observes that analysis inevitably generates a "verisimilitude" of "the narrative as told", because:

> "the interview is a unique, active event, reflective of a special culture and of a particular time and space" (Abrams 2010, p.13)

This positions the researcher's role as one of "advocacy" that "harnesses the knowledge and skills of both parties: the researcher and the respondents" (*ibid*, p.169). In this regard, Gready (2008) notes that:

> "the right to analyse and even criticize testimony and truths of all kinds can be combined with the right of each individual to tell his/her story in his/her own way and have the story retold in a way that respects its origins and intentions." (Gready 2008, p.146).

Although Gready (*ibid*) is concerned that people "may not always conceptualize their stories in neat categories", I have already indicated that I do not see this as a limitation in this inquiry.

Likewise, reliance on memories of lived experience may be problematic (O'Donoghue, 2007). Consequently it is recognised that:

> "memory is a complex phenomenon … which, like any other type of historical evidence, needs to be evaluated as such" (Lummis 1988, p.130).

Additionally, I accept Abrams' (2010) argument that aspects of memory, such as subjectivity, fallibility, mutability, performance, and influence, can be recognised as interesting components of oral history. In my inquiry, the *timeline* element of the interviews reflects Derry's (2005, p.44) contention that "drawing can be

used as a memory prompt", and *bricolage* archival research offers an opportunity to add context, and if felt necessary, fact-checking.

There are a few further limitations to consider when using online resources within the inquiry. As noted by Brockmeier (2015, p.37) they do not necessarily provide "exact or complete recordings of past experiences" and may be thought of as a:

> "creative remixing of memories of the past, experiences in the present, and expectations of the future" (Brockmeier 2015, p.38).

Further, Mussell (2013) discusses "questions about 'presence' and 'absence'" and also the mutability of online records. Finally Tensen (2013) suggests a lack of digital skills as a limitation of online research. I am mindful of such issues, and confident that my extensive experience and high level of technological competence enables me to overcome them where possible.

The research population was relatively small and participants' experiences cannot be viewed as representative. I acknowledge this limitation and recognise that as a result, aspects of careers cannot be examined in this inquiry. I believe that this constraint is countered by the rich insight gained into the particular career experiences and avoid over-generalising the inquiry's findings.

7.7. Researcher positionality

This section examines researcher positionality in relation to the topic of inquiry, confirming my value laden axiological position. Specifically, three issues regarding my relationship with the research participants are considered: proximity, homophily and visibility. Additionally, I explain the reflexive methods used to militate "potentially deleterious effects" (Tufford and Newman 2010, p.80) arising from my position and perspective. Finally I reflect on my role in the data analysis process.

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There is common agreement that researcher positionality may "impact the research process" (Bourke 2014, p.1). Indeed, Robinson (2010) argues that:

> "researchers must aim for attainable goals, such as being rigorous, explicit, thorough, and accurate, while remaining open to revision and adaptive to real-life contexts" (Robinson 2010, p.622).

Further, he observes that what is important is not "researchers' absolute absence of bias, interest, or preconceptions" (*ibid*) but:

> "their careful efforts to recognise and overcome inhibiting biases to the best of their abilities" (Robinson 2010, p.622).

Consequently, researchers are advised to be reflexive "about what we bring to the study" (Charmaz 2014 p.27). I have followed this advice in using a research journal to bracket and foreground the multiplicity of my "assumptions, values, interests, emotions and theories" (Tufford and Newman 2010, p.81). Although it is claimed such "preconceptions influence how data are gathered, interpreted, and presented" (*ibid*), Adriansen and Madsen (2009, p.145) caution that it is difficult to determine "the direct effect" of the researcher's position.

I have chosen to employ "qualitative and reflexive methods", which Chodorow (1996, p.22) positions as "feminist research". Although methodologically I do not see myself to be a feminist researcher, I am female, a feminist and a researcher. Moreover, I am conscious of "gender as a situated phenomenon" (*ibid*, p.43) throughout the inquiry.

Whilst Langellier and Peterson (1992, p.157) use the term *spinstorying* to reflect how women "tell stories about their experiences", my preference is to apply a feminist sensibility to treat all voices within the research population equitably, "go beyond conceptualizing gender in absolute terms" (*ibid*) and examine my relationship with participants reflexively.

7.7.1. Insider proximity

The "proximity of the researcher" (Jamil 2007, p.209) relates to their position as:

> "insiders of specified groups or collectives or occupants of specified social status" (Merton 1972, p.21).

For example, I am a public relations insider, a position shared with the interview participants. Merton says insider knowledge provides "privileged access" (*ibid,* p.11), whilst Chan et al. (2013) contend that researchers' expert level of knowledge about a topic of inquiry hinders their ability to understand the perspective of participants. Bracketing is recommended by Tufford and Newman (2010, p.85) to address such concerns "throughout the research endeavor". Hence, I have adopted their suggestion of using "multiple techniques" (*ibid*), including memo writing, as reflexive devices supporting my inquiry.

The concept of being an insider is not dichotomous. Hellawell (2006, p.490) observes that researchers "can *simultaneously* be to some extent an insider, and to some extent an outsider". He indicates "a multiple series of parallel" dimensions of "insiderness" (*ibid*). This is recognised by Adriansen and Madsen (2009) who discuss:

> "having insider knowledge of the participants and insider knowledge of the research matter" (Adriansen and Madsen 2009, p.145).

My prior knowledge of participants came from analysis of their completed profiles and, in some cases, previous contact[108]. Using these criteria, I qualify as a "double insider" (*ibid*), which has a number of implications including "power relations" (p.148), and "presupposed shared understandings" (p.149), which I reference below.

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[108] I had met twelve of the twenty-one participants previously (seven of these not for many years).

7.7.2. Participant positionality

In addition to considering the position of the researcher, Adriansen and Madsen (2009) recommend being aware of the positionality of interview participants. They highlight the "many possible roles" adopted by both parties that "can be negotiated during the research process" (*ibid*, p.149). In my inquiry, I analysed each participant profile to map factors such as prior contact, power relationships, shared experiences, employment history, vocational education and/or membership of professional bodies. I then addressed the following questions adapted from a study by Christman (1988):

- How is this participant like me?
- How are they not like me?
- How were these similarities and differences played out in our interaction?
- How did interaction affect the course of the research?
- How does it illuminate and/or obscure the inquiry?

These questions concern homophily, defined as "the degree to which two communicators perceive themselves as similar" (McCroskey et al. 1974, p.42). McPherson et al. (2001, p.415) report that "similarity breeds connection" noting characteristics such as "genders, races, ethnicities, ages, class backgrounds, educational attainment, etc". In addition, Merriam et al. (2001, p.406) argue that similarity assumes "access will be granted, meanings shared, and validity of findings assured".

In order to examine critically where such matters arose during the interviews, I adopted the technique of using a "reflexive journal" recommended by Tufford and Newman (2010, p.87). For instance, I observed several respondents presumed a level of shared knowledge concerning the placement year within the undergraduate degree courses at

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Bournemouth University. Being able to analyse the journal entries helps me address Drake's (2010) concern that:

> "closeness [*with research participants*] may seem to compromise the researcher's ability to engage critically with the data" (Drake's 2010, p.85).

7.7.3. Online visibility

Saunders et al. (2015) contend that accessibility online of private as well as public information presents challenges for researchers. In the interviews, I realised my visibility within the occupation and through social media meant that participants had varying levels of familiarity with my work or career background. My call to participate in the inquiry was circulated through social media enabling potential participants to identify common interests and contacts. I also included links to a blog post that I had written to provide further details of the research inquiry. This facilitated ready access to my biography, social media accounts and previous writing[109].

It is evident that online visibility makes it impossible for a researcher to be a "wayfaring stranger" in the style of Studs Terkel (1975, p.8). Instead, my position is as a visible and "willing participant in a dialogical process" of research (Jones 2003 p.60).

Consequently I accept fully the claim by Greene (2014, p.1) that:

> "As qualitative researchers, what stories we are told, how they are relayed to us, and the narratives that we form and share with others are inevitably influenced by our position and experiences as a researcher in relation to our participants" (Greene 2014 p.1).

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[109] I have been involved in social media since 2006, with over 1,000 posts available on my personal blog site.

In response, I adopt recommendations from within the literature to acknowledge my researcher position and practice reflexivity during the process of research and analysis.

7.7.4. Researcher's analytical immersion

I explain and justify below my direct involvement in the data analysis process. I chose to prioritise narrative analysis over coding, and preferred to immerse myself in the *timeline* interview recordings rather than producing written transcripts. Similarly the *bricolage* archival research is a subjective method of immersion in the process of adding context to the narratives.

I have kept records of my involvement and thinking at all stages. Whilst this does not eliminate my subjectivity, it means that I am able to refer back and justify my interpretation. This makes the analysis process more transparent than the potential for researchers to hide behind coding. Nevertheless, interpretation of the findings acknowledges the singular perspective of the researcher's analytical immersion.

7.8. Analytical approach

This section explains the analytical process applied to the data collected through the research methods summarised in Table 5. In addition, I discuss the critical issue of how participant "invisibility" (Sagan 2015, p.10) is assured in order to protect shared confidences, confidentiality and anonymity.

The analytical process applies two strategies identified by Alleyne (2015): categorising and connecting. The former focuses on building patterns, themes and underlying frameworks by iterative examination of the data set (Charmaz, 2005). The second relates to how the researcher connects the "findings in narrative form" (Alleyne 2015, p.49).

Research interests	
Broad research objectives	RO1: To identify how public relations practitioners (PRPs) make sense of their career experiences; RO2: To examine the strategies that PRPs use to inform career decisions; RO3: To determine how PRPs are responding to a changing career context.
Conceptual framework	Careers are social constructions that involve relational agency and social learning as transformative career strategies enabling public relations practitioners to make sense of the multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters that they experience over time.
Timeline narrative interviews	
Research population	UK based. Mid-career (10-20 years' experience in PR). 21 participants: female (11) and male (10). Heterogeneity in demographics and experience.
Sampling approach	Part 1: Wide search, snowball process. Personal/career profiles. Part 2: Purposeful sampling: selection of participants. Theoretical sampling: additional, known contacts.
Interview structure	Opening question: "How did you first come to work in public relations?" Timeline narrative: A3 paper/coloured pencil drawing. Review interview guide: 1. Entry into public relations 2. Subsequent career experiences and choices made 3. People who had influenced career move 4. Themes, threads and patterns 5. Reflection on career to date (recursion) 6. Future directions.
Bricolage archival research	
Role in the inquiry	Supplement timeline narrative interviews. Add context and verification (where necessary).
Online approach	**Stage 1**: Annotate participant career narratives. Collate notes, thematic analysis, common threads, and outline. **Stage 2:** Organic, ad-hoc use of digital tools + materials Obtain fractals of found information. **Stage 3:** Memo writing: monitor, assess + interpret found information. Craft into narrative analysis of timeline interviews

Table 5.   Research methods

This process reflects a constructivist grounded approach whereby participants' career experiences (as shared in the *timeline* interviews) are analysed with reference to contextual information, reflexive insight and conceptual knowledge. Theories can then be constructed that are grounded in the compilation of:

> "past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (Charmaz 2014, p.17).

7.8.1. Tapestry metaphor as an analytical frame

The inquiry draws on the career construction theory developed by Savickas (2002), thereby reflecting a "constructivist and narrative perspective" (Del Corso and Rehfuss 2011, p.344). Participants in the *timeline* interviews are viewed to have constructed narratives that can be defined as: "the telling (or retelling) of a story or set of events in a specific time sequence", which clearly applies to careers (Colyar and Holley 2010, p.73).

As noted previously, the concept of tapestry is proposed as an original root metaphor and applied as an analytical frame in the inquiry. The metaphor accommodates narrative by recognising tapestries as "effective forms of literary expression" (Hunter 1912, p.295) and interviews as "*verbal tapestries*" (Many 2002, p.385) indicating that:

> "As threads are woven from side to side, the pattern of a tapestry emerges, the resulting picture is part of the structure or fabric of the tapestry itself" (Many 2002, p.385)

I conceptualise the combination of threads, patterns, pictures, and structure as the *woven narrative* of personal and collective careers, which allows for macro, meso and micro levels of analysis.

As a root metaphor, tapestry offers a narrative analytical frame capable of supporting a range of ideas. It also

accommodates theories that emerge from the data, for example, whether or not participants' career narratives can be considered as gendered. Within the tapestry frame, narrative analysis is useful:

> "to be able to see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change" (Squire et al. 2008, p.1).

7.8.2. Analytical research process

Whilst the inquiry is informed by constructivist grounded theory, its method of analysis is adapted, as is common among researchers using the theory. Charmaz (2014, p.15) observes a tendency for studies to concentrate on the initial elements of "iterative research" and/or to fail to construct theoretical concepts or generate "innovative ideas" (p.16) as an outcome. In contrast, my adaption occurs in respect of the "pivotal link" (*ibid*, p.113) between these two aspects.

Instead of engaging in "coding practices" (*ibid*, p.109) that reduce the richness of collected data, I prioritise narrative analysis. This seeks to protect "the integrity of the individual narrative" (Charmaz 2011, p.301) whereas formal grounded theory analysis would fracture and reintegrate it "into a collective analytic story".

Initially, I considered a structured coding process using *NVivo* software. However, after participating in two extensive training sessions, I realised that this approach would present problems for the data and my own involvement in the analysis. Coding creates fragmented versions of a written transcript before generating reconstructions of the data. It thereby adds to the four narrative forms of data identified by Abrams (2010):

> "the original oral interview, the recorded version of the interview, the written transcript and the interpretation of the interview material" (Abrams 2010, p.9).

Each form is used to "create another" (*ibid*) meaning that coding moves the interpretation further away from the authenticity of the participants' experiences and the wider context in which their careers are lived and narrated. As such, coding distances participants and the researcher in favour of digitalised records and splinters of depersonalised and impersonalised data.

My preference is to minimise the number of "mediated and edited versions of the real-time interview" (Abrams 2010, p.9) and examine careers contextually (Adriansen 2012). Consequently, the analytical process is tied directly to the interview recordings, *timeline* drawings, supplementary *bricolage* archival research and reflexive materials. The first three interview recordings were transcribed in full. However, on reflection, I decided to selectively transcribe the remainder. My reasoning follows the lead of Hanna (2013) who writes:

> "oral histories are about understanding a person's telling of their story, not about the creation of a document via a transcription of the interview. A transcription can lose some of the intricacy of the interview during its conversion from the spoken word to the written form" (Hanna, 2013, p.19).

In order to maintain a "tactile" human "closeness to the data", I designed an immersive analytic process that enhances the researcher's "knowledge of content and pleasure in handling data" (Gilbert 2002, p.215). This is not a rejection of digital technology as the process employs various devices and software. The digital recording of each interview was reviewed several times, using the transcription software, *Express Scribe*. This system accommodated the following steps, drawing on recommendations offered by Justinia (2015):

- Time effective listening with audio speed control;
- Addition of reactive comments*;*

- Identifying indicators to distinguish interviewer comments and participant narrative;
- Time-stamped bookmarks enabling recordings to be clearly structured (and matched to the *timeline* drawings);
- Annotations indicating points for *bricolage* archival research;
- Verbatim transcription using word-processing software;
- Contextual note taking.

As a result of experiencing tendonitis, I controlled playback of the recordings by foot-pedal and worked out a way to use speech recognition and dictation software. The selective transcripts, notes and annotations were then exported into *Scrivener,* a writing software package where connections were made between the imported content, additional information from the *bricolage* archival research, reflective memos, and material within the literature review sections of the thesis.

I started by gaining a detailed overview of each interview, and then applied a purposeful approach by working across all recordings. This enabled me to focus separately and collectively on the six career aspects within the interview guide[110], as well as emerging concepts and ideas that indicated potential for theory development. Consequently, *woven* narratives emerge from the iterative analytical process to inform key outcomes, theoretical constructs and generation of innovative ideas, as illustrated in Table 6.

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[110] The six career aspects covered are: entry into public relations; subsequent career experiences and choices made; people who had influenced career moves; themes, threads and patterns; reflection on career to date and future directions.

Tapestry narrative analytical framework		
Timeline narrative interviews Recorded as verbal tapestries Supported by timeline drawings	Threads, patterns, pictures + structure **Woven narratives** of individual + collective careers Gendered sensibilities	Supplementary *bricolage* **archival research** Reflexive materials (research journal and memos)
Data for micro/meso-macro levels of analysis		
Constructivist grounded theory approach		
Iterative research – data generated using qualitative methods	Rigid coding replaced by **narrative analysis**	Construction of **theoretical concepts** and generation of **innovative ideas**
Immersive analytical research process		
Data set: interview recordings, timeline drawings, supplementary *bricolage archival* research and reflexive materials **Express Scribe**: bookmark interview structure, selective transcripts, questions for *bricolage* archival research, contextual notes	**Scrivener**: connections made between imported documents, answers for *bricolage* archival research, literature review + *timeline* drawings **Purposeful approach**: generate *woven narratives* across collective careers focusing on career aspects in interview guide plus emerging concepts and ideas.	**Outcome to address:** • Broad research objectives, conceptual framework + sensitising concepts • Emerging career concepts, notably social cognitive theory and career construction theory • Claims of professionalisation of public relations in relation to micro/meso/macro levels

Table 6.   Analytical research process

Although the *timeline* technique is used predominantly to facilitate generation of rich data within the interviews, it has analytical value. As observed by Adriansen (2012) I found the drawings acted as notes that in many cases were supplementary to the recordings. I also consider the work of

Kolar et al. (2015)[111] that identifies three styles of timeline: *list-like*, *continuous-line* and hybrid, with two approaches used to construct these: *sequential* and *parallel*.

In principle, I support Adriansen's (2012) argument that the *timeline* drawings:

> "should remain in the background and not be published when presenting the results of the study" (Adriansen 2012, p.47).

However, I have considered how to enable evidence from the technique to be included in the analysis whilst protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of participants.

In summary, the aim of the analysis is to address the broad research objectives with reference, where appropriate, to the earlier review of literature within the fields of public relations and career studies. Specifically, the relevance of social cognitive theory (Bandura 2001) and career construction theory (Savickas 2005) is considered.

Additionally, interpretation of the findings is guided by the conceptual framework. This allows emerging themes to inform theory development. Finally, the analysis seeks to offer critical examination of claims of professionalisation of public relations in relation to individual/collective careers, the occupation, employing organizations and wider society.

7.8.3. Balancing participant visibility/invisibiity

To conclude the research design chapter, the critical issue of participant invisibility is considered. The researcher has an ethical responsibility to protect shared confidences, confidentiality and anonymity. However, this needs to be balanced with ensuring the visibility of an:

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[111] Kolar et al. (2015) published their paper after I had completed my interviews.

"individual's interpretation of the various events that have taken place during her or his work-related career" (Valkevaara 2002 p.198)

I draw on strategies suggested by Saunders et al. (2015, p.131)[112] to reduce "the risk of participant identification". Although not all participants were concerned about anonymity or confidentiality, I apply randomly generated letter coding when referring to a particular participant's career and an unconnected number when noting specific personal or other contextual information. Any real names of people and organizations have been removed, and I avoid including other "potentially identifying details" (*ibid*).

However, I have not adopted "elaborate disguises involving changing key (but nonessential) elements" (*ibid*). I have been mindful of circumstances that are "sufficiently unusual" (*ibid*) that an individual could be identified, for example, from the specific pattern of a respondent's career path. I do not attribute any quote directly to particular participants and I have used a search engine to ensure individuals cannot be identified from any quotes that are included in the thesis. I cannot, however, guarantee that participants will not subsequently restate what is reported in this work online or elsewhere and thereby risk being identified.

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[112] Saunders et al. (2015) examine the tension inherent in balancing participant visibility and invisibility. They identify "participants' use of social media" and their "engagement with the mass media" as notable challenges. Public relations practitioners are likely to have a high level of online visibility (as discussed in relation to the researcher in the previous section). Indeed, all of the participants have a social media presence (notably LinkedIn profiles) and details of the current and previous work of many can be found using search engines. Further Bridgen (2011) has discussed the blurring of personal and professional presence for public relations practitioners through social media, and she has noted gendered differences in this regard (Bridgen 2013a).

Saunders et al. (2015, p.131) argue forcefully against the creation of "representational accounts which do not use the actual words spoken by participants", which I support in my work. Against their practice, however, I decided not to use "multiple pseudononyms" for a single participant, nor have I presented "composite accounts" (*ibid*) using quotes of different participants. Nothing shared in confidence is reported in the findings or analysis, even under the guise of anonymity.

In conclusion, throughout the research design, my priority is to maintain the authenticity of participants' career experiences and narratives, whilst respecting absolutely their confidentiality and anonymity. I acknowledge the fluid boundaries between the researcher and participants and the inherent tensions these cause. I have sought to balance the need for both visibility and invisibility by employing various techniques and approaches that allow the preservation of data integrity and protect participants' identities.

Chapter 8. Research findings

8.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out the findings of the research process within three sections. First it presents an overview of the research participants and the chronological development of their careers. Next it reviews empirical evidence obtained using the *timeline* narrative interviews and *bricolage* archival research. Finally, it explains connections made across micro, meso and macro levels of analysis with reference to reflexive memo writing as an analytical method. As proposed by Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p.283), "reflexive interpretation" is adopted to enable acquisition of "good knowledge" through "cautious interpretation of empirical material".

The resultant yarns, patterns, pictures and structure of participants' individual and collective careers are examined in Chapter 9 as *woven narratives*. The aim is "to assess meanings and develop revealing insights" (*ibid*) to address the three broad research objectives and review claims concerning the professionalisation of public relations with reference to emerging career concepts.

Reflecting the constructivist grounded theory approach of the inquiry, Chapter 10 attends to abstract analysis. This enables the innovative ideas generated within the *woven* narratives to be crafted into theoretical constructs. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p.274) argue that researchers need "an ability to see various aspects" within their data, but must "control theories (interpretive possibilities), without letting them control you". This perspective is evident in Chapter 11 where conclusions are offered that situate the findings, analysis and theorising within the existing knowledge base and assess the inquiry's relevance and limitations.

Recommendations presented in Chapter 12 include establishing a professionalised career design for public relations. Finally a brief outro chapter reviews the researcher's active participation in the inquiry and substantiates the original contribution offered by the tapestry paradigm for the professionalisation of career strategies in public relations.

8.2. Career design of the research population

This section starts by presenting the personal and professional characteristics of the research population of twenty-one mid-career public relations practitioners. Next, it considers the spatial dimensions of their careers. Finally, the chronology of participants' career development within the occupation's tripartite structure is reviewed.

In an attempt to stimulate heterogeneity within the research population, the call to participate had been circulated widely using social media, including the CIPR *Diversity and Inclusion Forum* Facebook group. In addition, approaches were made directly to a variety of potential participants known to the researcher. Responses were received from a diverse range of people interested in the inquiry; however, many did not have the required period of experience within the occupation.

8.2.1. Participant characteristics

Personal and professional information provided by participants in the profile document is indicated in Table 7.[113] In terms of personal characteristics, eleven of the twenty-one participants are female and ten are male. Their age range is 29-54 years, with a median average of 41 years. The men are marginally older (range: 32-54; median: 42 years) than the women (range: 29-52; median: 40 years).

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[113] In Table 7, a randomly allocated, single letter identifier is used to preserve participant anonymity and confidentiality.

Participant	Age	Gender	Marital status	Children	Degree	Professional qualification	Professional body member
A	47	Female	Married	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
B	41	Female	Married	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
C	44	Male	Married	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D	37	Female	Married	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
E	54	Male	Married	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
F	52	Male	Married	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
G	42	Female	Married	Yes	Yes	No	No
H	29	Female	Co-habit	No	Yes	No	Yes
I	34	Female	Married	Yes	Yes	No	Lapsed
J	52	Female	Married	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
K	45	Female	Married	Yes	No	Yes	No
L	40	Female	Single	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
M	33	Female	Single	No	Yes	Yes	Lapsed
N	39	Female	Co-habit	No	Yes	Yes	Lapsed
O	35	Male	Single	No	No	No	Yes
P	41	Male	Co-habit	No	Yes	No	No
Q	45	Male	Co-habit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R	32	Male	Engaged	No	Yes	No	Yes
S	46	Male	Married	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
T	37	Male	Married	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
U	33	Male	Married	Yes	No	Yes	Lapsed

Table 7.   Personal and professional profile of research participants

Two-thirds of participants (n=14) are at the Establishment career stage (range: 25-44 years); the remainder fall within the Management career stage (range: 45-65 years). The majority of respondents are married (61.9 per cent; n=13), engaged (n=1) or co-habiting (n=4).[114] Two-thirds of the research population (n=14) have children; including all those who are married.

Whilst the research population seems to be a conventional and somewhat homogeneous group, this belies participants' personal variation. For instance, the co-habitee with children reported being in their relationship for 26 years; one participant had children from a previous marriage and was a step-parent in their current marriage; another had a child when a teenager and has subsequently married. Considering other vectors of identity: two participants hold dual-nationality, one belongs to an ethnic minority group, one is homosexual, one reported partial deafness as a disability, and two noted their Christian faith.

The relative homogeneity of personal characteristics within the research population suggests a limitation of the inquiry. However, it is indicative of the historical development of the occupation as discussed in Chapter 2. Indeed the CIPR survey (2016b) shows socio-cultural representation across public relations is lower than the general UK population[115] in

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[114] 61.5 per cent of the general UK population aged 30-54 years is married or civil partnered (ONS 2016).

[115] CIPR (2016b) indicates 10 per cent of public relations practitioners report as BME (Black Minority Ethnic), 6 per cent are recorded as lesbian/gay/bisexual/asexual and 8 per cent have a disability. In comparison, government data shows that 17 per cent of the UK working population has a disability (DWP 2016). In terms of sexual identity, depending on age, between 6.7 and 4.8 per cent of working age persons report as gay/lesbian, bisexual or other (ONS 2015). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Owen et al. 2015) reports ethnic minorities (non-White British) represented 21 per cent of 16-64 year olds within the UK population in 2012, with a projected growth to 25 per cent by 2022.

respect of ethnic diversity and disability, and broadly comparable in terms of sexual identity.

With reference to professional information, the majority of participants are qualified to undergraduate degree level (81 per cent; n=17), which is consistent with the wider occupation (CIPR 2016b). Four studied public relations at university, one of whom later attained an MBA. Twelve participants (57 per cent) have at least one post-graduate qualification; compared with 47 per cent of respondents in the CIPR survey (2016b). One participant has not studied at either graduate or post-graduate level. In total, two-thirds (n=14) of the research population have a degree or professional qualification in public relations, which is substantially higher than indicated by CIPR (2016b).[116]

Similarly, the number of participants belonging to a professional body (most commonly CIPR) is greater than could be expected,[117] with fourteen respondents being current members (67 per cent) and a further four (19 per cent) reporting lapsed membership.

Participants studied a wide range of degree subjects at University. In addition to public relations, other communicative qualifications held by the research population include English, modern languages, graphic design and media production. Perhaps surprisingly given the historical link between public relations and journalism (noted in Chapter 2), only three participants are qualified journalists. Other subjects studied are sociology/social psychology, philosophy, public administration,

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[116] Participants' professional qualifications were awarded by CIPR (https://www.cipr.co.uk/content/qualifications) or CAM Foundation (http://www.camfoundation.com/qualifications/). CIPR data (2016b) indicate 24 per cent of survey respondents hold a university qualification in public relations or communications.

[117] As noted in Chapter 2, it can be estimated that under half of public relations practitioners are members of one or more professional bodies in the UK, although it is difficult to determine an exact percentage.

government and public policy, and business studies. One participant obtained a degree in biochemistry and another in geography/environmental biology; both made use of their chosen subject as a specialism within their public relations careers.

In summary, the research population collectively can be pictured as comprising well-educated professionals who tend to be married with children. Nevertheless, heterogeneity among participants is evident when their personal and professional characteristics are examined at a detailed level. The strong incidence of higher education qualifications and membership of industry bodies as reported above might be indicative of participants' interest in the topic of careers, and potentially their commitment to professional career development.

8.2.2. Spatial dimensions of participant careers

Looking at where participants developed their careers encompasses geographic location, mobility, type of organization and sector/industry. In order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity, information concerning these spatial dimensions is summarised rather than presented as individual profiles.

The majority of participants currently work and live in southern England, with one person based in Wales, and another in Norfolk. Many participants moved around the UK in developing their careers, although others have remained in the close vicinity of where they grew up or went to University. Everyone with early career experience within consultancies had worked in London. Subsequently, most of these participants have relocated, although one continues to work in a London-based consultancy. Another participant moved to the capital to take a head of department job within the not-for-profit sector. A further participant has experience of working in London for

consultancies as well as major private sector corporations, and has completed an overseas secondment for one global company.

Travel is a key part of the careers of all those who have worked for multinational private sector organizations.[118] Three participants have undertaken an overseas secondment, although they had no guarantee of a job opening being available once this was concluded. One participant pursued voluntary work abroad after graduation, with two others taking career breaks to travel globally for periods of up to six months. Some participants opted to commute long distances rather than relocate, with only one participant moving location (within the UK) as a result of a partner's career development.

Collectively participants have experience across a wide range of sectors, industries and types of organizations. This includes almost all of the sectors/industries[119] listed in the CIPR survey (2016b), encompassing public, private and not-for-profit organizations. Sector specialisation was common among participants and derives predominantly from early career experience. For instance, all four participants who studied public relations at university developed their careers initially in the sector where they had undertaken a placement year. Other participants specialised in particular disciplines such as media relations, digital communications, corporate social responsibility, public affairs and internal communications.

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[118]   International travel is mentioned by research participants who were directly employed by multinational businesses as well as those working for their public relations consultancies.

[119]   Participants have worked in the following sectors: aerospace/defence, arts/culture, automotive, charity/voluntary sector, computing/technology, education, fashion/beauty, financial services/corporate, FMCG, health/pharmaceutical, insurance/legal, manufacturing, professional body/trade association, emergency services, NHS, local government, retail, sport, science/engineering, travel and tourism.

Career	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
2015	♦	♦	♦	♦■	♦	♦	○+○	○	○+✖+✖	○+○
2014	♦	♦	♦	♦♦	♦	♦	○+○	○	○	■○
2013	♦♦	❖♦	♦	■♦	♦	♦	○+○	○	○	■
2012	♦	♦❖	○+■	□■	♦	♦	○+○	○	○	■
2011	♦	♦	○+■	■■□	♦	♦	○	○	○	■
2010	♦	♦	○+■	■	♦♦	♦	○	○	■○	■
2009	♦	♦♦	○+■	♦■	♦	⌘♦	○	○	■	■
2008	♦	♦	○+■	♦	■♦	⌘	○	○	■	■
2007	♦	⊙♦	○+■	♦	■	⌘	♦○	○	■	■
2006	♦	■⊙	○	♦	■	⌘	♦	○	■	■+○■
2005	♦	⊙■	○+□	♦	■	■⌘	♦	○	■	■+○
2004	♦	⊙	■+○+□	⊙♦	■	■	♦	■○	■	■+○
2003	♦♦	⊙	■+⊙	⊙⊙	■■	♦■	♦	■	■	■+○
2002	♦	■	⊙	■	♦	♦	♦	○+✖■	■	■■
2001	♦♦		⊙■	⊙	■	♦	♦	○+✖	■	■
2000	♦		⊙	⊙	■	■♦	♦♦	○+✖	○■	✖■
1999	♦				■	■♦■	♦	○+✖	○	✖
1998	♦				■	♦■	♦	♦	○	⊙✖
1997	♦				■	■♦	♦	♦	■○	⊙
1996	♦♦				⊙■	■	♦	○♦	■	⊙
1995	✖♦				⊙	⊙■	♦	♦○	■	
1994	✖				⊙	⊙+⊙	♦♦	○	■	
1993	✖				⊙	⊙	♦♦	♦	■■	
1992	✖				⊙	⊙	♦	♦	■	
1991	✖						♦	♦	■	
1990	⊙✖						♦	✖	■	
1989	⊙						♦♦	✖	■	
1988	⊙						✖♦	✖	■	
1987	⊙						✖	❖✖	■⊙	
1986							✖	❖	⊙	
1985							✖	❖	⊙	
1984								⊙	⊙	
1983								⊙	⊙	
1982								⊙	⊙	
1981								⊙	⊙	

Table 8a.   Chronological career ordering of research population (part 1)

250

Career	#11	#12	#13	#14	#15	#16	#17	#18	#19	#20	#21
2015	○+○	■	■■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■■
2014	○	■	■	■	■■	■	■	■■	■	■■	■
2013	○	■	■	■	■	■■	○■	■	■	□■	■
2012	○	■■	■	■	■■	■	■○	■■	■■	■□	■
2011	○	■	■	■	■	■■	■	■■	■	■■	■■
2010	■○	■	■■	■	■	■	■■	■■	■■	■■	■
2009	■	■	■	■	■	■■	■■	■	■	■	■■
2008	■	■	■	■	■■	■	■■	■	○■	■	■■
2007	■	■	■	■	■	■	■■	❖□■	○	■■	■
2006	■	■	■	■	■	■■	■	■	■○	⊙■	■
2005	■	■■	■	■	✖■	■	■	□■	■	⊙+■	■■
2004	■	■	■■	■	✖	⊙■	■	□	■■	⊙	■■
2003	■	■	■	■■	✖	⊙	✖	■□	■	⊙	■+⊙
2002	■	■	■	■	✖	⊙	✖	■	⌘■		■+⊙
2001	■	✖■	■■	■	✖✖	⊙	✖	■+⊙	⌘		■+⊙
2000	■	✖	■	■■	✖			■■+⊙	⌘		■
1999	■	✖	■	■				■	⊙⌘		■■
1998	■	✖		○■				■■	⊙		✖
1997	✖■	✖		○				■			✖✖
1996	✖+⊙	✖		✖✖+○				■■			⊙✖
1995	✖+⊙			✖				✖■			⊙
1994	✖			✖				⊙✖			⊙
1993	✖			✖				⊙			⊙
1992	⊙✖			✖+⊙				⊙			
1991	⊙			⊙				⊙			
1990	⊙			⊙				⊙			
1989	⊙			⊙							
1988				⊙							

Key:

○	Independent/Freelance
■[□]	In House [secondment or short-term contact]
◆	Agency/consultancy
✖	Non-PR role
⊙	Undergraduate education/placement
⌘	Non-working time out
❖	Travelling time out
(shaded)	Transition (job change, promotion etc.)
+	Indicates additional roles

Table 8b.   Chronological career ordering of research

population (part 2)

Six members of the research population currently undertake voluntary work, primarily involving committee roles as members of professional bodies. One participant was studying for a professional qualification at the time of the interview.

The above overview reveals substantial variation in location, mobility and nature of participants' career experiences. As a group, all had experienced spatial transitions in their career in one or more of the dimensions identified by Gunz et al. (2007). Narratives concerning the spatial transition dimensions of participants' careers are analysed in the next chapter.

8.2.3. Chronological career development

The temporal flow of participants' career experiences is presented using chronological ordering in Tables 8a and 8b.[120] This analysis derives from participants' curricula vitae (CV) or LinkedIn details supplied in support of their profile documents.

It was intended that participants in the inquiry would have between ten and twenty years' working experience in the occupation. However, three of those selected had longer public relations' career histories.[121] Hence a chronological period of 1987-2015 is covered within the inquiry.

The average length of public relations experience among the research population is 17 years, with eleven participants having worked in the field prior to 1999. Shading in Tables 8a and 8b indicates spatial transitions concerning changes to participants' job role, employer or employment status.

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[120] The numerals assigned as identifiers of individual careers do not correlate to the letters indicated in Table 7. Table 8 is split into two parts on separate pages with a key provided under Table 8b.

[121] These participants were chosen on the basis of having had no prior contact with the researcher and because their careers differed in notable ways from other participants.

There is notable variation in the number, frequency and chronological timing of the transitions evident in Tables 8a and 8b. Within the data set, it is difficult to offer insight into the technician-manager role transition that is emphasised within public relations literature, given the unreliability of job titles (Wolf 2006) and limited detail in the CV/LinkedIn profiles. Two male research participants did demonstrate a traditional hierarchical career within a single multinational corporation. Both transitioned into public relations from journalism. Transitional experiences of the remainder of the research population appear to reflect the more contemporary career concepts outlined in Chapter 5.

In terms of gender, all of those who have founded businesses are female and three of the four long-term independent practitioners are male. Seven of eleven participants currently employed in-house are male. Whilst the median age for in-house practitioners is 37 years, and the business founders are, on average, 39 years old, the long-term independent practitioners average 51 years of age.

In conclusion, the twenty-one research participants reflect a level of collective homogeneity in terms of their general personal characteristics, which is indicative of the wider occupation. As a group, they are well-educated and demonstrate a high incidence of professional body membership. Individually there is considerable variation in participants' personal circumstances and career experiences. There is evidence of traditional hierarchical corporate careers alongside examples of career mobility and transitions within and across the tripartite occupational structure. Heterogeneity applies to the wide range of sectors, industries, types of organization and disciplines evident throughout the flow of the participants' careers. Overall, the career design of the research

population as a whole, as well as for individual participants, indicates experience of traditional career concepts and contemporary career patterns as discussed in Chapter 5.

8.3. Career yarns, patterns, pictures and structure

Two types of yarn are used to craft tapestries: warp and weft. Weavers pass coloured weft yarns over and under "load-bearing" warp yarns that are stretched onto a loom (Campbell 2001, p.5). The weft yarns create visible patterns and/or pictures and completely cover the underlying structure of the *warp* yarns. I embrace this process within my inquiry's analytical framework as an analogy when considering the empirical evidence obtained using the *timeline* narrative interviews and supplementary *bricolage* archival research.

In this section, the *timeline* drawings and interview recordings are viewed as weft yarns that craft the patterns and pictures of the research participants' careers. Next, the warp yarns are drawn from the *bricolage* archival research that provides the underlying contextual structure of the career experiences of the research population.

8.3.1. Analysing the patterns of *timeline* drawings

The *timeline* narrative interviews took place between April and October 2015, at a time and place selected by the research participants. Thirteen chose an office or work space, two specified the CIPR library, two invited the researcher into their homes, and four preferred a café or bar.[122] The interviews took place within working hours between Monday to Friday, lasting between one and three-and-a-half hours.

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[122] The range of locations reflects the trends noted in Chapter 5 concerning working from home and other private, public or professional spaces.

All but one of the participants[123] completed a *timeline* drawing as an *aide memoire* when talking about their careers. Adriansen (2012, p.43) claims, "an important issue is when the timeline should begin and end". In the inquiry, participants determined their personal starting point in the interview and on the *timeline* drawing in response to the initial question: "How did you first come to work in public relations?".

Likewise, whilst the date of the interview provided a chronological end point to recollection of the lived career, participants were asked to extend the narrative and timeline to illustrate what they felt would come next. As detailed below, the *timeline* process was found to stimulate reflexivity, recursiveness and "a sense of future orientation" (Chen 1997, p.315) as participants (re)constructed and (re)viewed the visual illustration of their careers.

Table 9 categorises the *timeline* drawings generated in the inquiry.[124] Examples were found of each of the three *timeline* styles identified by Kolar et al. (2015): *list-like* (n=7)*, continuous-line* (n=6) and *hybrid* (n=7). Visually the timelines differed markedly, although three patterns were observed. I have termed these: ordered (n=8), simple (n=3) and complex (n=9). Photographs illustrating the six *timeline* formats created by the research participants are shown in Figures 7a and 7b.[125] Anonymised diagrams demonstrating ordered, simple and complex patterns (for the continuous-line style) are presented in Figures 7c and 7d.

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[123] This participant was physically unable to draw as they held their small baby on their lap during the interview.

[124] Roman numerals are used in Table 9 as *timeline* identifiers to protect participant anonymity and confidentiality. There is no direct relationship between these and the letters used in Table 7 for participant profiles or numerals used in Tables 8a and 8b to indicate participant careers.

[125] Participants were free to determine whether to create their *timeline* as a vertical or horizontal drawing.
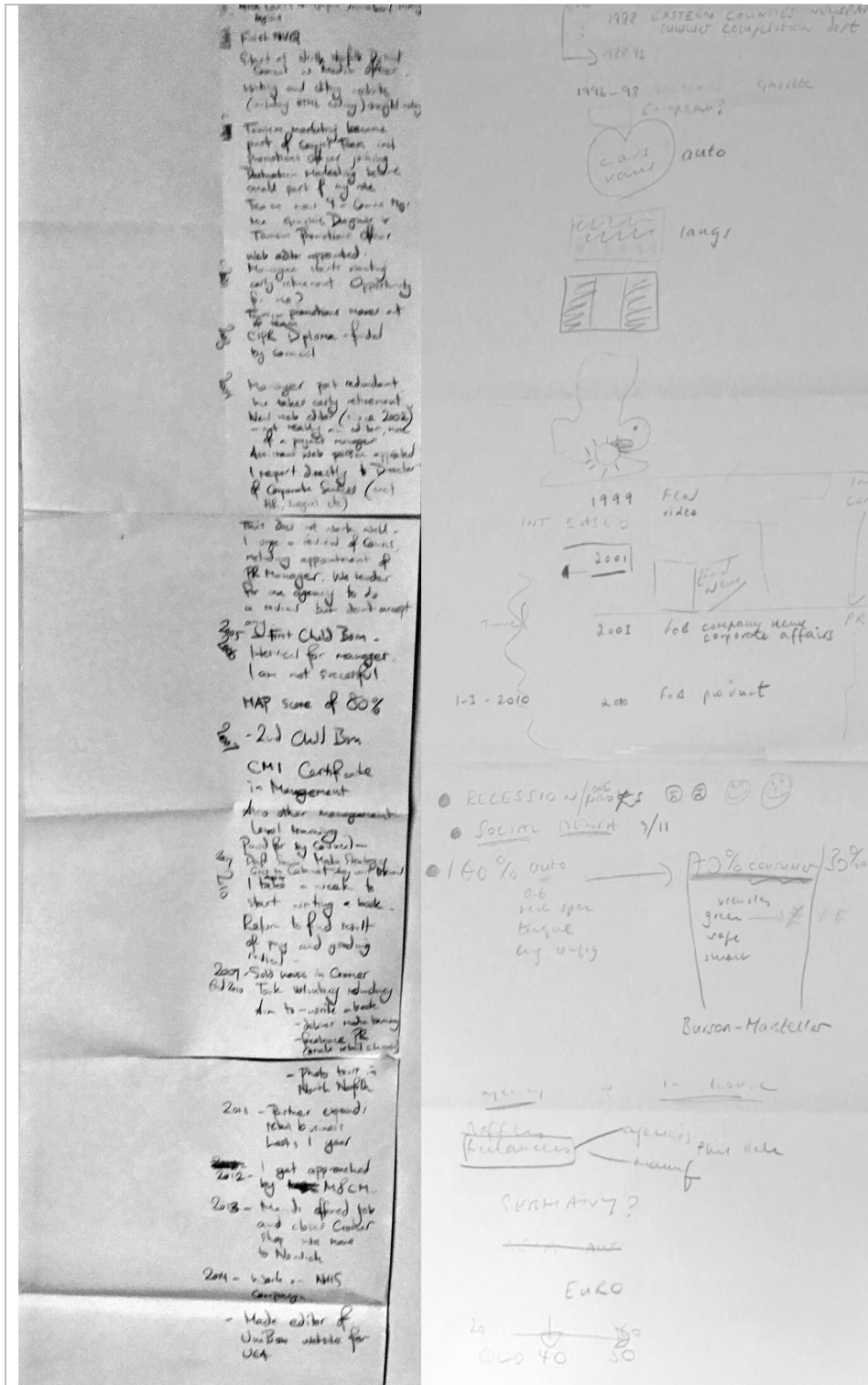
| List-like ordered timeline | Continuous line complex timeline |

Figure 7a. Photographs illustrating vertical timeline formats

List-like simple timeline

Continuous-line simple timeline

Continuous-line ordered timeline

Hybrid complex timeline

Figure 7b. Photographs illustrating horizontal timeline formats

Continuous-line ordered timeline

Continuous-line simple timeline
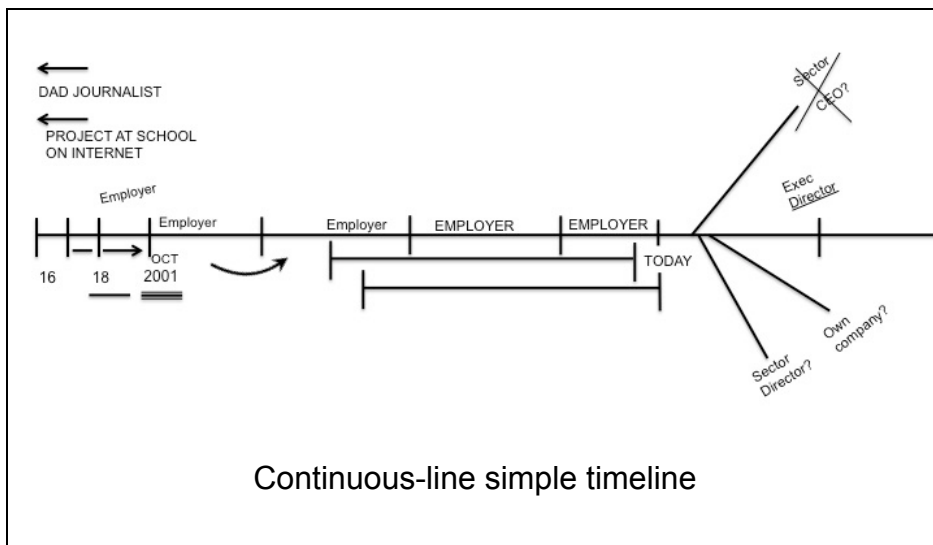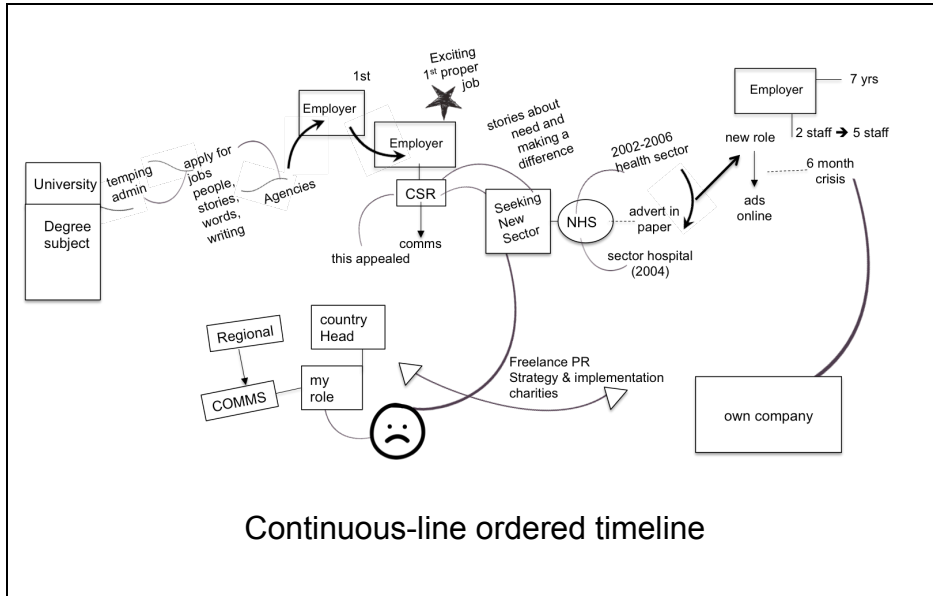
Figure 7c. Anonymised diagrams of continuous-line ordered and simple timeline formats

1979   SCHOOL PAPER
UNIVERISTY PAPER "NAME"
1988   REGIONAL NEWSPAPER
         Summer competition department
            1988-92
1996-98 LOCAL NEWSPAPER

European?

sector
products

[German flag]   langs

[French flag]

[Company]

date

INT BASED
date   video   INT
                                     COMMS
travel
                        news
1-3 2010

                                            PR
         date   Company news
                     corporate affairs
         date   Company product

● RECESSION
● SOCIAL MEDIA   £s
                  9/11
● 100% sector   70% consumer   30% sector

                           Agency name

agency   vs   in-house

staffers   agencies
freelancers   Name of a
                      manuf   person

GERMANY?
ASIA   AUS
    EURO

20   60
OLD   50
      40

Continuous-line complex timeline

Figure 7d. Anonymised diagram of continuous-line

complex timeline format

Timeline	Style	Visual type	Chronological ordering	Graphic
i	List-like	Ordered	Consistent date/time	Yes
ii	List-like	Ordered	Consistent date	No
iii	List-like	Ordered	Consistent date	Yes
iv	List-like	Ordered	Consistent date	No
v	List-like	Ordered	Consistent date/ occasional time	No
vi	List-like	Simple	Consistent date	No
vii	List-like	Simple	Consistent date	No
viii	Continuous-line	Complex	Consistent date	No
ix	Continuous-line	Ordered	Consistent date	Yes
x	Continuous-line	Ordered	Consistent date	Yes
xi	Continuous-line	Complex	Consistent date	Yes
xii	Continuous-line	Ordered	Occasional date/time	Yes
xiii	Continuous-line	Simple	Occasional date/age	No
xiv	Hybrid	Complex	Consistent age	Yes
xv	Hybrid	Complex	Consistent time	Yes
xvi	Hybrid	Complex	Consistent date/time	Yes
xvii	Hybrid	Complex	Occasional date	Yes
xviii	Hybrid	Complex	Occasional date/time	Yes
xix	Hybrid	Complex	Occasional time	No
xx	Hybrid	Complex	Occasional date/time	No

Table 9.   Analysis of research participants' career timeline drawings

Five participants produced ordered *list-like* drawings that "described life events chronologically and were text-heavy" (Kolar et al. 2015), p.19). Two others produced similar, yet simpler drawings that listed little more than employer names, dates and job titles. Consistent use of date ordering was also evident in four of the *continuous-line timelines*. Three of these had an ordered appearance; one, which featured numerous graphics, was more complex. Looking at the complex *hybrid timelines,* one participant featured age as a consistent marker; another recorded the time they spent in each role and a third consistently indicated date and time. The remaining participants (n=6) occasionally noted their age, date and/or time. Different forms of chronological ordering, therefore, appear as either a consistent or sporadic pattern in all of the participants' career illustrations.

Most of the *continuous-line* drawings feature "angles, waves and curves" *(*Kolar et al. 2015, p.19), although one participant produced a simple drawing comprising a series of horizontal lines to indicate employment periods for specific organizations. In contrast, all seven examples of the *hybrid*[126] style of *timeline* were complex in appearance. Graphics (ranging from stars and asterisk symbols to detailed images) were found in all styles of *timelines,* although most commonly in the *hybrid* drawings*.*

Kolar et al. (2015, p.19) claim that the *hybrid* style of *timeline* depicts "complex experiences". However this was not necessarily the case in my inquiry. Participants who produced the most detailed of the *complex timelines* tended to be those adopting a technique of simultaneous drawing and speaking.

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[126]   An example of the *hybrid timeline* presented in Kolar et al (2015, p.22) that features a continuous line and further written information is termed "messy".

The simplest drawings arose when participants updated the *timeline* intermittently. The most common technique involved participants either narrating a period of experience and then recording this on the *timeline,* or updating the drawing and then discussing this experience. Variation in technique was not related to the length of the interview, complexity or duration of career experiences or any personal or professional characteristics of the participants.

The complex *hybrid* format appears to most closely represent the method recommended by Adriansen (2012, p.43) where "the timeline is the basis of the whole interview". Kolar et al. (2015) term this a *parallel* approach and favour its use over a *sequential* one that Heppner et al. (1994, p.84) instruct career counsellors to adopt, whereby *timeline* drawing precedes discussion of "life-career planning and decision making" at the start of an interview. My inquiry suggests that participants adopt a cognitive "parallel-processing model" (Crowder 2015, p.354) when they verbalise and illustrate their career experiences simultaneously and "serial processing" (*ibid*) when they alternate the narrative and drawing elements of the interview. This *serial* approach was noted predominantly among participants who produced the simplest or most ordered *list-like* and *continuous-line* styles of *timeline*.

Unfortunately, the varying level of detail in the *timeline* drawings limits their usefulness as an analytical data set in the inquiry. However, their use achieved the research purpose (as explained in the previous chapter) of enhancing participants' involvement in the narrative interviews. For instance, chronological ordering in the *timelines* stimulates appraisal of the sequence, timing and meaningfulness of visible career experiences (Mazzetti and Blenkinsopp. 2012).

8.3.2. Crafting weft yarns in narrative interviews

Turning to the narrative interview recordings, participants' deeper reflections reveal a range of pictures. Two core findings are presented here, with Chapter 9 offering further narrative analysis of the authentic individual/collective voices and experiences of the research population.

The first observation is that participants focus primarily on the work undertaken throughout their careers rather than on processes involved in career development. From a diversity perspective, Wittmer and Rudolph (2015, p.169) contend that "individual career management" should concentrate on continuous "job crafting" opportunities rather than "the disruptions of formal transitions" that dominate traditional careers. It is, therefore, interesting that where visible records of career (such as CV/LinkedIn profiles and the *timeline* drawings) highlight changes in jobs, employers or the nature of employment, the interview recordings reveal participants' subjective attention on the time and space between these incidents of "work role transition" (Gunz et al. 2007, p.479). Consequently, the interviews reveal a "narrative of experience" (Squire 2008, p.42) encompassing people, places, travel and events, alongside personal thoughts, feelings and actions within stories that connect the past, present and future. This is illustrated in representative quotes from three participants:

> "Out of all my jobs, I was probably happiest doing that one because it was freedom. There were times when it was quite stressful though because you'd never want to turn work down. So I do remember them being times of just, you know, being really stressed and working late in the evenings a lot and working weekends... But then equally, you know, if I wanted to go in and help out in my daughter's school, I could. I'd just work later. So it was flexible from that basis."

> *[Participant discussing freelance employment experience]*

"A friend let me sleep on their bedroom floor in London, so I moved up. Wanted to go to London, yes, definitely. So lived in London, worked in a bar for a couple of months to keep going and started applying or jobs. And got my first job, lovely job for a communications partnership. Travel PR... In Central London... They did travel PR, freight PR and something else PR. And I was given *<<account>>*. So I got to fly around Europe. Launching hotels and taking press on press trips and stuff. Then I also got to do *<<client name>>*, all-inclusive holidays. So I got to go to Kenya and St Lucia and somewhere else. Where I'd take press for a week and they would enjoy, you know. Take them out and tour around the area. Basically sell the area as a destination."

[Participant recalling experience of first agency job]

"By the time I left, the team was completely my own and the structure was my own. And we'd won press office of the year a couple of times. And *<<team member>>* had won rising star. So we moved from twentieth in *<<name of survey>>* to about third. It was considered a success in that period in terms of performance against other press offices by objective measure. And also I think the brand – it's a difficult brand – but I think from where we were there, to where we were by time I left… I was fortuitous in that the then president of the company *<<name>>*, happened to be in *<<company location>>* on my last day; in a meeting. Only his second visit. He came along and personally congratulated me – which is good for a president of a company on your last day. So yes, they were good times at *<<company>>*."

[Participant talking about leaving a previous employer]

A second finding relates to the richness of narratives concerning early career experiences in public relations. Few of the research participants made a deliberate choice to work in public relations, yet all recall their initial experiences positively and with enthusiasm. A high level of "career salience" (Greenhaus 1971, p.209) is evident in the importance that research participants place on their work at the start of their careers. Further, Molley and Noe (2010) argue that:

"individuals high in career salience may have a strong predisposition towards career-related learning" (Molley and Noe 2010, p.345).

This propensity within the research population was noted earlier in relation to attainment of post-graduate qualifications. It is evident in the following interview quote:

"An opportunity came up where <<*contact name*>> was expanding her team and she needed a comms officer to support her and you know, she gave me a ring and said: "Would you consider applying for it? I know you. I like you". I liked the opportunity to join an organisation as it was expanding so I applied for it and got it. So that was the leap from journalism.

"In hindsight I didn't understand PR at all really. From everything that I've learned now, media relations is just a minute part of it. But it was the stepping stone to move from journalism into PR. And so yes. Moved across. I'd be lying if I didn't say the money was a factor as well. Moving from a junior reporter salary on a local newspaper, into a public sector funded, graded comms officer role meant two or three grand pay rise for me, which at that time was a blessing.

"One of the big parts of this job was about events. And some education work as well. But basically going out and representing the organisation at events and talking about the work of the organisation. As we were doing more and more events she <<*the contact*>> needed an extra pair of hands to do that.

"It was also round about that time that I – you know – having made the leap. Work experience is great, but I knew that I needed some more of a theoretical understanding and that is when, so it was in that time when I completed that course <<*CIPR Advanced Certificate*>>."

[Participant explaining move from journalism into PR role]

However, when discussing later career experiences, several participants are critical of public relations. Others indicate that work had become less of a focal point in their lives as family commitments took priority. Some practitioners contend that their

careers have developed away from public relations as a result of new opportunities or they envisage their future work will move in a different direction. Frustration with the occupation is expressed clearly in the following example quote:

> I was bored with PR and I wanted to do something different. So I – definitely wanted to get out of PR. So I thought I could do that – and then I decided that actually, that wouldn't solve the boring home situation, so I moved to be with <<*partner's name*>>… I went to work for <<*management consultancy*>>. I saw this job advertised in PR Week. It was doing "reputation building" as <<*the company*>> called PR and marketing. Erm. And it was in manufacturing practice. So it was an absolute dream… Then I did an MBA – self funded. I was ready to learn – I'm very academically and analytically minded… And I also felt – two years into the job – that being around all these clever people, that they aren't much more clever than me… And I was probably still thinking; "I don't want to do PR anymore".

[Participant who had worked in-house for several years]

In addition, the interview recordings confirm that socio-cultural, organizational and other factors have a notable impact on career strategies both individually and collectively. An example of agency culture is indicated in the following quote:

> "I got a bit burned out as well because they also had a bit of a culture of working late. I didn't really agree with it. So they had a lot of people who stayed there until seven or eight o'clock in the evening. And if you didn't stay that long it was like "oh, you're not working as hard". You'd see people like on Facebook and you'd think, "they're not doing anything. They're just staying for the sake of staying"… So everyone was lovely, but a few people had started to leave by then. And a few of my good pals in the team had moved on to go in-house or go charity side and I was thinking… So I decided to go travelling."

[Participant who had worked in agencies for several years]

As discussed in Chapter 7, *bricolage* archival research was undertaken to develop broader contextual and chronological understanding of such influences.

8.3.3. Drawing warp yarns from archival research

The *bricolage* archival research adds value to the participants' career narratives by addressing a range of contextual matters arising from the *timeline* interviews. Annotations on the interview recordings were collated using thematic analysis to identify common threads. An overview of seven dominant contextual threads is provided below. *Bricolage* archival research was then undertaken to develop a structural underpinning as warp yarns across the chronological period of 1987-2015.

Thread 1: Family concerns.
Particular themes were found regarding the influence of families on careers, including reference by mothers within the research population to company policies, maternity leave legislation and societal expectations. Fathers also indicate how parental experiences affect their career decisions. Other themes within this thread relate to dual-career couples, responsibility for parents, long-distance commuting, relocation challenges and circumstances influencing overseas secondments.

Thread 2: Rationale for independent working.
The ability to work independently within public relations is mentioned in most interviews in respect of past and present experiences as well as future expectations. One theme concerns the motivation of becoming a freelance public relations practitioner. A second relates to risks and benefits associated with short-term or project contracts. Thirdly, technological developments are viewed as opening up new career opportunities, as well as presenting challenges.

Thread 3: Maturation matters.

Several themes allude to maturation of public relations as an occupation. A number of participants discuss the opportunities, benefits and drawbacks of developing specialist careers within particular sectors or areas of public relations. Aligned to this, public relations careers are seen to offer future potential in general management, business ownership and strategic consultancy. Additionally, professional networks and industry bodies are highlighted as helping to build relationships, gain recognition and establish expertise over time.

Thread 4: Success and failure.

A number of participants make reference to how their experiences differed from a "traditional career", intimating beliefs that careers should develop in a particular way. In some cases, participants relate experiences where they felt a career transition had been unsuccessful, or where their ambitions were not met. Other participants reflect positively on where they felt they had acted against the norm, for example in deciding to take time away from work to go travelling.

Thread 5: Money.

Financial remuneration is indicated occasionally on *timeline* drawings, but raised frequently in the interviews. Invariably participants emphasised that money is not their primary motivator, although its importance was reinforced through various themes.

Thread 6: Recession, restructures and redundancies.

Structural organizational and occupational developments as a result of social, political or economic changes are mentioned in many interviews. In particular, various participants discuss the negative impact of the 2008 financial crisis with themes including restructures, redundancies and austerity policies.

Thread 7: Media trends.

Although not all research participants are involved in media relations, the importance of knowing journalists and their role as career advocates is mentioned quite often in the interviews. Another theme concerns how media changes motivate moves into public relations. Some sees technological developments as opening up future career opportunities, whilst others view digital communications and media trends less positively. Participants also indicate the shift from looking at job adverts in print publications to using websites and online recruitment systems.

These dominant threads informed the outline guide for the *bricolage* research. The next section looks at how the online information generated through this process was interpreted using the reflexive memo writing technique advocated by Charmaz (2014). This enables connections within the data to be made across micro, meso and macro levels of analysis.

8.4. Micro-meso-macro career connections

Charmaz (2014, p.162) discusses memo writing as a "crucial", yet "informal" analytical method in constructivist grounded theory. I use this technique to connect the *bricolage* archival data to the *timeline* narrative interview findings. This section grounds memo writing using a reflexive framework proposed by Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009). It concludes by bringing together the *bricolage* and *timeline* interview methods in order to construct *woven* narratives.

8.4.1. Reflexivity and memo writing

Writing memos enables researchers to:

> "articulate, explore, contemplate and challenge their interpretations when examining data" (Birks et al. 2008, p.71).

Within constructivist grounded theory, memos are used typically when analysing coded data, which can be inefficient and ineffective particularly when:

> "events are detached from the context of relationships in which they occur" (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, p.68).

My use of memo writing at this point in the thesis is "as a reflective tool" (Mills et al. 2006a, p.10) to examine the *bricolage* archival data. The focus is on "knowledge production" derived from "the unboundaried archive" online where "the traces of the lives of the people and events" are being researched (Moore et al. 2017, p.24).

As recommended by Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p.283), I adopt "four elements of interpretation" in writing the reflexive memos: construction of the data, insight, emancipation and polyphony. The following example illustrates how this approach develops a wider perspective from the *timeline* narrative interviews. It looks at the theme of involvement with professional networks and industry bodies, which was identified from annotations made when listening to the interview recordings. One research participant stated:

> "There's a body… a professional body that acts as a support network. And also sharing best practice between professionals. And um, again, without jumping ahead to now, but I'm voted vice chair of that organization, um, six months ago. So I found it helpful when I was coming up through the ranks and quite nice at relatively young age to be voted by your peers and voted in to be part of the committee for that. That's quite nice. Um. There's a bit of a, some of the themes, come out when I look back in a bit of a holistic way. Sort of romanticism – not in a purposeful way – but kind of coming full circle thing. I remembered it didn't seem that long ago that I was getting training and going to sessions that they delivered. And I've now been delivering training for them as a lecturer for five years and – I've now got a training and development role, in the vice chairmanship to look at the practice for the future."

Construction of data

The written memo starts with "cautious interpretation" of the reflective extracts (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, p.283). In this case, the constructed data, that I term *knots*, include annotations relating to training development, best practice, a peer network, an elected/committee role within a professional body, and supporting younger practitioners.

After collating data from other participants' interviews, I use memo writing to tie a set of *knots* to a theme as a "unit of meaning" (Guest et al. 2012, p.50). Here, *the knots* signify a connecting theme of professional involvement.

Insight

A further "record of reflexivity" (Birks and Mills 2015, p.53) is added to the written memo by looking for "more profound meaning" (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, p.284) within the themes and constructing these into dominant threads. The intention isn't to lose the richness inherent in the participants' narrative. Rather the idea is to inform the *bricolage* archival research in order to gain further insight into the dominant threads across multiple levels of analysis (as detailed in the previous section).

For the above example, I determined that the theme of professional involvement alludes to the maturation of public relations as an occupation (alongside other themes as noted above). Consequently, outline notes were written for each dominant thread to inform a research guide for the online *bricolage* archival research. The outline notes refer cohesively to the *knots*, themes and dominant threads alongside specific questions and annotated thoughts.

This wider structural perspective adds multi-textual underpinnings to the pictures and patterns gained from the narrative interviews. In this particular instance, *bricolage* research included exploration of the participant's involvement with the professional body, its historical development of a training programme and how this compares to wider education provision in public relations.

Emancipation

The *bricolage* archival research seeks to acquire fractals of knowledge as my role as a bricoleuse is to be an:

> "improviser who can take pieces of disconnected material and forge them into something new" (Papson 2013, p.3).

The *bricolage* task of finding, tracing and (re)crafting fractals includes revisiting each dominant thread reflexively to offer additional critique and emancipatory interpretation in the memos. In particular, this involves considering the effects of inherent power, structural boundaries, inequalities and other "problems residing in social systems" (Blustein et al. 2005, p.150) on career strategies in public relations.

Polyphony

The *bricolage* archival research offers an opportunity to gain multiplicity of perspectives (both contemporary and historical) to enhance understanding of the career experiences of the twenty-one research participants. Particular attention is given to discovering "marginalized quieter voices" (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, p.284). The memo writing technique allows for this polyphony within the connections made between the *bricolage* archival findings and the participants' *timeline* narrative interviews.

Finally, observations of what remains unknown are added to the memos along with any additional ideas, questions and thoughts. In this way the reflective memos support examination of the underlying dominant threads over (and under) which public relations practitioners craft their individual and collective careers within a temporal context.

Returning to the findings of the *timeline* narrative interview (warp yarns), the reflexive memos provide additional "context-rich" multiple perspectives gained from attending "to relevant historical and cultural factors" (Blustein 1997, p.267). Together these warp and weft yarns generate "thick description" (Ryle, 1968, p.57) or what Geertz (1973) describes as:

> "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another" (Geertz 1973, p.10).

In relation to career strategies in public relations, these findings help to inform:

> "multiple interpretations of practice, tell currently untold stories, and generally contribute multilayered insights into practice" (L'Etang 2011, p.18).

In conclusion, the primary research population for the *timeline* narrative interviews comprised twenty-one well-educated, mid-career professionals who tend to be married with children. Whilst this collective homogeneity is indicative of the historical development of public relations, it belies variation within individuals' personal and professional characteristics. Moreover, heterogeneity – including both traditional and contemporary career concepts and patterns –is evident in the spatial dimensions of participants' careers and their chronological career development.

The empirical evidence obtained using the *timeline* narrative interviews provides rich insight into the career experiences of the research population. This includes their subjective focus on the time and space between career transitions, salience of early career experiences and impact of socio-cultural, organizational and other factors on career strategies. Consequently, reflective memo writing and *bricolage* archival research generated further depth of understanding of the multi-textural contextual threads underpinning participants' chronological career narratives. Discussion of these findings is presented in Chapter 9 as constructed *woven* narratives.

Chapter 9: Narrative discussion

9.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the inquiry's three broad research objectives[127] and allows claims for the professionalisation of public relations to be assessed with reference to emerging career concepts. Further it examines the validity of the inquiry's conceptual framework, which proposes that careers are social constructions involving relational agency and social learning as transformative career strategies enabling public relations practitioners to make sense the multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters that they experience over time.

The first section in this chapter provides an overview drawn from the research participants' authentic voices as they constructed and deconstructed their lived career experiences through the *timeline* narrative interviews. Next, an approach to reconstructing these "tales of the field" (Van Maanen 2011 p.ix) as co-constructed *woven* narratives with insight from the *bricolage* archival research process is discussed.

9.2. Tales of the field

Van Maanan (2011, p.ix) employs the phrase "tales of the field" to reference how researchers carry out and write up their work. My intention in using it here is to foreground the constructivist nature of the inquiry and my authorship of participants' career narratives in this thesis. The phrase also signifies how careers are lived experiences and that as an insider I share knowledge of the field within which participants construct their careers.

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[127] The broad objectives of the research are to identify how public relations practitioners make sense of their career experiences (RO1); examine the strategies they use to inform career decisions (RO2) and determine how they are responding to a changing career context (RO3).

Further, I acknowledge my origination of the *timeline* interview method through which these tales are deconstructed.

The design of the interview guide encompassed six areas[128] that inform four types of tales in public relations field: beginning, becoming, relational and recursive. The tales offer a personal (micro) level of analysis. They are then combined with insight gained from the *archival* bricolage research encompassing organization/occupation (meso) and societal (macro) level analysis as co-constructed *woven* narratives.

9.2.1. Tales of beginning

Each of the twenty-one mid-career public relations practitioners determined their personal starting point in the interview and on the *timeline* drawing in response to the initial question: "How did you first come to work in public relations?". This invariably prompted a pause and dialogic reflection with the typical response being "where should I start?". Brown and Sawyer (2016, p.4) suggest this might indicate "critical thinking and meaning making". However, I am mindful of Elmer's (2011, p.57) observation that public relations practice involves storytelling as "an emotional performance", whilst Brown (2015) views practitioners as actors.[129] Similarly, Savickas (2013b, p.12) reports that within "career intervention discourses"

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[128] The six areas are (1) entry into public relations, (2) subsequent career experiences and choices made, (3) people who had influenced career moves, (4) themes, threads and patterns observed by the participants, (5) reflection on career to date and (6) thoughts on future career directions.

[129] It is not my intention to analyse participants' narratives as "story-text" or "storytelling performance", neither do I contend that they constitute "conversational interaction" (Langellier 1989, p.244). Likewise, the inquiry's focus is not on career narratives as a "social process" or "political praxis" (ibid), although there are similarities between the timeline interviews and career counselling (as considered in Chapter 7).

participants are conceived variously as actors, agents or authors.[130]

All of the research participants constructed personal narratives that pre-dated their first employment in the field. These *tales of beginning* can be categorised as: personal interest in writing or people, family or other personal influences, opportunistic experiences and fit with prior employment. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories.

With the exception of those who moved into public relations from journalism or an ancillary role in the same organization, participants lacked knowledge of what public relations involves. For example, one person stated:

> I was like, "oh, what's this public relations thing". I hadn't actually heard of it before, didn't recognise it as a discipline and it sounded more interesting and appealing to what I liked doing.

This continues the thread of opportunism identified earlier in this thesis in relation to the origins of public relations careers and career experiences of female practitioners during the 1970s and 1980s.

As noted in Chapter 8, participants' narratives of their early career experiences in public relations are notably salient and predominantly expressed with an enthusiasm that is rich in detail. Indeed, where one participant told of a lack of fit in an initial role, they emphasised enjoyment of public relations work but not the nature of the particular employment sector, financial services. This informed their future career development within public services.

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[130] Savickas (2013b, p.12) links matching theories to a vocational guidance view of clients as actors and associates a career education approach with a view of clients as agents adapting to their life stages. He views clients as authors of "autobiographical stories" in relation to his social constructionist life design model.

9.2.2. Tales of becoming

Once participants began to verbalise their career histories and reconstruct these using the *timeline* drawings, all continued to share subsequent career experiences with little need for further prompting. Invariably, participants' tales focused on the time and space between these incidents (as mentioned in Chapter 8). Hence, I did interpolate where appropriate at points of spatial career transition (such as job changes, promotion or relocations) to seek further clarification regarding choices; for instance, regarding strategies used to locate new jobs.

One effect of using the *timeline* drawing approach to support the interviews is that participants did not necessarily narrate their career histories in a chronological order. The process of illustration stimulated additional thoughts and created knots and threads of *pastpresentfutureness* within participants' narratives. Consequently, career experiences and choices were told largely in a disjointed or fragmented fashion rather than as a cohesive story. This suggests that public relations practitioners do not inherently make sense of their careers as a linear progression or narrative thread.

However, it was notable that elements of two participants career narrative were told in a manner that suggested rehearsal. Their recordings were annotated and a search in the inquiry's *bricolage* archival research phase revealed the same stories were told in interviews with the industry publication, *PR Week*. Development of a cognitive framework and rehearsal techniques are deemed to be "essential ingredients necessary for a successful career intervention" (Spokane 1988, p.26). Likewise Bandura's social cognitive theory (2009, p.118) recommends role rehearsal to enhance self-efficacy in handling commonly encountered work situations, which can be applied to media interviews within public relations.

Squire et al. (2008, p.4) confirm "wide variability" in narrative research approaches citing two main options: event narratives and experience-centred work. My analysis draws on the second of these as I accept the premise that individuals may "produce very different stories" when representing the same situation. This is evident within the *timeline* interviews as participants engage in constructing and reconstructing their "narrative of experience" (Squire 2008, p.42) across the temporal context of their personal career chronology.

Consequently, I view participants' experiences and the choices they make during their careers as *tales of becoming*. This rhizomatic perspective:

> "opens up the possibilities of understanding the relational, contextual, and collective processes that contribute to *becoming*" (Strom and Martin 2017, p.8).

The overview of the research population detailed in Chapter 8, alongside the spatial dimensions and chronological development of participants' careers, underlines the occupation's lack of a robust career system. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the *timeline* interviews reveal considerable differences in career experiences and *tales of becoming*.

Within the interview recordings, it is evident that the research participants recognise and reflect traditional career concepts. For instance, those who chose to study public relations as an undergraduate indicate Parsons' century old matching paradigm (Savickas 2000); with one person saying:

> I looked at the course at Bournemouth because obviously I've done the research and I knew that that was the best course at the time in PR and I thought: "do you know what that sounds just like me; that sounds exactly like the sort of thing I could do".

Many other participants indicated the relevance of fit in relation to both personal traits required to work in public relations and

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alignment with organizational cultures. In several cases, disconnect in person-environment fit was cited as a reason for leaving a role. However, only one participant discussed working with a life consultant when considering a specific choice of job options. This implies that knowledge of traditional concepts does not necessarily inform professionalised strategies, such as career counselling.

Indeed, few participants reflect proactive longitudinal planning in relation to their career lifespan or life-stages. Most do refer to hierarchical career progression with seniority and management status viewed as a milestone early in their careers. Notably, linear advancement appears to be less important subsequently, and participant stories indicate that they respond reactively when facing "decision points" (Super 1980, p.291) by employing a strategy of "minicycles" of career reflection (Swanson 2013, p.53); albeit without professional support.

Despite the evident resilience of traditional career concepts, participants' narrated experiences of public relations careers reflect the diversity, fluidity and flexibility inherent in contemporary career thinking. All participants discuss inter-organizational job-hopping (Kanter 1989a), many have pursued multi-occupational careers and several willingly undertake portfolio work. Such career patterns are not constructed as exceptional or problematic in most cases. However, as noted in Chapter 7, there can be emotional consequences when someone lacks career volition.[131] Nevertheless, flatter organizational structures, lack of hierarchical progression and "tournament mobility" contests (Rosenbaum 1979, p.220) were normalised if mentioned at all in participants' stories.

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[131] This person had experienced a plateau situation (Ference et al, 1977) in a particular role that ended in voluntary redundancy.

Several participants indicated opportunity structure issues, primarily in relation to specific employers. Commonly this concerned unwritten organizational practices rather than formal processes. In general, narrations present public relations as an open, boundaryless occupation. Indeed, the only participant who had not studied at University indicated this as a positive tale rather than as a barrier in developing their career.

This is not to say that participants did not encounter career constraints in the occupation but these were universally addressed by a personal agency strategy of seeking a new opportunity. This suggests that participants have "some degree of volition and privilege" (Blustein 2013 p.5) in order to demonstrate "career resilience" (Baruch 2006, p.128) and other "metacompetencies" (Hall 2004, p.6) that favour "independent protean careers" (Hall 2002, p.311). Public relations is also portrayed in the *timeline* narrative interviews as helping to develop transferrable skills that enable participants to adapt their careers into self-employment, business consultancy and other executive roles.

In summary, it appears that whilst public relations practitioners draw on traditional career concepts in narrating their *tales of becoming*, their experiences indicate more rhizomatic contemporary career patterns. Consequently opportunism, personal agency, resilience and flexibility are deployed as strategies in overcoming career boundaries and responding to the changing career context.

9.2.3. Relational tales

The inquiry's conceptual framework proposes that careers, as dynamic rhizomatic assemblages, are social constructions that involve relational agency and social learning as transformative career strategies enabling public relations practitioners to make sense of the multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters

that they experience over time. The validity of this premise is examined here in relation to Bandura's social cognitive theory (2001), which highlights the concept of agency as enabling adaptation through personal, proxy and collective efforts.

As already noted when examining research participants' *tales of beginning,* family and other people influence decisions to enter the public relations occupation. In some cases stories are told of parents who worked in marketing or similar fields. One participant gained experience whilst at school of working in a family friend's public relations consultancy. Another said:

> I started waitressing … at a café [*and*] the lady who did the PR for the restaurant came in. I used to see her quite regularly and over time got to know her very well and I got to see what she was doing and she said to me – you know, because she knew me: "Oh you'd be great at this you should do this".

The inclusion of dialogue within participants' tales was a common occurrence. Bandura does not consider this as a form of cognitive learning and it is not evident in literature concerning "career intervention discourses" (Savickas 2013b, p.12). It may be viewed as indicative of "dialogic imagination" (Bakhtin 1981) that is cited by Brown and Sawyer (2016, p.4) as a way to "stimulate new perspectives". Consequently, this may be viewed as a sense making approach employing dialogic reflection to intimate where proxies have contributed towards career development.

Practitioners all mentioned colleagues, bosses or other contacts who influenced their careers over the years. Such references were integral in their *tales of the field* demonstrating the importance of relationships. Many practitioners shared stories where others acted as proxy agents in developing their careers. For example, several people had been recruited by existing contacts. Indeed one participant noted that their career

had always involved being informed of opportunities by journalists or former colleagues.

When prompted to clarify how a career transition had occurred, a few people mentioned recruitment consultants. These were all London based practitioners working in the consultancy sector. Otherwise, participants indicated that they had noticed job adverts either in print or online. Again this suggests limited engagement with professionalised career management strategies.

Generally participants present themselves as benefiting from proxy agency as a result of having a good reputation rather than seeking to "exercise proxy efficacy through socially mediated influence" (Bandura 2009, p. 184). Few narrated being proactive in seeking mentors or career opportunities through contacts. One participant did tell a story of working for an employer where through networking they discovered the importance of securing a champion for when career moves were discussed by senior managers. Reputation is a factor in ensuring the "mobility of the professional career" (Kanter 1989b, p.512). Similarly, it is alluded to in arguments that attaining leadership roles within a bureaucratic career depends on "performative competency" (Brown 2015, p.56) in demonstrating expected "behavioural repertoires" (Gregory and Willis 2013, p.98).

This discussion indicates that proxy agency may involve networks of influencers. One participant emphasised the importance of keeping in touch with former colleagues through social media, specifically LinkedIn. They shared a *relational tale* of this as a successful strategy on returning to the UK after an overseas secondment. The experience of having to find a career opportunity in this circumstance reflects the risk noted in Chapter 5 concerning nomadic global careers.

Collective agency was evident when several participants discussed their involvement with professional bodies. They indicated that joining committees or becoming involved in educational activities played a role in their career development. Notably this strategy was reported across the occupation's tripartite structure. However, others noted that they found membership of such bodies was useful only for skills development rather than building social capital. This demonstrates a lack of employment of collective agency as a career strategy, which is proposed by Bandura (2009, p.184) to help achieve "common purpose through independent activity". This appears to reflect the emphasis on individualisation rather than relational agency in public relations discussed earlier in this thesis.

Consequently, I conclude that public relations careers can be conceptualised as a rhizomatic assemblage. However, they tend to be personal rather than social constructions. Relational agency and social learning are employed as a career strategy to a very limited extent within the research population. However, some practitioners do narrate transformative career experiences as a result of multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters.

This suggests that the inquiry's conceptual framework is not fully realised in the field. Nevertheless, given that all participants indicated the value of the *timeline* narrative interview experience, which constitutes a social constructive process, this matter is considered further as a recommendation in Chapter 12.

9.2.4. Recursive tales

In Chapter 6, I indicate recursiveness as a key linkage between lived career experiences and the development of sustainable careers (see Figure 6). It provides "feedback and feedforward

mechanisms" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.230) that encourage individuals to be reflexive (Cunliffe 2004) and foster "a sense of future orientation" (Chen 1997, p.315).

Three of the six areas within the interview guide involve recursiveness. Hence, towards the end of the *timeline* narrative interviews when participants had narrated their career histories and current situation, I asked them to:

- Observe any themes, threads and patterns in their *timeline* drawing
- Provide thoughts on their future career direction
- Reflect on their career to date, specifically by inviting them to loop between their current and younger selves.

As participants (re)constructed and (re)viewed the visual illustration of their careers, they shared what I've termed *recursive tales*. This involves a creative process of "involution" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.238) where novel rhizomatic connections may be conceived.

The majority of the tales concerning themes, threads and patterns included on the *timeline* drawings were idiosyncratic to individual careers. Reflective observations were frequently transformative as behaviours and experiences were indicated that were previously unknown to the participant. R*ecursive tales* commonly revealed patterns. For example, one participant recognised a four-year cycle of career moves. Another found that they had segmented jobs on the basis of whether or not they were enjoyable. Talking about this revealed a tendency to accept roles despite misgivings, which proved a learning experience. A third respondent had consciously positioned work matters below the *timeline* with personal milestones noted above it. Commenting on this fact resulted in sense making reflection.

In looking forwards to anticipate future career directions, the research participants shared tales that invariably sought to achieve a work-life balance. Indeed, they indicated an intention to deploy an adaptive strategy that, as discussed in Chapter 5, is an indication of customised careers. Most practitioners identified a range of potential directions although some narrated fairly clear ideas of what they thought they might do in the future. This included two contrasting views concerning the role of technological developments in public relations. One participant in particular saw this as vital in opening up new opportunities, whilst another argued the essential components of public relations remain unchanged.

Notably, none of the practitioners had a thought through plan for future career development. One participant declined to indicate any future plans on the *timeline* drawing. When asked what this meant, the response was that the blank page represented opportunity.

The final element of recursiveness involved considering the relationship between the participant today and their younger self at the start of their public relations career. With the exception of the person discussed in Chapter 7 where the interview was terminated at this point, all participants said their younger self would have been proud to know what they would achieve in their career. However, no-one indicated how they may have changed their current status by employing career agency or other professional strategies.

Nonetheless, participants' *recursive tales* universally drew a clear thread through from their career starting point, implying recognition of causal effects within their narrated experiences. Arguably this demonstrates ties between the different types of *tales of the field* presented in this section; beginnings, becomings, relationships and recursions.

In terms of the broad objectives of the research, the above discussion indicates that public relations practitioners make sense of their careers with reference to traditional career concepts, despite their experiences reflecting contemporary developments. There is some evidence of self-efficacy and personal agency within the narrated tales. However, proxy and collective agency tend to be under-developed as career strategies and there is little engagement with professional approaches, such as career counselling or planning. Similarly, the research population did not indicate proactive career planning in order to respond to a changing career context. Indeed, aspects indicated as problematic in the earlier chapters of this thesis are normalised in the narrated tales.

9.3. Woven career narratives

Constructing *woven* narratives from the *timeline* interviews and *bricolage* archival research helps to develop a richer understanding of public relations career strategies. As considered in Chapter 8, reflective memo writing was used to underpin participants' chronological career narratives in respect of seven dominant threads.

The *tales of the field* considered in the previous section provided insight into career beginnings, becomings, relationships and recursions predominantly at a micro (individual) level of analysis. The *bricolage* research underpins these pictures and patterns with a framework of meso and macro levels of analysis. That is, additional information was sought to evidence the cultural and historical context in which the research participants' careers were experienced.

As an example, the process of developing a *woven* career narrative around the theme of dual-career couples within Thread 1 (Family concerns) is considered. This enables

examination of "strategic differences in the kinds of stories men and women tell" (Langellier and Peterson 2002, p.157) both within the research population and by looking for other voices through the *bricolage* archival research.

The type of annotations made on *timeline* interview recordings that inform this theme include:

- What data exists on dual career couples?
- How do experiences of single-sex couples differ?
- Anecdote of school calling working mother when child is sick, not father – is this common?
- What are career issues facing home-husbands?
- How do government policies affect dual career couples?
- Polyphony – are some voices of PR practitioners missing – check intersectionality
- Anecdote of difficulties in working in high pressure PR role after having second child – are some sectors and employers better than others?
- Contrast anecdote claiming increased flexibility for working parents in large corporations vs ease of working as independent practitioner.

The lived experiences of four research participants were of particular interest. One of the women had developed a career as an independent practitioner during the past two decades whilst bringing up two children, now of University age. A second woman had two young children and planned to continue to develop a career within corporate in-house public relations. The third was a house-husband and the fourth was a male in a long-term co-habiting single-sex relationship. Two participants have developed in-house careers, whilst the others have experience of long-term independent working. Together they represent a

wide range of possible career implications concerning dual-career couples, including gendered experiences.

The *bricolage* archival research constructed an understanding across micro, meso and macro levels of analysis. It reviewed the current and historic situation in respect of individuals, the occupation of public relations, different types of organizations and wider society. The following extract illustrates an element of the resultant *woven* narrative that is derived from fractals of information from the *bricolage* research, *tales from the field* and memo writing. It concerns one of the four research participants.

> …In the 1980s, women were expected to prioritise motherhood over developing a career. Maternity rights were inconsistent as revealed in a European Commission report in 1988. The participant's *beginning tale* involved a temporary appointment undertaking secretarial work in a public relations consultancy. Such work was not unusual for a woman qualified to degree level at this time. Use of personal agency and the support of an 'old-fashioned' male mentor helped her linear career progression in *becoming* an account manager and running a regional office. A *recursive tale* notes a lack of self-efficacy in combining this career path with marriage and children. Her husband's careers took priority, indicating a cultural boundary. Public relations skills informed the participant's decision to work as a freelance practitioner. Socially this was acceptable – but she was concerned about being seen as a mother working for "pin-money". Economically it was feasible with her husband's support and growth of the occupation in the 1990s. *Relations* with contacts, including media and local businesses, were important in building a reputation. After working from home for a number of years to fit in with family needs, the participant moved into a local office. Access to broadband was a barrier until recently. Income from her business is now of greater family significance than her husband's career. He is taking early retirement...

An individual (micro) level *woven* narrative was written for each of the four research participants in relation to this theme. These were co-constructed to gain a broader perspective of the

career implications for dual-career families. For instance, the contrast between the experiences of the two working mothers in the *woven* narratives was particularly illuminating in terms of changing career strategies within the occupation and society over the past two decades.

In terms of gendering of personal narratives, the experiences of the men and women differed in respect of dual career opportunities and constraints. However, the two men indicated changes that echoed those within the above female narrative. In particular, the opportunity structure for the house-husband revealed similarities with the earlier experience of the older married woman. Conversely, his tale demonstrated less self-efficacy and personal agency.

The corporate career tales likewise demonstrated similar features although the woman had been more proactive, largely in negotiating child-care issues. Anecdotes of social practices indicate that although personally the dual-career was intended to be an equal matter, externally as a mother her career experiences differed from those of her husband. In contrast, it is easier for a single-sex couple to manage a dual-career. There was no apparent gendered difference in how any of these participants narrated their stories. Indeed, both included elements of what Langellier and Peterson (2002, p.163) describe as a "kernel story" in being "nonlinear and circular, containing 'overlays' and re-workings of conversational material" and alluding to common experiences.

This chapter has addressed the inquiry's three broad research objectives in seeking to identify how public relations practitioners make sense of their career experiences; examine the strategies they use to inform career decisions and determine how they are responding to a changing career context. Claims for professionalisation of public relations have

been challenged by indications that public relations practitioners narrate careers that are largely opportunistic, fluid and flexible. Whilst traditional career concepts are evident in the *timeline* narrative interviews, career experiences normalise contemporary career thinking. Most research participants do not indicate that they adopted any form of professional career development strategies.

The validity of the inquiry's conceptual framework for public relations careers is questioned as they appear to be developed as personal rather than social constructions. There is little evidence of relational agency and social learning with research participants relying primarily on personal agency. Proxy agency is indicated in respect of the importance of reputation, although collective agency is under-deployed, including in respect of engagement in professional bodies. Nevertheless, careers in public relations may be conceptualised as a rhizomatic assemblage and there is some indication that careers provide transformative experiences over time as a result of multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters. However, this appears to be largely the result of opportunism rather than indicative of a professional career design.

Chapter 10. Theoretical constructs

10.1. Introduction

This chapter involves abstract analysis to reflect my research strategy of constructivist grounded theory in developing four original theoretical constructs: knotted patterns of mobility; fluidity in career middleness; multi-layered, polyphonic sense making; and a non-linear, kairotic element of time.

An interpretivist approach is adopted to scrutinise career strategies in public relations and address a lack of academic theorising into careers within the occupation. Critical consideration is given to conceptual underpinnings of professionalisation of public relations and emerging theories in the field of career studies. My position acknowledges that:

> "interpretive theories aim to understand meanings and actions and how people construct them" (Charmaz 2014, p.231).

My theorising is grounded in empirical observations that sought to address three broad objectives (RO):

RO1:   To identify how public relations practitioners (PRPs) make sense of their career experiences;

RO2:   To examine the strategies that PRPs use to inform career decisions;

RO3:   To determine how PRPs are responding to a changing career context.

In developing theoretical constructs, an interpretivist approach allows for the subjectivity of the research population (twenty-one British-based mid-career public relations practitioners) and recognises my researcher's subjectivity as a visible insider. This is consistent with how the research findings are constructed, deconstructed, reconstructed and co-constructed in the preceding chapters.

A theoretical account is included as an emergent thread throughout this thesis where I have developed an "imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon" (Charmaz 2014, p.231). Multiple perspectives have been considered from public relations scholarship and practice alongside traditional and emerging theories within the career studies field. This work is cognisant of the historical and social context within which public relations as an occupation and career studies as a discipline developed.

Consequently the process so far has involved "*seeing* possibilities, *establishing* connections and *asking* questions" (*ibid*, p.244). Taking this a step further, Urquart et al. (2010) suggest that:

> "in developing theory, the researcher needs to be capable of *theoretical sensitivity*" (Urquart et al. 2010, p.360).

This is "a multidimensional concept" encompassing the researcher's insight into the topic of inquiry, as well as their ability to "reconstruct meaning" from research participants' "words and actions" and determine what is pertinent (Mills et al. 2006b, p.26). To start this process, Charmaz (2014) advises:

> "theorizing means stopping, pondering, and thinking afresh" (Charmaz 2014, p.244).

I decided to return to the sensitising concepts[132] (Chapter 7) in light of the issues raised in Chapter 9 that challenged the inquiry's conceptual framework. Remaining open to "the unexpected" and "theoretical playfulness", I scanned the *woven* narratives to stimulate new ideas in relation to these "seed concepts" (Urquart et al. 2010, p.363).

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[132] The sensitising concepts are: sense making, decision-making, responsiveness, relationships, agency, learning, transformation, time, boundary-crossing.

Rather than using memo writing to support this informal analysis, I paired Rico clustering as a non-linear creative process with Scapple software, a non-hierarchical freeform text editor.[133] This allows me to adopt a fluid approach in "pattern-weaving", to borrow a term from Bauman (2012),[134] in conceiving the four theoretical constructs[135] discussed below.

10.2. Knotted patterns of mobility

Construction

The construct of knotted patterns of mobility has many dimensions as noted below. In essence each dimension is a continuum of mobility. Individuals vary in terms of the meaning they attribute to any constraint affecting their mobility. Likewise they differ in the extent to which they can demonstrate volition, momentum and strategic agency in becoming mobile.

As such, individual careers are envisaged as patterns of mobility. It should be possible to identify mobility dimensions for public relations careers. Consequently, a multivariate Kiviat chart can be created enabling individuals to craft their personal pattern of mobility. This could then be compared to the requirements for an occupational role as a matching process. From a career perspective, a temporal dimension can be added so that a stack of mobility patterns can be created over time.

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[133] See: http://www.gabrielerico.com/ and https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scapple.php

[134] Bauman (2012, p.8) refers to the "burden of pattern-weaving" being redistributed from institutions in society to individuals. This is evident in changes within careers noted earlier in this thesis. Hence I appropriate the term to examine patterns within the *woven* career narratives in my inquiry.

[135] The constructs are intended to serve as abstract objects that help to illuminate features and connections found when researching public relations career strategies. This thesis does not propose the constructs as formal or substantive theories

Conceptualising such patterns as knotted enables consideration of the many factors that inhibit career mobility. Focus then shifts from the thread (vector) of mobility onto a specific knot (node) or pattern of knots. This allows individuals (micro level), organisations and the wider occupation (meso level) to examine and address the pattern and multiplicity of constraints affecting public relations careers, including opportunity structure barriers at the societal (macro level).

<u>Clusters</u>

Mobility was seeded by the responsiveness sensitising concept. It generated a large number of entries on the Rico cluster. Many of these convey physical movement (between jobs, countries, organisations, occupations) or psychological movement (such as opportunity to develop skills and grow). Technology is presented as enabling mobility and expanding career potential for individuals, organisations and the wider occupation.

It was clear that a lack of mobility is critical in career decision-making. This was noticeable in relation to spending too long in a job, family constraints on working overseas, home ownership ties and so forth. When looping back to their earlier selves, many participants indicated that at the start of their careers they were able to be more mobile.

Within the previous chapters, mobility was referenced in relation to the above matters but also conceptually. This includes boundaryless careers, volition, spiral and hierarchical progress, opportunity structures, nomadic careers, plateauing and the tournament model. Mobility is used by Kanter (1989b) to differentiate between career forms and it also enables a contrast between traditional and contemporary careers.

Additionally, mobility as a concept aligns with spatial aspects of career models alongside the notions of individuality

and personal agency that I have argued are inherent in thinking about careers within public relations.

10.3. Fluidity in career middleness

<u>Construction</u>

The construct of fluidity in career middleness connects *tales of beginning* and *tales of becoming.* The former involve crossing a boundary to begin a career in public relations. My research has shown this to be a salient and rewarding experience for those who proceed to develop careers in the occupation. Subsequently, career experiences are conceived as allowing practitioners to take advantage of the occupation's expanding scope and flexibility. Within the construct, the notion of middleness avoids the difficulties in defining the technician-manager transition. This is the occupation's dominant role theory and has been subject to extensive critique in this thesis.

The proposed construct removes the idea of a hierarchical framework for crafting public relations career strategies. The traditional linear upward trajectory is shown by the "tournament" model (Rosenbaum 1989, p.336) to benefit a limited number of people. In contrast, fluidity in career middleness better suits contemporary career concepts and promotes agency, lifelong learning and career sustainability.

This construct encourages a transformative focus in order to realise the potential of all practitioners. It envisages the pursuit of leadership roles to be one option within the fluidity of career middleness rather than a normative career path. Further, the construct has relevance within and across the tripartite occupational structure that the research participants demonstrate offers fluidity of transition rather than fixed boundaries.

Middleness is imagined as a fluid time and space to accommodate the changing nature of contemporary careers within public relations. It is not marked by rigid temporal or hierarchical boundaries and as such, promotes greater inclusiveness within the occupation.

Clusters

Fluidity and middleness were seeded by the transformation and boundary-spanning sensitising concepts. These generated entries on the Rico cluster relating to practitioners' concentration on the work they do rather than career transitions, as well as a lack of clarity regarding when certain boundaries are crossed. Cluster words reference the variety of career experiences within the relatively small research population and the on-going opportunities they envisage for future career development. Indeed, the only research participant to talk about retirement did so by finding a middle position on the *timeline* drawing.

The opportunity to change direction within the occupation and make choices regarding employed and self-employed work similarly indicates a fluidity within public relations that is not possible in traditional professions. For example, research participants gained their professional qualifications in public relations at different ages and times in their careers. Likewise experiences of balancing a career and parenthood indicate that such life experiences are equally fluid, and can be accommodated within public relations. An adaptive strategy of career customisation, motivated by individual or organisation circumstances, encourages responsiveness to change.

Finally, this construct offers an alternative approach to seeking to impose a prescriptive rigid career structure or system within the occupation. Increased flexibility is particular relevant for career development for a diverse population.

10.4. Multi-layered, polyphonic sense making

<u>Construction</u>

The construct of multi-layered, polyphonic sense making attends specifically to the first of the inquiry's broad research objectives. It indicates the micro, meso and macro influencers on public relations careers that are evident in the literature and career experiences of the research population. Similarly it accommodates the uncertainty and complexity inherent in contemporary careers and the spiral of career experiences observed within the *woven* narratives.

Reference to polyphony signifies the use of dialogic reflection by research participants as a sense making approach. It also accommodates proxy and collective agency (Bandura 2001), which were evident to a limited extent in the inquiry. A third indicator of polyphony lies in the multiple experiences, perspectives and voices within public relations. Further it encourages examination of the career implications of public relations as "social phenomenon" (Ihlen and van Ruler 2009, p.1). Polyphony foregrounds postmodernism and consideration of career sense making by a wide range of practitioners (including those currently marginalised in the occupation).

Multi-layering can be found in the concept of portfolio careers that was apparent in the *woven* narratives. It acknowledges the multiple pressures and interests in people's lives. For instance, research participants indicate that they evaluate numerous factors and opinions when making career decisions. Likewise, the voices of other public relations career stakeholders can be accommodated within the construct. These include recruitment consultants, employers, professional bodies, education providers, academia, communities of practice and social contacts.

<u>Clusters</u>

Multiplicity and polyphony were seeded by relationships and agency as sensitising concepts. Entries generated on the Rico cluster include recollections of how others played a role in career decision-making, reference to advice given (often as reconstructed quotes), the value of maintaining a social or professional network and the ability to talk with others (including mentors) about careers.

One research participant indicated a complex network of experiences informed their decision to establish a public relations consultancy, that itself involved a virtual team. Another compared their career to fellow practitioners, whilst one practitioner indicated how values informed by family circumstances influenced their current career. Each of these instances reveals a complex and multi-layered set of influences on career sense making.

Similarly, the construct acknowledges the multiple needs and expectations of others who research participants indicate have an active interest in their public relations careers. This was evident in the Rico cluster with words indicating mentoring, proactive recommendations from journalists and other contacts of new opportunities, and the opinions of partners. In some cases, others' input was critical, reflected cultural differences or unpleasant circumstances that led to reactive career moves.

Finally, multi-layered polyphonic sense making foregrounds the individualistic and opportunistic nature of public relations careers witnessed in the *woven* narratives and earlier chapters of this thesis. This encourages greater reflexivity in order to ensure that taken-for-granted practices and "common sense assumptions can become open for debate" (Kirkpatrick et al. 2005, p.5).

10.5. Non-linear, kairotic elements of time

<u>Construction</u>

The construct of non-linear, kairotic elements of time emphasises the importance of the temporal aspect of careers. It is inherent in an understanding of careers as "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al. 1989, p.8) and is the central component of the Social Chronology Framework (SCF) proposed by Gunz and Mayrhofer (2015).

Carr's (1961) explanation of history as "an unending dialogue between the past and the present" (p.30) that "reflects our own position in time" (p.8) is evident in the historical perspective that underpins this thesis. Most notably, it informs the design of the research methodology and both research methods, the *timeline* narrative interviews and *bricolage* archival research.

As noted in Chapter 8, forms of chronological ordering (age, date or time) appear as either a consistent or sporadic pattern in all of the participants' *timeline* drawings. However, the *woven* narratives indicate that public relations does not intrinsically offer an "orderly career" (Wilensky 1961, p.521). More precisely, it is not experienced and reconstructed as a coherent "temporal flow" (Dyke and Maclaurin 2016, p.530).

The *woven* narratives reveal what I have termed knots and threads of *pastpresentfutureness* within participants' recollected career histories, which were told in a disjointed or fragmented fashion. This is reflected in Eco's (1998, p.12) argument that chronological time is "entangled in our everyday lives … with the time and consciousness of our memory". Hence, my final theoretical construct refers to non-linear kairotic elements of time. This derives from the Greek concept, καιρός (kairos) meaning, "defining moment" (Hambrick 2011, ix).

<u>Clusters</u>

In this construct, the term non-linear and the concept of kairos were seeded by time as a sensitising concept, alongside responsiveness, agency, learning, transformation, and boundary-crossing. Creating a Rico cluster around the concept of time generated a substantial number of words. This is not surprising given time's intrinsic place in the *timeline* narrative interviews and *bricolage* archival research.

However, the clustering process suggested the notion of quality time due to participants' references to particularly memorable times in their careers, the richness with which certain experiences were recounted and the emotions that were evident when specific stories were shared. For example, one participant discussed a dysfunctional culture within fast-growing consultancies ahead of the dot.com crash in 2001. Recalling this time, the participant demonstrated annoyance and frustration with attitudes towards female employees, citing this as a reason for changing jobs.

Another participant discussed the optimal timing for starting a family in order to minimise any effect on career progression. Several career moves were said by participants to be the result of chance, good luck, or "being in the right place at the right time". It was also apparent that career opportunities were driven by meso or macro level circumstances, for instance, organizational restructures, a freeze on external recruitment and the opportunities presented by technological developments.

The construct of non-linear kairotic elements of time is evident in career reflexivity stimulated by the recursiveness element of the interviews. Finally it could be seen when looking forward, which suggests the importance of career sustainability.

10.6 Crafted career strategies

This doctoral research project set out to examine career strategies in public relations. It is therefore appropriate to conclude this chapter by considering the relevance of the four original theoretical constructs in informing understanding of career behaviour at the macro, meso and micro level. The final section of this chapter further considers conceptual linkages between the constructs to underline their collective contribution.

Starting with the first construct, knotted patterns of mobility, I suggest this illustrates the flexibility inherent in public relations careers. Importantly, career strategies are affected by constraints that act as knots to inhibit mobility. A wide range of personal, organizational, occupational and societal factors may be seen as enabling or constraining career mobility. Hence, I propose that it should be possible to craft knotted patterns of mobility to illuminate career behaviours within public relations.

Turning to fluidity in career middleness, this construct challenges traditional perspectives of careers within public relations scholarship and practice. In particular, it favours contemporary career theories over the more rigid, linear, hierarchical management constructs that continue to dominate public relations conceptualisation of careers. I believe that the concept of middleness better reflects the career behaviour of public relations practitioners and promotes life-long learning, career sustainability and greater diversity within the occupation.

The third construct, multi-layered, polyphonic sense making highlights micro, meso and macro influencers on public relations careers. This supports the socio-cultural turn in public relations academia and emphasises how uncertainty and complexity affects career decision-making. Indeed, it may explain the opportunistic strategy that I have found to be a consistent element of public relations careers. The notion of

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polyphony raises the interesting idea of dialogic reflection and accommodates proxy and collective agency.

This has relevance for the inquiry's conceptual framework, which proposes that careers are social constructions that involve relational agency and social learning as transformative career strategies enabling public relations practitioners to make sense of the multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters that they experience over time. Whilst its validity was challenged in Chapter 9, I now contend that public relations careers may constitute social constructions and involve relational agency due to their multi-layered, polyphonic nature. This offers the possibility to revisit Bandura's social cognitive theory as a framework for examining career development processes.

Finally, the construct of non-linear, kairotic element of time offers an entirely new way of considering career strategies. This has not been examined in the career studies field, despite the centrality of linear chronology within both career definitions and theories. It connects with how public relations practitioners construct, reconstruct, deconstruct and co-construct their careers when reflecting on their experiences. Potentially the construct could be integrated within career construction theory (Savickas 2012). Further, I suggest that it encourages a focus on the importance of quality time as an influence on career strategies.

10.7 Twined conceptual linkages

To conclude this chapter, exploration of conceptual linkages between the four theoretical constructs reveals their collective contribution towards understanding career strategies in public relations. Table 10 presents a framework involving three linkages identified from revisiting the woven narrative "*tales of*

the field" discussed in Chapter 9. With reference to the inquiry's *tapestry* metaphor, such "three-strand twining" (Samuel 1987, p.30) needs to be examined from both sides of the weaving (Drooker 1992). This indicates the interrelationship between the subjective "private meaning of career" and the objective "public pattern of occupations" (Savickas 2002, p. 383).

Conceptual linkages: [*Tales of the field*]		Beginning+ Becoming	Relational	Recursive
Theoretical constructs	**Knotted patterns of mobility**	Inhibitors and drivers of career development change over time	Personal, proxy and collective influences	*Rhizomatic* effect on career strategies and directions
	Fluidity in career middleness	Career transitions affected by flexibility and scope of the occupation	Multi-directional boundary-crossing career encounters	Adaption to emerging transformative opportunities
	Multilayered polyphonic sense making	Multiple perspectives and layers of experience within public relations careers	New perspectives of careers emerge through dialogic reflection	Perceive careers as reliant on layers of opportunism and flexibility
	Non-linear kairotic element of time	Notable *pastpresent-future* knots and threads are examined	Disjointed narrative encompassing micro, meso and macro factors	Careers not experienced as a coherent flow

Table 10.   Framework of conceptual linkages between theoretical constructs

Linking the four theoretical constructs with the beginning+ becoming concept challenges the traditional career paradigm evident in the dominant technician-manager role model in public relations theory and practice. It acknowledges that inhibitors and drivers influencing career development change over time. Consequently career transitions are affected by ability of the occupation to accommodate these knotted patterns of mobility. Such fluidity in career middleness is evident in the multiple perspectives and layers of experience narrated with public relations careers. Indeed, through multi-layered polyphonic sense making individuals examine the *pastpresentfuture* knots and threads connecting notable career moments. Hence rather than traditional orderly lines of progression, public relations careers primarily reflect complex contemporary patterns.

The second conceptual linkage involves relational agency as a transformative career strategy, in contrast to the emphasis on individualisation in public relations theory and practice. The relational aspect of the knotted patterns of mobility concerns personal, proxy and collective influences on careers. Likewise, relationships are established through multi-directional, boundary-crossing career encounters. Within public relations, these tend to reflect fluidity of opportunistic experiences rather than deliberative strategies. Similarly, practitioners develop new perspectives through use of dialogic reflection of particular *kairotic* encounters within their careers. This is expressed as a disjointed narrative that encompasses individual, occupational, organisational and wider societal relationships.

The recursive conceptual linkage emphasises the connection between lived career experiences and the development of sustainable careers. The *rhizomatic* (non-linear) effect of knotted patterns of career mobility is recognised by individuals with the benefit of hindsight. Moreover, the

emergence of new, transformative career opportunities within the expanding public relations occupation supports reliance on adaptive strategies (demonstrating fluidity in career middleness). Hence individuals make sense of their careers largely with reference to multiple layers of opportunism and flexibility that are recollected as a disjointed flow of experiences. Moreover, lived experiences indicate that career sustainability within the occupation is rarely the result of proactive longitudinal career planning.

This exploration of conceptual linkages between the four theoretical constructs reveals their collective contribution towards understanding career strategies in public relations. In particular, they support an argument that careers in public relations primarily reflect contemporary patterns not traditional hierarchies. Further, relational agency (including use of dialogic reflection) tends to result from opportunistic career experiences, rather than deliberative career development strategies. Indeed, career sustainability within public relations can be seen as resulting from reliance on adaptive strategies.

Moreover, examination of the three conceptual linkages as entwined strands within the tapestry paradigm underlines the disconnect between the tangle of individual subjective experiences of crafting careers in public relations and the objective portrayal of orderly hierarchical career progression within discourses of professionalisation of the occupation.

In conclusion, this chapter has successfully used a creative method of abstract analysis to develop four original theoretical constructs and examine conceptual linkages between these. The contribution of this framework to knowledge of public relations careers is considered further in Chapter 11.

Chapter 11. Conclusions

11.1. Introduction

Situated at the intersection of critical consideration of professionalisation of public relations and emerging theories in the field of career studies, the thesis addressed a lack of academic research into careers within the occupation. A new 'tapestry paradigm' has been proposed to offer an original contribution to both of these disciplines.

Narrative inquiry from my viewpoint as a visible insider has shed new light on how public relations careers have developed to date, and may develop in future. Specifically, four original theoretical constructs have been developed that individually and collectively make a unique contribution towards understanding of career strategies in public relations. Further they suggest ways in which Bandura's social cognitive theory (2001) and Savickas' career construction theory (2005) might be developed.

These two theories informed the inquiry's conceptual framework. This proposes careers are social constructions that involve relational agency and social learning as transformative career strategies enabling public relations practitioners to make sense of the multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters that they experience over time. The first section of this chapter reviews the validity of this premise, alongside an overview of the findings and analysis. The second section examines the contribution to knowledge of the four theoretical constructs developed within the thesis before conclusions are drawn concerning the broad research objectives through a process of inferencing. The final section considers the inquiry's relevance and limitations.

Chapter 12 provides recommendations including to establish a professionalised career design for public relations. A final outro chapter then reflects briefly on my active participation in the inquiry and substantiates the original contribution offered by the tapestry paradigm.

11.2. Key findings

11.2.1. Body of knowledge

The premise of this thesis is that the focus of the concept of a career on the implications of change (Herriot 1992) offers a new line of inquiry to investigate the continuing relevance of a professionalisation narrative within public relations.

In Chapter 2, a review of the literature established an understanding of the occupation of public relations. My analysis of the origins of careers in public relations added to historical knowledge in the field and was published in *Public Relations Review*. Findings were also presented in Chapter 2 from an investigation of the occupational field in the UK since the mid-twentieth century. This work identified *equifinality*, alongside opportunism and primarily *commenda* (agentic) careers. I reported inadequacies in how careers are conceptualised within public relations literature and practice. Insight gained into historical and contemporary career development confirmed the value of an inquiry into career strategies in public relations.

Chapter 3 applied Kanter's (1989a) frame of bureaucratic, professional and entrepreneurial career forms to examine the logic informing career strategies in public relations. Although the chapter identified a lack of a coherent canvas underpinning the occupation, it revealed an emphasis within public relations on individual practitioners as the main career agent across all three of the career forms.

This individualistic career pattern was investigated in Chapter 4 with a focus on demographic changes in the occupation. In particular, I examined implications of increased feminisation of the occupation by researching the career experiences of female practitioners during the 1970s and 1980s. My small scale study made an original contribution to historical and feminist knowledge within public relations. It was published in *Public Relations* Review and has been widely cited. The series of semi-structured interviews identified an ongoing opportunistic and agentic career strategy. Moreover, it reinforced an individualistic narrative citing strong evidence of personal rather than proxy or collective agency (drawing on Bandura's social cognitive theory). An overview of literature concerning other minority demographics within the occupation identified limitations of individualisation as a career strategy, not least because it tended to reflect a focus on the trait-factor characteristics of practitioners.

Chapter 5 turned to the extensive body of career studies literature to establish an explanatory framework for the thesis. Findings revealed career thinking in public relations generally drew on traditional career theories, specifically concerning role theory and matching individuals to occupations. This raised questions regarding the opportunity structure within the occupation. Although there was little recognition of emerging career concepts within public relations scholarship and practice, I argued that they are well suited for explaining career strategies employed by public relations practitioners.

A reflexive approach was adopted in Chapter 6 resulting in development of a series of original schema. These informed the conceptual framework that draws on social cognitive and career construction theories to present the concept of a career as a rhizomatic assemblage. The chapter also established my

position as a weaver of a new career paradigm by proposing the concept of tapestry as an original root metaphor that accommodates the complexity of contemporary careers.

The design of this research was outlined in Chapter 7. Three broad research objectives guided the inquiry:[136]

RO1:   To identify how public relations practitioners (PRPs) make sense of their career experiences;

RO2:   To examine the strategies that PRPs use to inform career decisions;

RO3:   To determine how PRPs are responding to a changing career context.

A constructivist philosophy informed an interpretive narrative approach to research how individuals understand their work-life story. Constructivist grounded theory supported a research methodology involving a series of twenty-one in-depth, oral interviews with British-based mid-career practitioners using an innovative visual *timeline* technique. These were supplemented by an original method that I termed *bricolage* archival research, which sought to offer a broader contextual understanding of career experiences.

Analysis of the findings presented in Chapters 8 and 9 noted considerable diversity in the career experiences of the research participants. Claims for professionalisation of public relations from a careers perspective are challenged by indications that strategies employed by research participants were largely opportunistic, fluid and flexible. The interview recordings identify that participants refer to traditional concepts

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[136]   The ROs are all included in the inquiry's conceptual framework that proposes careers are social constructions that involve relational agency and social learning as transformative career strategies enabling public relations practitioners to make sense of the multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters that they experience over time.

to make sense of their careers. However, their career behaviours and future expectations evidence (and normalise) contemporary career concepts.

Further the validity of the inquiry's conceptual framework was questioned on the basis of findings indicating that careers within the occupation reflect personal rather than social constructions. There was little evidence of relational agency or social learning. Research participants relied primarily on their personal agency. Nevertheless, the research suggested that careers in public relations could be conceptualised as a rhizomatic assemblage and there was some indication that they offer transformative experiences over time as a result of multi-directional boundary-crossing encounters. However, this appeared to be largely the result of opportunism rather than indicative of a professional career design.

11.2.2. Research population

The career design of the research population was analysed in Chapter 8. Collectively, participants were well-educated professionals who tend to be married with children. Their relative demographic homogeneity was noted as indicative of the historical development of the occupation. Greater heterogeneity was evident at a detailed level within their personal characteristics and career background. Analysis revealed substantial variety in the location, mobility and nature of participants' career experiences.

A chronological period of 1987-2015 was covered by the research participants' careers. There were notable differences in the number, frequency and timing of individuals' career transitions. However, the analysis did not enable insight to be gained into the exact nature of the technician-manager role transition that is emphasised within public relations literature.

There was evidence of hierarchical corporate careers, as well as career mobility and transitions within and across the tripartite occupational structure. Heterogeneity was apparent in respect of the wide range of sectors, industries, types of organization and disciplines evident throughout the flow of the participants' careers. Overall, a complicated career design was found for the research population as a whole, as well as for individual participants. This combined traditional career thinking and contemporary career patterns.

11.2.3. *Timeline* drawings

The *timeline* drawings created by research participants were limited in their usefulness as an analytical data set. Yet, the approach proved to be a successful and innovative interview method.[137] Analysis revealed occurrence of each of the types of *timeline* drawing identified by Kolar et al. (2015), and I propose that this model can be extended with an addition of a visual variable consisting of ordered, simple and complex patterns[138].

Additionally with reference to the work of Adriansen (2012), Kolar et al. (2015) and Heppner et al. (1994, p.84), I suggest that participants in *timeline* interviews adopt a cognitive "parallel-processing model" (Crowder 2015, p.354) when they verbalise and illustrate their career experiences simultaneously and "serial processing" (*ibid*) when they alternate the narrative and drawing elements of the interview.

The *timeline* narrative interview technique that I developed has not been used previously in either public relations or career

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[137] Whilst other researchers have used similar *timeline* approaches, none have applied this technique to a study of careers.

[138] The typology proposed by Kolar et al. (2015) comprised *list-like, continuous-line* and *hybrid* timelines. In the analysis I identified an additional visual variable consisting of ordered, simple and complex patterns. However only six of the possible nine *timeline* formats were found in this inquiry

studies. It offers rich insight into career experiences. Analysis reveals subjective focus on the time and space between career transitions, salience of early career experiences and the impact of meso and macro level factors on career strategies.

11.2.4. Telling tales of the field

Micro level analysis of *timeline* interviews enabled development of four *"tales of the field"*: beginning, becoming, relational and recursive. This proved a useful analytical approach to gain insight across the research population as well as concentration on individual experiences.

The *timeline* drawing approach resulted in fragmented narration rather than a cohesive career story. Further it stimulated knots and threads of *pastpresentfutureness* (a term I have originated in this thesis). Visualisation appeared to trigger additional recollections and enable connections to be made.

Analysis of the interview recordings confirmed the lack of a robust career system in public relations. Early career experiences *(tales of beginning)* were found to be notably positive, salient and rich in detail. Even with a relatively small research population there were considerable differences in career experiences within the *tales of becoming.* Although there was little evidence of proactive longitudinal career planning, two occurrences of "rehearsal" (Spokane 1988, p.26) were noted.

Whilst traditional career concepts were evident in how careers were narrated, analysis of career experiences indicated more rhizomatic contemporary career patterns. Consequently opportunism, personal agency, resilience and flexibility were the dominant career strategies. The *relational tales* highlight areas where practitioners are unwilling to compromise personal circumstances for their careers. The *recursive tales* confirm the fluidity of contemporary careers and underline the opportunities

created by public relations experience both within and without the occupation's tripartite structure.

11.2.5. Weaving co-constructed narratives

The *bricolage* technique, combined with reflective memo writing, offered the potential to overcome the limitations of traditional archival research. However, it proved rather complex and time-consuming. That said, it did help to develop a richer contextual understanding of public relations career strategies.

Seven dominant threads emerged from my immersion in the *timeline* interview recordings. Each was researched in some detail using the *bricolage* method. As a result, it was possible to develop a large number of *woven* career narratives around particular themes involving the research participants. It was not feasible to review these within the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, their value is evident from an illustrative example that challenges the contention by Langellier and Peterson (1992) that *spinstorying* is a gendered storytelling technique.

11.3. Theorising and inferencing

11.3.1. Theoretical constructs' contribution to knowledge

Despite my reservations concerning efficiency of the *bricolage* method, it proved effective when developing theoretical constructs. Likewise Rico clustering (paired with Scapple software) enabled me to develop a creative "pattern-weaving" approach to abstract and conceive four original theoretical constructs: knotted patterns of mobility; fluidity in career middleness; multi-layered, polyphonic sense making; and a non-linear, kairotic element of time.

Chapter 10 confirmed the relevance of these in informing understanding of career behaviour at the macro, meso and micro level. Individually and collectively, these make a unique contribution towards understanding career strategies in public

relations. Further they suggest ways in which Bandura's social cognitive theory (2001) and Savickas' career construction theory (2005) might be developed.

The original contribution to knowledge of the four theoretical constructs responds to limitations of traditional notions of career that are evident within a professionalised narrative of public relations. The constructs accommodate the emergence of contemporary career patterns and more recent holistic career frameworks. They also shed light on trends influencing current and future career environments within public relations.

The knotted patterns of career mobility construct theorises that individuals' ability to craft careers within public relations is affected by a multiplicity of constraints. Its contribution to knowledge lies in extending discussion regarding career constraints within public relations beyond specific vectors of identity, such as gender or race. A richer perspective emerges when looking at issues affecting career mobility as a pattern of knots that is responsive to change over time. In particular, the construct encourages analysis of a wide range of opportunity structure demands and barriers at the occupational, organisational and societal levels. In turn, this challenges the traditional emphasis within public relations on individualisation as the predominant enabler of career development.

Career mobility is portrayed traditionally as involving hierarchical progress through an orderly series of jobs within a single employer or a chosen occupation. This perspective has been critiqued for representing a normative experience of "the white western able bodied middle class male" (Patton and McMahon 2014, p.135). Nevertheless, a basic technician-manager linear model dominates career thinking in public relations. Its relevance is questioned by the changing

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demography of the occupation since role theory was formalised nearly fifty years ago (Broom and Smith 1979).

In contrast, the flexibility inherent within contemporary career patterns accommodates the diversity of experience evident in the inquiry. Hence, the fluidity in career middleness construct theorises that public relations' structural elasticity encourages opportunism as the dominant career strategy employed by public relations practitioners. Rather than presenting a demarcated hierarchical career structure (whether bureaucratic or professional in form), public relations supports flexibility, including equifinality and multifinality. Consequently, the second construct makes an original contribution by countering the narrow perspective of the traditional upward career trajectory that benefits, and reflects the experiences of, a minority of public relations practitioners. Further, it encourages a transformative focus on lifelong learning and career sustainability to enhance career resilience for the majority within the occupation.

Moreover, the multi-layered, polyphonic sense making construct theorises that career experiences can be evaluated using dialogic reflection and relational agency. Indeed, the construct's original contribution to knowledge is to propose that the complexity of careers within public relations are best understood as socially crafted narratives across historic, current and future environments. This challenges traditional notions within public relations scholarship that favour a simple progressive narrative of occupational professionalism.

The threads of pastpresentfutureness interweaving narratives of public relations careers are evident within the final theoretical construct, non-linear, kairotic elements of time. This theorises that careers within public relations comprise

fragmented opportune moments rather than a coherent sequence of planned job transitions.

Historically organizations were expected to manage the careers of their employees. However, since the 1990s, career planning has been viewed predominantly as a personal responsibility (Baruch et al. 2015). The uncertainty of current and future career environments as a result of trends such as on-demand employment and automated technologies, accentuates a need for organisations (as well as individuals) to facilitate customised careers (Benko and Weisberg 2007). Therefore, the contribution to knowledge made by the non-linear, kairotic elements of time construct is to emphasise the importance of career-enhancing experiences and encounters. It also indicates that rhizomatic connections between these can be viewed as both opening up and conjoining career development opportunities.

In summary, the four theoretical constructs support theorising and enhance knowledge of public relations careers. They accommodate the structural elasticity of public relations as an occupation and the multiplicity of career experiences encountered by contemporary practitioners. Specifically they address the limited perspective of traditional notions of career. Further, they contribute conceptually to the tapestry paradigm in supporting the identification of career strategies within public relations as opportunistic, agentic and rhizomatic.

11.3.2. Inferencing broad conclusions

At the end of this doctoral project, I have drawn some clear conclusions concerning the broad research objectives through a process of inferencing.[139] The first is that the career studies

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[139] Shuy (1987, p.107) states that "the process of inferencing moves from the narrow to the broad".

field has enormous potential for reconceptualising how public relations careers are viewed. Contemporary career designs represent experiences of public relations practitioners. Yet the language and theories evident within the occupation, organizations and wider society tend to reflect career thinking developed in the twentieth century. From the research inquiry, I infer that this influences how public relations practitioners make sense of their career experiences.

The second is that claims of professionalisation of public relations are not substantiated from a career studies perspective. The occupation reflects a professional career form only to a limited extent. There is also little evidence that public relations practitioners use professionalised strategies (such as career planning or counselling) to inform career decisions.[140]

My third conclusion is that the way in which public relations practitioners are responding to a changing career context is largely unchanged from the approach that I identified in my preliminary research studies. Careers continue to be viewed primarily as personal rather than social constructions and career strategies remain predominately opportunistic and reliant on personal agency. Given the occupation's lack of a coherent career system and the inherent flexibility of public relations careers this is not surprising. However, it is problematic where practitioners lack career mobility owing to encountering structural boundaries as constraints. In such circumstances alternative career strategies including relational agency and social learning may be more transformative.

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[140] It is notable that research participants are well-educated with a higher incidence of membership of an industry body than the occupational population. Both are professional characteristics.

11.4. Relevance and limitations

The relevance of this doctoral research topic lies in its potential contributions to the fields of both public relations and career studies. It addresses a lack of academic research into careers within the occupation and offers a new line of inquiry regarding the continuing relevance of a professionalisation narrative within public relations. It provides an original occupational case inquiry as public relations has not been examined previously within career studies scholarship. As discussed earlier in this chapter (and developed further in Chapter 12) the thesis identifies a number of recommendations for both fields.

Nevertheless, the inquiry has a number of limitations. These predominantly concern the research design and have been examined in Chapter 7. Additionally, it was ambitious to situate an inquiry of career strategies in public relations within a body of knowledge encompassing traditional and contemporary career studies. Concentrating on the perspective of individuals rather than organisations narrowed the focus somewhat. This and other ways in which the scope of the inquiry was delimited are discussed and justified elsewhere in the thesis.

It may also be thought that my preference to develop an "imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon" (Charmaz 2014, p.231) is a further limitation. However, as the study breaks new ground in terms of its topic, it seems appropriate to be equally innovative throughout the doctoral project. I contend that this has resulted in a number of original developments, insights and recommendations. These include construction of four theoretical propositions and a new tapestry paradigm as discussed in Chapter 13.

Chapter 12. Recommendations

12.1. Introduction

In this thesis I have crafted a new line of inquiry via the career studies domain through which to investigate the continuing relevance of a professionalisation narrative within public relations. My hope is that this work inspires and motivates others to build on, and critique, the result of my initial weavings.

This chapter comprises three sections. I start by addressing implications of the conclusions presented in Chapter 11 concerning the broad research objectives. As a result, consideration is given to establishing a professionalised career design for the practice. In the second section, I attend to implications of my thesis for theory and pedagogy. I conclude the chapter with reflection the potential to develop the research methodology, theoretical concepts and new tapestry paradigm.

12.2. Developing a professionalised career design

My thesis has argued that the career studies field has considerable potential for reconceptualising how public relations careers are viewed. In particular, the research inquiry underlines a need to shift the lexicon and theorisation away from traditional career thinking to better match practitioner experiences that reflect contemporary career designs. I dispute the professionalisation narrative of public relations on the basis of limited evidence that the occupation reflects a professional career form or that practitioners use professionalised strategies to inform career decisions. Further, I note the lack of a coherent working career canvas within the occupation and the tendency to promote individualization as the prevailing career strategy.

My contention is that understanding of public relations careers relies on everyday career thinking rather than knowledge of career studies theory. This long-standing deficit is

evident throughout the occupation and in how others regard it. Hence the implications of my thesis apply across the micro (individual), meso (occupational/organizations) and macro (societal) levels. They can be traced historically and resonate into the future.

Consequently, I see a need to confront the dominant professionalisation perspective within public relations scholarship and practice of an implicit, yet normative, chronological, hierarchical career system predicated on individualistic characteristics and behaviours. Instead I recommend establishing a professionalised career design for the occupation. This would accommodate the jurisdictional and definitional challenges it is facing and build understanding of individual and collective contemporary career experiences.

Whilst it is not my intention to present a fully formed concept of a professionalised career design here, I envisage this holistic approach will be directed towards sustainable career development. It will take account of the multiplicity of career options within public relations and the desirability of increasing diversity within a growing occupation. Further, its perspective would recognise the concept of a career as a *rhizomatic* assemblage and social construction. It will enable examination of a variety of *tales of beginning*[141] and *tales of becoming*.[142] In recognising the important work-life interface, the professionalised career design will demonstrate that:

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[141] This allows for post-education entrants alongside those joining public relations from other occupations, without the pejorative connotations of the term "encroachment" (Lauzen 1991, p.245).

[142] This relates to equifinality whereby "individuals at the same position can have somewhat different job histories" (Rosenbaum 1989, p.337) and multifinality (Buckley 1967, p.55) whereby "similar initial conditions may lead to dis-similar end-states".

"careers are central to understanding how individuals, institutions and society interact" (Gunz and Mayrhofer 2015, p.2).

Robust knowledge of contemporary careers across the occupation's tripartite structure is important for all career stakeholders. A professionalised career design would help people make sense of the scope of careers within the occupation – and opportunities for skills transfer outside it during a lifelong career. In addition, it would support subjective and objective career development[143] by informing practitioners' career planning and decision-making as well as organizations' recruitment and retention practices. This initiative could be developed as a research project by Global Alliance.[144]

12.3. Recommendations for theory and pedagogy

12.3.1. Public relations role theory

The thesis has implications for a number of existing public relations theories, most notably it challenges the technician-manager role theory that has come to dominate career thinking in academia and practice over the past half-century. This work was considered in Chapter 3 where alongside reporting its limitations, I noted academic claims for its ongoing relevance.

Bifurcation of the occupation using this model reflects a traditional bureaucratic career form. It reflects the way in which public relations practitioners in the inquiry make sense of their career experiences, encounters and ambitions. However, the

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[143] Arthur (1997, p.3) connects "institutional – organizational or societal – interpretations" of someone's career, termed objective, with the subjective career perspective involving "the individual's own interpretation of his or her career situation".

[144] The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (http://www.globalalliancepr.org) is the confederation of the world's major PR and communication management associations and institutions.

theory's implied rigid, normative career structure is inconsistent with the strategies and career patterns that they narrated.

This is not to say that a traditional hierarchical career within a single organization is not a contemporary reality. However, it is one of many options. This should be made clear within textbooks and other pedagogic materials that discuss careers within public relations. My inquiry has other implications for those teaching public relations or preparing students for careers in the occupation. For instance, in respect of the UK government's teaching excellence framework (TEF) that indicates the importance of employability.

Moreover, I recommend that academic research into role theory within public relations needs to take a fresh approach. For instance, a grounded theory study would avoid being influenced by fifty years of literature that essentially derives from initial studies in the late 1970s. Likewise, new research could draw on observational and phenomenological research, rather than the positivist philosophy informing existing role theory work.

In respect of practitioner surveys, such as the CIPR State of Public Relations and European Communication Monitor (ECM), I recommend a review of the use of dichotomous segmentation as arguably job title and self-reporting of seniority are unreliable indicators.

12.3.2. Collaboration with career studies

There is considerable scope to situate future research in public relations scholarship and practice within the career studies body of knowledge. I also contend that the career studies domain could learn from public relations scholarship. For example, my thesis proposes that the career studies domain would benefit from greater engagement with critical scholarship. In contrast a rich critical seam has developed

within public relations academia indicating the value of critical reflection for research, theory, pedagogy and practice. There is potential for a similar development within career studies and I propose that collaborative research between the two disciplines could help address this situation.

From my thesis, I suggest the construct of multi-layered polyphonic sense making offers the possibility to revisit social cognitive theory (Bandura 2001). Similarly I suggest the theoretical construct of non-linear, kairotic element of time has the potential to be integrated with career construction theory (Savickas 2012).

12.5. Potential for methodology and theoretical concepts

To conclude the recommendations chapter, I return briefly to my own interests in the topic before considering the potential to develop the research methodology, theoretical concepts and new tapestry paradigm.

I explained my initial interest in the topic of career strategies in public relations at the start of this thesis. In the time that has passed, this interest has developed. It is difficult not to be enthusiastic about a subject when everyone you meet has a career story to tell. I hope that the outcomes from this work will enable me to address in practice some of the issues that stimulated my initial interest.

My knowledge of the topic has developed so that I now view myself as an insider in both career studies and public relations scholarship. However, my greatest learning has been in research methodology and developing creative approaches. I presented a paper at the 2016 International History of Public Relations Conference explaining the *timeline* narrative interviews and *bricolage* archival research. This was well

received and I would like to use both in further studies. For example, I am interested in researching nomadic careers.

The research methodologies I have developed warrant further examination within a career studies context. In particular, I believe the *timeline* drawings offer an original way of developing the *Life Design* interviews proposed by Savickas (2012). Moreover, I have responded to Collin's (2007) suggestion to develop tapestry as an original career metaphor. My proposition of its value as a root-metaphor is a new addition to the typology of craft metaphors presented by Inkson et al. (2015). Initial conversations with public relations practitioners suggest the value of the set of four theoretical concepts and the tapestry metaphor. I explore this further in the final outro chapter.

Chapter 13. Outro - pastpresentfutureness of the woven career tapestry metaphor

In this final outro chapter I reflect briefly on my active participation in the inquiry and substantiate the original contribution offered by the tapestry paradigm for the professionalisation of career strategies in public relations. Initially I approached the thesis following the established academic convention of ensuring research invisibility by use of the third person authorial voice. Recognising this as artifice was liberating and opened up my writing, as I have been able to develop the thesis as social constructivism in action. It seems fitting at the end of my work to examine my active participation and provide a personal perspective on the theoretical constructs I have developed and my proposal for tapestry as an original root metaphor.

13.1. Weaving a coherent tapestry

I have established my position in the thesis as a weaver of a new career paradigm in seeking to accommodate the complexity of contemporary careers across the micro-meso-macro space. In doing so I examined the threads that are interwoven over the span of time into careers. I have aimed to reconstruct these faithfully into a coherent tapestry in the written thesis. Throughout, I have been open about my active participation and engaged in reflection both within and without the written pages. In developing my craft, I have felt able to be creative yet also responsible for ensuring the final product remains true to the protocols of academic endeavour. Nevertheless, my work reflects Turner's concept of a "pattern of embedding" (2010, p.34) as my active participation is interwoven through every word.

13.2. Crafting theoretical constructs

As a *bricoleuse* I have found and stitched a number of words and concepts into the thesis to repurpose these in the creation of something new. The ability to interweave logic and imagination is most useful when crafting theoretical constructs. This involves looking back to what has come before, seeking to craft something original of the moment and entrusting some future value in the finished work. I view theoretical constructs as objects of *pastpresentfutureness*. Each is rooted in the literature and research findings, and presented as an original contribution to understanding the topic of inquiry. Their future value lies in resonance and usefulness for scholars and practitioners as craftsmen and women. I trust that readers can reconstruct their own knotted patterns of mobility, recognise the freedom of fluidity in career middleness, recollect engaging with multi-layered, polyphonic sense making and remember moments in the non-linear, kairotic element of time.

13.3. Untangling tapestry as a woven root metaphor

Finally, it is time to revisit my proposition of tapestry as an original career metaphor. Ricoeur (1977) indicates the power of a word that acts as a metaphor to modify meaning. This is my intention in selecting tapestry as a root metaphor to illuminate new meaning of careers. I concur with Collins (2007) on its ability to produce:

> "a picture of the wholeness, roundness, and oneness of how people experience their lives and how they express that experience as a career" (Collin 2007, p.561).

The craft of tapestry has a long history that began with women as skilled workers. Mechanisation constrained this artistry as men and women became cogs in the machine. Today tapestry is recognised as a hobby or a refined cultural artform. Its future

lies in digital technologies as design and creation are aided by artificial intelligence. Tapestry's career is a story of the changing context of work.

The metaphorical properties of tapestry can change how we see career strategies in public relations. I justify this argument by the use of the lexicon of tapestry throughout this thesis. I have indicated tapestry as a root metaphor that informs a worldview of careers and propose it as a new paradigm. It was not my intention to do more than reflect Stead's (2013) contention that "the use of fresh metaphors … will broaden and enrich our perspectives" (p.41). I trust that I have proven the suggestion of Fraser and Nicholson (1988, p.102) that the tapestry's "threads of many different hues" support a "broader, richer, more complex, and multilayered" critical inquiry.

I contend that it is the everyday language subordinated to tapestry as a basic concept that will help create a new worldview of career strategies. As such, it will enable conceptualisation of career strategies in public relations to better reflect the reality of experiences in a changing career context. To conclude, I draw on Shanahan's (2014: 228) exploration of tapestry as a *muralnomad* where she notes:

> "tapestry has oscillated between the built structure (notable the castle or the church) and the carpet of the nomad's temporary shelter, connoting a range of social and institutional hierarchies from feudal and colonial orders to conditions of stateless and migration" (Shanahan 2014, p.228).

*As a metaphor this illustrates the mutability of public relations and the position of career at the connection of "floor and wall, between horizontality and verticality" (*ibid*). Moreover, as a* muralnomad*, tapestry has "resonance with conditions of impermanence and instability" (p.229). It is the perfect metaphor for explaining career strategies in public relations.*

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