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**INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL
OPPORTUNITIES
AND CAREER PATHS
FOR MANAGERS**

**Case studies
in the UK automotive industry**

by

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Industrial and Business Studies**



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Thank you.

Declaration

The present research study and thesis:

- is entirely the author's own original work;
- does not contain any material that the author has had published;

and

- has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

This thesis examines intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers in the context of a general trend of downsizing. The thesis presents new evidence on the impact of the trend on the traditional career and aims to produce an analysis that moves beyond the optimistic and pessimistic accounts.

The strength of an in-depth investigation was sought in companies within the same industrial environment and labour market. All the research sites are in the automotive sector and geographically located in the Midlands, England. Field work was carried out at Rover Group Ltd., LucasVarity Aerospace Ltd., GKN Automotive Driveline Division UK Operations Plc., and Valeo (UK) Wipers Systems Ltd., and covered also Mayflower Vehicle Systems Plc. and Peugeot Motor Company Plc. as ancillary sources of information. This is a long-established sector of the economy where change may have a more dramatic impact.

The case-study was the format chosen as the best suited for my predominantly exploratory endeavour. The main tools of data collection were a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews directed at managers. The former concentrated on core matters such as the managers' education and past career paths. The latter enabled deep-probing so as to explore detail and perceptions. Primarily with a qualitative orientation, collected data were sorted and analysed within categories that emerged from inside this same material. A quantitative element was incorporated with a complementary controlling function. This joint approach elicited findings which answered some important questions.

In face of a pessimistic literature on managers in the downsized organization, Dopson and Stewart (1990) suggested that there might still be some hope. Other optimistic authors came to emphasize managerial empowerment to an extreme, notably Heckscher (1995) with the vision of a 'professional' manager in a post-corporate era. My results can be linked, instead, to existing studies that adopt a middle ground between optimism and pessimism, such as Watson's (1994) and, more recently, Gratton *et al.*'s (1999). My own distinctive contribution is two-fold. The boundaries of current knowledge are expanded at an empirical level with fresh evidence on the management career, revealing how managers are making sense of, and living with, a situation of career uncertainty and pressure. At an analytical level, the thesis develops a theoretical model which condenses the key conclusions of the present research study and depicts the emerging structure of a spiral career, with limited upward movement for many and further spiralling upwards for the minority. The former is for 'the majority of us'; the latter is for the 'high flyers' and the 'shining stars'. Optimism applies to this group while for the rest there is not uniform reluctance but realistic acceptance of the situation by many combined with cynicism expressed by some.

PART I

1 - Introduction

**'I believe that he will be successful who directs
his actions according to the spirit of the times'
Machiavelli (1513) *The Prince* p.2**

The downsizing exercises and resultant job cuts which marked the corporate scene of the 1980s offered fertile ground for a pessimistic literature on managers and their careers, to which Dopson and Stewart (1990) reacted, suggesting that a ray of hope could be sustained. Today there is an optimistic literature on the managerial career which tends to be associated with the concept of empowerment (e.g., Dopson and Stewart, 1990; Kessler and Bayliss, 1992; Heckscher, 1995) and that of employability (e.g., Handy, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995). Much in the optimistic strand is also associated with the view held by some (e.g., Kanter, 1983, 1989; Handy, 1984) that downsizing has brought with it a radical change away from the Weberian organizational model. Heckscher (1995) takes this view to an extreme with his forecast of a marketable manager in a post-corporate world. There are, however, some sceptical voices (e.g., Guest and Davey, 1996) who do not see a radical change to the traditional managerial career and its organizational context.

On the other hand, the pessimistic literature has both persisted and received further input. This strand emphasizes job insecurity and sees the end of traditional career opportunities (e.g., Kanter, 1989; Scase and Goffee, 1989; Heckscher, 1995; Pahl, 1995).

It equally tends to see the end of loyalty (Kanter, 1989; Scase and Goffee, 1989; Handy, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995), an outlook which is associated with the perception that downsizing job cuts may represent a corporate infringement of the 'psychological contract'.

But what is actually happening to managers and their careers? Are there grounds for optimism? Pessimism? Or is there a mixed scenario? The present study seeks an objective assessment of the *status quo*; and brings new empirical evidence and theorization. At a pragmatic level, it also seeks, and suggests, answers for managers and other actors in the corporate world.

I - NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH STUDY

My investigation is primarily concerned with finding fresh evidence on what is actually happening to managers and their careers. Its initial approach is, thus, that of building theory, rather than testing theory. The works of Dopson and Stewart (1990) and Heckscher (1995) have served as a benchmark for comparison and contrast, and they constitute a platform of departure from which I have addressed empirical and theoretical issues left open to further research. Both Dopson and Stewart and Heckscher can be regarded as being in the same line of argument inasmuch as both put great value on the manager. However, the manager is placed, by the former, inside the organization, i.e., in the internal labour market, and, by the latter, outside the organization, i.e., 'empowered' to the point of competing in the wider, external market as an independent professional.

In 1990 Dopson and Stewart called for more empirical work on the situation of middle managers. Their call for research evidence was echoed throughout the decade (e.g., Hirsch, 1993) and has had some response (Redman *et al.*, 1997; McGovern *et al.*, 1998; Gratton *et al.*, 1999). However, there is still a rather fragmented body of research-based information on the managerial career. Also, most of the existing literature tends to be focused on the middle manager, and limited attention is given to those on higher grades.

In the past, not much distinction was made between 'management' and 'employer' (Sisson and Marginson, 1995), for the 'organization men' could easily be seen as one-with-the-employer (Scase and Goffee, 1989), but downsizing and related events in the 1980s may have left managers clearly re-defined as employees. If this new situation may mean uncertain employment and dismal career prospects for the middle manager, what will it mean to the senior manager? In some respects, the effect of lost status and security may be felt more dramatically by those on higher grades, as they may have more to lose. When Edwards (1995) stressed the scarcity of research material on managers as employees, he was setting future researchers a challenge which would take them beyond the confines of middle levels and research also higher ranks. My study does that. In my investigation, evidence was invited across the managerial band, and significant findings have been encountered both for middle and senior management, as presented in PART II and further discussed in PART III of this work.

The 'organization men' were successful 'white-collars' who, with the events of the 1980s, such as downsizing, became as vulnerable to job loss as 'blue-collars' had always been, as pointed out by Scase and Goffee (1989), who also found that the new situation was a generator of 'reluctant managers'. These employees may also have other reasons to feel proletarianized. Collinson and Collinson (1997) have found that managers who have

survived downsizing exercises are expected to be highly committed and are being evaluated on their presence in the organization with 'time-space surveillance' practices characteristic of industrial bureaucracies. There is a difference, though. In the Taylorist-Fordist organization, this control over work time and space would have been applied to labour, not to management!

Trust, or lack of it, is at the core of this state of affairs. The issue of level of trust in the employer-employee relationship has been addressed by Armstrong (1987, 1989), with his 'agency approach', in a theorization further developed by Edwards (2000) on the control-empowerment dilemma and the resulting contradictions and tensions experienced by managers in a scenario where different aspects coexist which justify both a pessimistic and an optimistic vision of the management career. Watson (1994) found contradictions and tensions expressed in ambiguities being played out on the managerial stage. Similarly, my investigation has produced findings that reveal apparently antagonistic forces and support both a pessimistic and an optimistic outlook for managers and their careers, as can be seen in PART II. In the discussion of these findings, in PART III, my work is in line with the theoretical orientation developed by Armstrong (1987, 1989) and Edwards (2000). From this standpoint, one can see more clearly that the managers in my study are to a degree in tune with the times and, as such, neither 'reluctant' nor 'empowered'.

Management careers are to some extent embedded in the organizations where they may evolve, which are human groupings who, in turn, are embedded in the surrounding socio-cultural reality. In face of the complexity of the elements involved, the case-study was the chosen format of research design, for it allows an examination of how various influences work through the organization and amongst its members. I carried out my case-study

investigation in a variety of settings within the same sector of the economy and geographical area - the automotive industry in the Midlands, central England.

This is a choice of settings which is distinct from what has been provided by some other researchers. Dopson and Stewart's (1990) study is based mainly on eight broad case-studies in different organizations in the UK, in the public and private sectors, including a traditional manufacturing company and a distributor of autoparts. Watson's (1994) work is an ethnographic study of a single UK manufacturing firm of telecommunication products. Redman *et al.*'s (1997) is a case-study of a UK building society. Heckscher's (1995) argument is based on interviews carried out at fourteen units - divisions, headquarters or plants - in a total of eight large industrial companies in the US, ranging from chemicals to automotive products.

A wide spectrum of large organizations was also covered in two more recent works, which have similar concerns to mine, namely by McGovern *et al.* (1998) and Gratton *et al.* (1999). Coincidentally, these two works, which are contemporaneous with mine, produced some results which, to a point, run parallel with some of my results, notably that no substantial evidence could be found of a transformational change that would support a new model of the kind proclaimed by Heckscher in replacement of the traditional management career.

These two studies are both the product of research on eight quite different major British-based organizations, ranging from pharmaceuticals to electronics, food to banking, and telecommunications to the National Health Service. Differently to these and other researchers who opted for a wide coverage of different sectors, I preferred, instead, the strength of an in-depth investigation of large companies in the same industry that share a substantial base of commonalities and the same labour market. Four such firms were my

case-study organizations: Rover Group Ltd; LucasVarity Aerospace Ltd; GKN Automotive Driveline Division UK Operations Plc; and Valeo (UK) Wipers Systems Ltd. My field work was also extended to two additional organizations, namely Mayflower Vehicle Systems Plc and Peugeot Motor Company Plc. These have been used for ancillary information of trends detected in the main research organizations. All the six companies in my study are manufacturers and suppliers of whole assembled powered vehicles and/or components for powered vehicles. All the sites visited are in the Midlands, historically a major centre of the UK automotive industry, of great economic importance for the country.

The automotive industry's major product is passenger automobiles, followed by commercial vehicles. By the late 1930s, Britain could boast to have producers of world-wide renown such as Morris, Austin, Standard and Rootes. In the Second World War, automobile companies contributed significantly to aircraft production, and by 1945 Britain's automotive industry was the world's second largest, next to that of the United States of America. Later in the century, the situation changed, and in the 1980s Japan became the leading producer, with the European Economic Community, now European Union, ranking second. The automotive industry has, however, continued to play a central role in British economy and labour market, traditionally concentrated mainly in the Midlands, England.

For the purpose of my research study, the automotive industry has also offered the advantage of being traditionally hierarchical, with incremental career progression upwards through the ranks. In this type of organization, therefore, the effects of downsizing and delayering could be expected to show a particularly dramatic impact on the management career.

II - METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Once the review of the existing literature had revealed a gap in the area of intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers, the research questions were formulated, with the following umbrella question: How is the concept of management career played out in the employing organization?

As explained above, in face of fragmented research-based information, an exploratory, theory-building approach was chosen as the main route to follow, and preference was given to the case-study method as the best suited to the complexity of elements involved. My selection of research settings for this investigation on the automotive industry was made on pragmatic grounds, i.e., free from any pre-theoretical considerations, – the same business sector, socio-geographical context and other commonalities – and its strength can find confirmation in the consistency of findings despite the fact that, not one or two, but seven different case-study settings were examined, as follows: one from Rover; three from LucasVarity; two from GKN; and one from Valeo. To these can be added the two extra organizations, on a complementary basis. This brings us to a total of nine settings, similarly to McGovern *et al.* (1998) and Gratton *et al.* (1999), with eight settings, and Heckscher (1995), with fourteen, though different in nature.

The sample population in my study was a random selection of individuals within each firm's understanding of the managerial band. This provided a variety of positions along the management career – the unit of analysis in my investigation – with 114 employees participating in my study under research controlled conditions.

A questionnaire and semi-structured interviews directed at managers were the main tools of data collection in my investigation. A vast amount of material was gathered which was sifted into categories and sub-categories generated from within the same material,

thus removing possible researcher's biased pre-judgment. This process also created an articulated system of data analysis and evaluation. Finally, although a qualitative paradigm was the fundamental form of approach in my research design, quantitative elements were incorporated and data control was enhanced with a numerical input for a triangulating effect.

III - CONTRIBUTION MADE TO KNOWLEDGE

In relation to my platform of departure based on the works of Dopson and Stewart (1990) and Heckscher (1995), my findings appear to disprove the latter and to some extent confirm the former. There are changes in the managerial career, but little evidence has been found that can support Heckscher's model of the 'professional' manager in a post-corporate world. It is more likely that managers have a more important role to play in the organization with fewer ranks, as suspected by Dopson and Stewart; but the situation is confused.

My findings have revealed a complex scenario of conflicting forces in which managers are caught, of which they are trying to make sense, and through which they are trying to map a career. These conflicting forces can be successfully explained with the theoretical line devised by Armstrong (1987, 1989) and Edwards (2000), which is based on the understanding of the 'agency problem' and the control-empowerment dilemma, and which can act as a unifying theory validating both a pessimistic and an optimistic vision of the managerial career.

Further to these results, my research study has expanded the limits of knowledge also with a new theoretical model that takes into account both the surface appearance and its

underlying constituent dimensions in what is happening to managers and their careers in the organizations researched. The model depicts the interplay of the individual and the organizational context in the making of a re-defined management career which I have termed the **flat or rising career spiral in the cylinder-cone organization**.

This term was chosen as a particularly felicitous metaphor. As will be seen, there is a firm-led emphasis on a career movement in which the traditional upward direction is not an intrinsic constituent. Lateral job changes are encouraged as a means of increasing one's competence and value as an employee. This may result in a circulatory path with little upward progression, if any at all. Significant upward progression will be achieved only by some individuals. Similarly to a spiral – which can evolve on a single plane or be three-dimensional – career efforts by the managers in my study organizations may result in either a flat or a rising spiral. The rising curve may be limited for many but, in exceptional cases, may shoot to the top.

What is happening to managers and their careers can be summarized briefly as follows:

The cylinder-cone organization

- A downsized organization does not necessarily mean a flatter organization. Intermediate ranks can be knocked down in an otherwise intact hierarchy, where the traditional career ladder remains in place.
- With the development of divisionalization and relatively autonomous business entities, career ladders have multiplied across the wider organization or group. These may be two-legged ladders in which a technical and professional leg is appended parallel to the traditional managerial line of command.

- The traditional pyramid-shaped organizational structure has evolved to a cylinder-cone shape, corresponding to a two-tiered labour market with poor career opportunities in the lower, cylindrical tier.

Career: flat or rising spiral

- The route to the top is achieved by big jumps past the missing rungs in the ladder. This is for the 'high flyers' some of whom are 'shining stars'. Lateral movement is open to all. This may be the option for 'the majority of us'.

- Career management planning systems and tools play an ambiguous role both in general and in relation to the dividing line between the higher tier of 'high flyers' and the lower tier for 'the majority of us'.

- Under a corporate emphasis on lateral job movement, side moves may result in one's career spiralling up; but the curve may never rise. Also, employment insecurity is experienced at all levels of the managerial band.

- The spiral career movement – rising or flat – is dignified through a corporate ideology of personal development and breadth of experience across the organization which applies both to the 'high flyer' with an international, or global, bird's eye view of the business and to the lower tier 'rounded engineer' trying different technical skills around the site.

- There is an embryonic new outlook and push for greater recognition of technical and professional careers, but the matter is dealt with mainly through a protracted version of the traditional subordination to the line of command, in a dual career system in which the line of command is the leg to reach the top.

- There is considerable frustration from managers who have upward career aspirations but feel caught in a lower tier, some in danger of losing their job. Nevertheless, there is from managers in general an expressed desire to establish a constructive employee-

employer dialogue with the firm. However, there is also concern over the increase in constraints and pressure to perform and deliver in the fluidity of an ever-changing working environment and the vagueness of both career prospects and employment security.

IV - PREVIEW OF CHAPTER CONTENTS

The main body of this dissertation comprises three parts, each one built around a distinct group of tasks. PART I opens with the present CHAPTER 1, which now comes to its conclusion. CHAPTER 2 reviews the available scholarly literature and other written material on related subjects. The lacunae left by the existing critical literature are identified, and questions are posed on the multiple facets of the complex issues in need of investigation. The questions waiting for an answer influenced the central focus of my study – namely, the link between managers and their working context – as well as the methodology adopted and the research instruments used so as to elicit the required information. This is defined in CHAPTER 3, which also explains how my work endeavours to produce new empirical evidence, build new theorization, re-evaluate previous theorization, and provide new lessons of a pragmatic nature for practitioners in the corporate world. This chapter includes a statement of the philosophical stance and the epistemological rationale that inform my data collection and analysis methods. A description and a justification are given of my case-study approach as well as of my choice of research sites and sample population. The questionnaire and the semi-structured interview are described as the principal tools of inquiry, whilst the respective master copies are enclosed in the APPENDICES at the end of the volume. The analytical process is explained in its different stages. An explanation is also given of the measures that have

been taken throughout my investigation in order to maximize validity. Generalizability and reliability are equally discussed.

PART II encompasses the results of my research in the sense of collected, sorted and analysed material. It consists of five chapters, each one reporting on and evaluating sets of findings that relate to each other in a significant manner. CHAPTER 4 gives details of the companies studied, with an emphasis on their current features and career planning systems as at the time in which my field work was carried out (1997-1998). This account includes the four case-study organizations – Rover, LucasVarity, GKN and Valeo – as well as the two complementary organizations – Mayflower and Peugeot – and acts as a platform for the more complex evidence which follows in the next four chapters, where the respondents' views on various issues are laid out and assessed. CHAPTER 5 is devoted to findings on the corporate side of the link between managers and their working context. It looks at the corporate understanding of manager and at understandings of the firm's career model; corporate career management profile, tools and policy, as well as provision for technical and professional careers; and changes in corporate career pattern. The first substantial findings emerge in this chapter where one sees that a two-tier career system may be operating in the firm where the managerial ladder has but a few rungs to climb. In CHAPTER 6 the focus is turned on to the individual. How managers see their career prospects is under consideration as well as the extent to which they feel they can be proactive and drive their own career. In this chapter further major findings show that in their majority respondents feel that they were able to shape their career proactively better in the past than they are likely to in the future. CHAPTER 7 examines both corporate demands on managers and the latter's response to the pressure associated with tight performance monitoring and a fluid working environment. This situation was found to be

a source of opportunities for some but a source of frustration for others. CHAPTER 8 moves on from the current *status quo* to considering what may be in store for managers, and their firms, in the future. Predictions, suspected trends and expressed concerns are assessed. Also, culture-bound aspects are examined as pointers that can illuminate what lies ahead. Some striking findings can be seen in this chapter. A five-year forecast includes the expectation of more structured career paths in a scenario of increased intra-organizational mobility. This appears to be backed up by a disseminated notion of 'development', rather than career, and a corporate ideology of excellence through breadth. In contrast, however, there is also scepticism towards lateral movement as a career alternative, and the notion of vertical career movement is very much alive!

PART III returns to the different aspects examined in the preceding results chapters, pulls the various strands together, and addresses wider issues. CHAPTER 9 contains a discussion of the overall findings, where the debate is led by the central themes that run through the previous chapters; and new light is thrown on the obscure areas left by the available literature reviewed in CHAPTER 2 and formulated in CHAPTER 3 as questions waiting for an answer. The answers provided in CHAPTER 9 expand the boundaries of the state of knowledge in this academic field with fresh evidence that brings a clearer understanding as to the management career and the link between managers and their working context. In the light of this evidence, CHAPTER 10 re-writes scholarly literature with the presentation of a theoretical model – the **flat or rising spiral career** movement which managers will experience in the **cylinder-cone organization**. Implications are drawn which concern both the future of managerial career paths and the firm itself. Also, suggestions are made for further scholarly research. This final chapter concludes with a number of lessons for practitioners.

2 - What We Know Already or Don't - Research Themes

Although not well supported by research evidence, there is a persistent literature on an alleged future without the traditional career but, instead, self-help, short contract hiring and open-ended employment transaction (e.g., Kanter, 1983, 1989; Handy, 1984, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995; Baron and Kreps, 1999). London book shops are not short of popular literature on the subject. Generally coming from the US, these books promote the idea of self-development and competitiveness in the open labour market. Furthermore, this is often elevated as philosophical wisdom to be affiliated in Ancient Greek or Buddhist teachings. Examples are Korten (1999) *The Post-Corporate World. Life after Capitalism* and Boldt (1999) *Zen and the Art of Making a Living. A Practical Guide to Creative Career Design*. Moving around in the labour market appears to be also encouraged by the British national press. An article on how to manage a career beyond the year 2000, with the title 'Working on Tomorrow', proclaimed that 'in the future people will make a large number, and different sorts, of transitions during their working lives' (*The Guardian*, 22 June 1996). Another example is a whole page advertisement for 'Management Jobs' with the slogan 'change is good @ revolver.com' (*The Times*, 10 June 2000).

There is a large literature on organizations, management and managerial careers. Some of it is descriptive, for example measures of the extent of downsizing or delaying, while other parts are prescriptive, such as advice to managers on how to control their careers, whatever shape these may be taking in the future. Even when such work has been discounted, there remains a large body of academic writing. The purpose of this chapter is to draw out selected themes relevant to the central research question, which is introduced in Section I. These themes embrace changes in the structure of organizations, which are reviewed in Section II. Such changes are important mainly for the contextualization of the management career, which is discussed in Sections III and IV. They establish the changing world in which careers are enacted, but it is the careers themselves which are key.

The main themes of this chapter are two-fold. First, in relation to organizational structure, arguments are laid out about new forms of organization which are allegedly replacing the Weberian model of bureaucracy. Although there has certainly been a great deal of turbulence in the light of familiar issues such as downsizing, distinctive new models have emerged at best only patchily and arguments for novelty may often be exaggerated. Second, in relation to careers, three main aspects are considered: the impact of organizational change; the position of managers as employees; and the potential impact of corporate culture. Under the first of these, organizational change is often confused and uncertain. Under the second, managers are seen to face tensions. On the one hand, firms may seek loyalty, but on the other, as Watson (1994) for example found, middle managers are often distant from corporate decision-making and as powerless in face of restructuring as many other employees. Under the third heading, corporate culture programmes are viewed in respect of the tensions they address and how they may influence the management career.

I - THE RESEARCH QUESTION

My viewing of the available literature led me to identify a number of questions which I believe need to be answered if we are to improve our knowledge and our ability to assess best practice in respect of intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers.

How is the concept of management career played out in the employing organization?

Figure 2.1 - The principal research question

The questions which arose from my reading of the existing literature include the following: 1. To what extent is current and future organization design likely to reproduce traditional management career paths or instead bring innovative alternatives? 2. Can a substantive evolution be identified in the relationship between the manager and the organization in respect of employee-employer dynamics? 3. Can a correlation be detected between corporate culture and the understanding of career by different members of the organization?

These are research questions which fall into an area in need of investigation, as it has been pointed out in the existing literature. Dopson and Stewart (1990) stress the need for empirical work so that a clear picture can be obtained of what is happening to middle management. Hirsch (1993) stresses the need for research on the situation of middle management and internal labour markets. Edwards (1995) stresses the scarcity of research material on managers as 'a result of the rarity of studies adopting what may be called an industrial relations approach to managerial work.' (1995:22), where 'industrial relations'

is to be understood, not in its narrow meaning of collective relations between managements and trade unions, but as the regulation of employment.

My research questions concentrate on intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers. The career issues they address meet in the link between organizational structure and managerial employment. This is not a simple matter, for the questions posed are complex. On the other hand, they are also interrelated and are, in fact, sub-questions of a wider formulation, that is to say, the principal research question as follows: How is the concept of management career played out in the employing organization?

When making decisions on the existing literature in view of the research questions, a double criterion of selection was adopted. This included both ontological and epistemological considerations in addition to an adequate coverage of related subject areas. Also, the literature surveyed included not only academic work but also a selection of non-academic 'popular' books, which were used because they present models (e.g., the post-bureaucratic career) which may be expected to have an influence on companies.

In my selection of academic literature I looked for a theoretical framework of departure in my study and a benchmark for contrast and comparison of my own findings. This is, however, by no means a detraction from a possible new theorization that may occur as an outcome of my research.

The selected literature will be reviewed in the following three sections of this chapter. 'Organizations and approaches to management careers' is an analytical overview of empirical and theoretical developments over time with a direct bearing on the research questions. It is divided into a number of sub-sections, each one contributing a piece to the complex jigsaw puzzle which tells the main story. 'Management careers and organizational changes' is a discussion of established theoretical models, as compared

with influential predictions and prescriptions, and is also an evaluation of other relevant research findings and theory. It identifies the limitations of previous literature in relation to the research questions, and it will establish the leading considerations which will inform my research design. 'Recent research and empirical evidence' is mainly an additional review of works that came to my attention when my study was already under way. These later publications did not in any way influence my research questions and methodology. However, they represent similar concerns to mine and they will be brought into the discussion of my own findings.

II - ORGANIZATIONS AND APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT CAREERS

1 - The Bureaucratic Model

It is a long time since bureaucracy received its first systematic formulation from Weber in the very early twentieth century. As in the state and the church, and as in parties and armies – he explained – in the profit-making business 'the organization of offices follows the principle of hierarchy, that is, each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one' (Weber, 1947:331). Each position, or 'office', 'has a clearly defined sphere of competence' and is not to be held on an honorary or short-term basis, but implies stability and continuity. 'It constitutes a career. There is a system of promotion according to seniority or to achievement, or both' and the 'salary scale is primarily graded according to rank in the hierarchy' (1947:333-4). Finally, the following is a governing principle:

‘Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge. This is the feature of it which makes it specifically rational’ (1947:339).

In the Weberian ideal type of organization, inferior-superior relations are impersonal – as opposed to traditional types such as feudal and patrimonial – and rational – as opposed to traditional legitimizations of authority such as the sacredness of tradition. Loyalty is, therefore, oriented to an impersonal hierarchy, to a superior position, not to the individual who holds it. By the same token, recruitment is not on the basis of family position or political affiliation, but on formal qualifications such as a diploma or a university degree. ‘Bureaucratic authority is carried out in its purest form where it is most clearly dominated by the principle of appointment’ (1947:335).

In its implementation, this principle came to correspond to a divide in which the many below received orders from the fewer above (Sisson, 1994:5). With Taylor’s (1911) ‘scientific management’ and the Ford Motor Company’s introduction of the assembly-line methods, those on the lower bands were subjected to supervision for maximization of profitable use of time and space. The Taylorist-Fordist techniques were to have a long-lasting impact on mass-production and industry in general.

This model was still holding a firm grip well past the Second World War (1939-45) and past the middle of the twentieth century. In his five-basic-parts classification of a manufacturing firm, such as that traditionally encountered in the car industry, Mintzberg (1979) pictures the organization with a small ‘strategic apex’ connected by a flaring ‘middle line’ to a large flat ‘operating core’; and these three parts are typically connected through a single line of formal authority. The remaining two parts, the ‘technostructure’ and the ‘support staff’, are separate from its main line of authority and influence the operating core only indirectly.

In the strategic apex are the few who are charged with overall responsibility for the organization - chief executive and other top-level managers whose concerns are global. The middle line is occupied by managers with formal authority. It runs from the senior managers just below the strategic apex to the first line supervisors, who have direct authority over the operators. The technostructure consists of study analysts, such as industrial engineers; planning and control analysts, such as accountants; and personnel analysts, such as recruiters. The support staff ranges from legal counsel to plant cafeteria. Both the support and the technostructure relate to management in an advisory capacity and, in some cases, they are put together into a single category under the label of 'staff'.

In relation to the very beginning of the twentieth century, Mintzberg's model may accommodate an increased number of ranks in the decision-making sector. The doers are concentrated mainly in the 'operating core', below. Curiously, the technostructure – including engineer analysts – and the support staff appear to be in a somewhat peripheral situation.

2 - Post-bureaucracy

Starting in the late 1970s, but mainly since the early 1980s, drastic changes in industry have been widely reported in the media and discussed by commentators. The phenomenon has become generally known as *downsizing*, that is to say, a set of activities designed to improve organizational efficiency and performance and which affect the size of the organization's workforce, costs, and work processes. These measures include a variety of personnel-reduction strategies, such as transfers, outplacements, retirement incentives, buyout packages, layoffs, and so on (Cameron *et al.*, 1991), with a considerable impact on the intermediate ranks of the managerial line of command. Although downsizing may on

occasions be presented almost as a tidal wave of change, numerical evidence may not always be available. Nevertheless, in the early 1990s it was estimated that 95% of UK based organizations had undertaken, or were about to undertake, downsizing exercises (Holbeche, 1994). For the US, Cascio (1993) reports that more than 50% firms downsized in 1990 alone.

The reason generally given for downsizing is that of severe pressure from continuously changing economic and business circumstances in face of international competition in a global arena. The economic environment was dominated by two severe recessions, both in the UK and the US, first in 1979 and then in the early 1990s. Manufacturing in established economies was being challenged by low priced products from Third World low-wage countries. In the UK, from the mid-1980s, there was an escalation in the shift from manufacturing to services. Other important contextual features in Britain were the monetarist economic policy, large-scale privatization and freer markets introduced by the Conservative government who was elected in 1979 and would stay in power throughout the 1980s.

Since the 1980s, Britain has experienced a high level of merger and acquisition activity as well as internationalization either on an European or worldwide basis. The second Company Level Industrial Relations Survey found that, between 1987 and 1992, more than two thirds of companies with more than a thousand employees in the UK reported incidence of merger or acquisition and a similar number reported investment in new locations, figures which show an overall combination of closure, or rundown, and growth (Marginson *et al.*, 1995:20).

The downsized format seems to have become the general restructuring approach in UK organizations, and perhaps more so after privatization, merger or acquisition. A good explanation can be found in the need to improve organizational efficiency and

performance in times of great economic and business challenge. There is, however, another side to the issue of downsizing which may not have received much publicity. In some cases, firms may have come to the view that the managerial hierarchy had escalated to a disproportionate size as a result of an excess of posts having been created. This is a possible situation which, as it has been discussed (Jackall, 1988), can be propitious to serving some individuals' selfish interests but which may have little to do with organizational efficiency. The form of downsizing known as *de-layering* seeks to eliminate this corporate 'fat'. Harrison (1994) comments that corporations are becoming 'leaner and meaner' through such means as, on the one hand, out-sourcing and production networks, and, on the other hand, the elimination of managerial layers. Downsizing / delayering and externalizing, through out-sourcing or other means, are practices which became reactive and defensive measures for firms who were experiencing difficulties. But for others it may have been a proactive and anticipatory exercise, joining a trend of seductive new ideas.

The wind of change came with some voices who heralded solutions to be found in measures contrasted to the old bureaucratic order. The compartmentalization into well defined spheres of competence was classed by Kanter (1983) as a 'segmentalism' which hinders corporate efficiency. Success lies instead in an 'entrepreneurial spirit' combined with an 'integrative' approach. Problems are addressed as 'wholes related to larger wholes' (1983:27). Elaborating further on her teachings, Kanter (1989) talks of a 'post-entrepreneurial company' where there are fewer and fewer corporate departments as such, as 'more responsibilities are delegated to the business units, and more services are provided by outside suppliers. As opposed to the bureaucratic model, what matters most is not the 'vertical dimension' of the corporation but its 'horizontal dimension' which is the process of cross-communication and cooperation between divisions, departments and

business units (1989:115-6). 'Bureaucratic-corporate assumptions about a steady, long-term rise up a hierarchy' are replaced with 'long-term uncertainty' and 'the need for portable skills' as 'hopping from job to job' is replacing the old ladder climbing. 'Reliance on organizations to give shape to a career' is replaced with 'reliance on self' (1989:229). Behind these replacements there is a fundamental shift in the locus of loyalty and commitment: 'loyalty not to company but to self; commitment not to organization but to task' (1989:332-3).

Summing up, the new message points to the following: a flatter organization; no assumptions of upward career; horizontal inter-communication and cooperation; reliance on, and loyalty to, self; and commitment to task. Bureaucracy and its career paths appear to have been displaced.

3 - The Organization of Organizations

Based on Weber's (1947) concept of the bureaucratic organization, Pugh *et al.* (1968) identified five dimensions of organization structure: specialization; standardization; formalization; configuration; and centralization. Specialization refers to the division of tasks in terms of the different occupational types or functional departments within an enterprise. Standardization and formalization refer to organizational procedures and rules. Configuration assesses levels in the managerial hierarchy and respective span of control, shorter in the taller organization. Centralization evaluates the extent of decision-making at higher or lower levels.

Writers such as Handy (1984) and Kanter (1983, 1989) see the downsizing of the 1980s and 1990s as changing fundamentally the Weberian organizational model. Of the dimensions identified by Pugh *et al.*, configuration is the most visibly threatened. The

bureaucratic organization was pyramid-shaped, with a broad base and successively higher ranks, each one with fewer positions. Now ranks have been knocked down and positions reduced. The pyramid may be said to have been flattened. Specialization will be perceived as a hindrance by those who believe that an entrepreneurial spirit and integrative approach are the way ahead. A function-based division of labour may be seen by some as a thing of the past. Standardization and formalization measures may be equally perceived as inhibitory and in need of being slackened or removed. Finally, centralization would be seen as being replaced by a more dispersed form of authority, with local managers having increased discretion.

A decentralizing format can be found in divisionalization and budgetary devolution. Divisionalization is the break-up of the large organization into semi-autonomous entities which may be known as divisions, business units, or other name, and can operate at both national and international level. Budgetary devolution is a form of divisionalization in which the business units are often designated as profit centres and are responsible for financial targets. However, in the divisionalized organization, centralizing and decentralizing variables are at play (Sisson and Marginson, 1995). In fact, in general, strategic management is distinct from operating management, resulting in that the organization is decentralized in what concerns operations but is centralized in what concerns strategy. Standardization and formalization can provide vehicles for strategic centralizing control, which can, in turn, be facilitated by technological innovations such as computerized information processing.

In addition to changes within the organization, the 1990s saw extensive efforts to focus on 'core' activities, with non-core work being out-sourced. Whatever its limitations, the original core-periphery model (Atkinson, 1984) underlined the essential issue that firms may need to develop a long-term relationship, within which the idea of a career is of

course embedded, with only some employees. Others will be on short-term contracts, so that labour utilization and output can be adjusted to fluctuating business conditions. Externalizing – through networks across organizations, out-sourcing or subcontracting – is just one extra step further outwards. The core-periphery model can perhaps be seen as a horizontal divide between insiders and outsiders, as opposed to the Taylorist-Fordist vertical divide between decision-makers and doers. Also, although in the 1980s much of the focus of the core-periphery model was the treatment of non-managerial employees, during the 1990s the externalization of managerial work through out-sourcing gathered pace; the implication is that there is an additional challenge to traditional methods of the career within one organization.

The extent and novelty of such developments can easily be exaggerated. A significant attempt had been made before to move away from functional grouping of activities, which is closely linked with, and encourages, specialization. This was the matrix or lattice-type structure which sought to combine the benefits of both function-based and product-based activity grouping and became popular in the 1970s (Francis, 1994). Team and project work in today's divisionalized organization equally seeks to combine the benefits of specialized knowledge and product oriented grouping.

Much is not new. Divisionalization itself was established in the 1920s by Alfred Sloan, for General Motors, and subsequently adopted by other automotive companies (Chandler, 1962). This process did not of course remove centralized controls, and instead created a structure of local decision-making within clear central guide-lines. This is important for contemporary debate, for it was sometimes suggested that decentralization means the abandonment of central direction, whereas there is mounting evidence that the performance of operating units is closely monitored (Marginson *et al.*, 1995).

Divisionalization and decentralization mean, not the end of organizational controls, but their development in new forms.

Also, whatever form it may take, the core-periphery duality can be expected to result in an imbalance of opportunities both in respect of corporate training and empowerment. The balance is likely to tip in favour of those who are involved in critical firm-specific, or 'core', activities, that is to say, those in the firm's primary, not secondary, labour market. As pointed out by Peters and Waterman (1982), attention must be given to avoiding overdiversification and concentrating on 'core competences', which are the employees' skills and knowledge viewed collectively, as an operative whole. This body of skills and knowledge must be constantly improved on by making systemic learning a corporate goal. In what became known as the 'learning organization', 'new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured' and 'people are continually learning to learn together' (Senge, 1990:4). Corporate investment in core competences can also be expected to concentrate on those in the firm's primary labour market.

Some buzz words and influential notions have developed, often in association with the core-periphery format. The term 'Human Resource Management' (HRM) emerged in the 1980s and has since been surrounded by debate and controversy (Storey, 1992, 1997). For some, it is little more than a new label for personnel management and industrial relations, though, to a point also capturing some additional meanings. For others, it has the makings of an innovative model. In this latter understanding, HRM seeks to address the needs of the downsized organization and the need to meet the challenges posed by intense competition and continuously changing economic and business circumstances. Central to the HRM concept is the combination of enhanced human resources and maximized competitiveness. Then more will be achieved with fewer individuals.

In the evolution of personnel management and industrial relations to HRM, some new meanings have been brought in from Japan such as 'lean production' which became an example to follow (Sisson, 1994:7). Lean production incorporated the meaning of seeking a better fit between human resources and business goals. Indeed, in contrast with other features of HRM, some working methods associated with lean production, such as 'just-in-time', set demands which are reminiscent of the no-time-and-motion-waste approach of Taylorist methods. Equally reminiscent of these methods are other forms of control that can be found in HRM. They include individual appraisal and pay systems and the 'surveillance' used in some information systems (Burawoy, 1985; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). Exacting demands and tight supervision are, in fact, the pillars of 'Total Quality Management'(TQM), which is inspired in the Japanese organizational principle of continuous improvement. In the rhetoric of HRM culture, however, TQM is often expressed in people-centred terms, such as employee development, self-regulation, involvement and participation (Legge, 1994). TQM may also appear in association with the concept of the 'learning organization' discussed above.

The instrumentalist approach is an apparent contradiction with ideas that appear to put people first. Presented as a 'hard' and a 'soft' version of HRM, the two contrasting facets are described as follows by Storey (1989): The hard version 'emphasizes the quantitative, calculative and business-strategic aspects of managing the headcounts resource in as "rational" a way as for any other economic factor'; the soft version 'traces its roots to the human-relations school' and 'emphasizes communication, motivation and leadership' (1989:8). In other words, the hard version admits poor career prospects, poor pay and poor job security, if that fits the business strategy. The soft version, which stands out in the HRM rhetoric, is essentially people-centred.

The restructuring of firms in the 1980s and 1990s is characterized by assertive moves such as downsizing, but it includes a mixture of old and new which is by no means unidirectional. A career path in these firms may not be a clear-cut route.

4 - Two Contrasting Scenarios

Burns and Stalker (1961) found that bureaucratic-type structures worked well for organizations operating in stable circumstances but that others requiring innovation or adaptation to changing environments needed a very different kind of structure, which they termed 'organic' as opposed to mechanistic'. Although this early classification has evolved to a more elaborate 'mechanistic-organic' duality, it may have been regarded by some as a simplistic 'package'. Two common caricatures express this reaction: the firm as an economic automaton pursuing rational goals; and the firm as the passive tool of powerful business leaders (Gunz, 1989). However, the 'idea of two extreme types illuminates a wide variety of possibilities' (Francis, 1994:56).

ORGANIZATIONAL TYPE ⇒ DIMENSION ↓	'Mechanistic'	'Organic'
STRUCTURAL DESIGN	* hierarchical * top-down authority control * standardized formal roles	* flatter structure * employees' self-control * flexible roles, lateral cooperation
BEHAVIOUR REFERENT	* corporate regulations * customary practice	* values, sense of mission * entrepreneurship, innovation
INITIATIVES	* piecemeal	* integrated
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	* controlled access to courses	* learning organization
MEASURE OF EMPLOYEE SUCCESS	* upward progression in the line of command	* furthering of professional competence

Table 2.1 - Contrasting corporate contexts for managerial employment and career

In *In Search of Excellence* by Peters and Waterman (1982) – which ‘has probably been the most widely read management book of all time’ (Watson, 1994:32) – the authors proclaim that ‘excellent’ companies look ‘organic’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ as opposed to the mechanistic, bureaucratic model (1982:39). In fact, the ‘mechanistic-organic’ dichotomy is useful in more than one way. First, it highlights aspects of the bureaucratic model which were felt to be inadequate and in need of replacement but seem to be in a way present in the proposed alternatives. This is the case with the control and tight supervision associated with TQM and the hard version of HRM in general. Second, it contains the embryo of important views and practices which took a clearer shape in the 1980s and 1990s. The entrepreneurial spirit is amongst them, as well as elements central to HRM such as integration and lateral cooperation. Third, it shows elements that have come together in views which go beyond, and may deviate from, the proposed integrative organizational solutions. The employee’s self control, entrepreneurship and learning efforts can evolve in the direction of advice given by influential voices, as for example ‘reliance on self’, ‘the need for portable skills’ and ‘loyalty to self’ (Kanter, 1989). Labour market externalization is expanded in concepts such as the ‘federal’ organization (Handy, 1984); ‘network’ organizations (Miles and Snow, 1986; Powell, 1990); ‘boundaryless’ organization (Academy of Management, 1993); ‘horizontal’ and ‘virtual’ organizations (Byrne, 1993; Wally *et al.*, 1995). Some of these suggestions may represent fragmentation, not peripheralization.

Innovative organic ideas have by no means received unconditional acceptance. For example, Guest and Davey (1996) are sceptical of radical innovations and a completely different organizational model. They were involved in academic investigation for the Career Research Forum, a group of thirty three leading private and public sector

companies concerned with the future of career and the new challenges for career management. They found that 'for the core of key managers, the traditional career is [...] still intact and hierarchy remains in place, albeit somewhat reduced (1996:23) and, in their opinion, 'the rhetoric of the new organization and the end of career is some way removed from the reality' (1996:25).

In contrast, placing himself at the outermost edge of the organic scenario, Heckscher (1995) has proclaimed the end of the traditional corporate world together with the end of the loyalty that has been attached to it. Loyalty, he argues, is 'the motivational base of obedience' on which bureaucracy is founded, but is now giving way to 'empowerment'. Managers who cling to the old ethic of loyalty are blocking out the magnitude of the changes around them and failing to prepare themselves for the future. Managers who embrace the new identity define themselves not as 'loyal servants', but as 'professionals' whose commitment is to a mission or task rather than to a company. 'The relation to the company then becomes contingent, valuable only as long as the employee feels challenged and respected'. (1995:7). Kanter's (1983) managers may be 'hopping from job to job' across one same company; but Heckscher's rise to the stature of independent professionals competing in open labour markets.

The picture is complex. Intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers may have to be found in a wide extended internal market. From Kanter's point of view, the external market may become the way out. If we are to believe Heckscher, then the manager is to be seen on the outside the organization, as this ceases to exist as we know it. The next section, 'Management careers and organizational changes' will identify the limitations of the above and other existing literature in relation to the research questions.

III - MANAGEMENT CAREERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

1 - To what extent is current and future organization design likely to reproduce traditional management career paths or instead bring innovative alternatives?

The bureaucratic organization is thus widely seen as having been superseded by an entrepreneurial, integrative approach, and an increased marketization, where long-held assumptions of a steady rise up the managerial hierarchy will have to be replaced with preparing to move from job to job (Kanter, 1983, 1989). Dopson and Stewart's (1990) review of the resulting literature on middle management reveals a bulk of negative predictions in which managers are portrayed as a declining group. This is presented in general as the result of the increased availability and sophistication of information technology combined with the need of organizations to rationalize and the associated reduction of managerial posts. The authors remark that such statements rarely draw on serious research evidence or differentiate between different organizational contexts, for example, between the public sector, a traditional industry, or a fast-growing computer company.

In contrast with the gloomy literature they found on managerial posts, Dopson and Stewart's own study, based on a diversity of organizations in the UK, did not find evidence of managerial decline but suggested instead that a slimmer middle management in a time of rapid change has a more important role to play than before perhaps with a resulting increased degree of empowerment. The authors were cautious about generalizing

their findings and called for further research in what is a complex scenario of different contexts, backgrounds and attitudes.

Filling this void requires empirical investigation in different sectors. The automotive industry in the UK is a particularly interesting area for the important role it has played in the past, and to some extent continues to play, in British economy and labour market. From an empirical perspective, evidence is needed on how managerial paths have, or have not, been changed by possible factors such as job cuts, and the possible switching to an integrative approach and adoption of TQM schemes. Will Mintzberg's (1979) model of the manufacturing firm still hold true for the automotive firm in the UK? Are there any major changes? Has there been an evolution in the relative position of the managerial line and the technostructure?

The growing need for suitable academic qualifications has been pointed out. Already in the early 1970s, a university degree was becoming a prerequisite in recruitment and career advancement. Roberts *et al.* (1972) researched the impact of technological change on occupational structure in a study of industrial technicians in fifteen companies in the UK. Traditionally, the technician had occupied a level overlapping that of the technologist, above, and that of the skilled and semi-skilled worker, below. In the past, technicians had been able to move up into the technologist grades, and management grades, through job experience, but it was found that this route was now becoming closed. In face of changing techniques of production, employers were instead recruiting technologists almost solely from university graduates. Not only a 'graduate barrier' prevented technicians from moving up, as those without a college education and a technological degree were finding themselves pushed down into a new mass labour force with little distinction from manual workers. This finding means that disappointment awaits those who had entered their

organization in a time in the past when there was a different, task-centred system of qualifications and rewards.

Corporate provision for technical and professional posts has since long been deemed to be unsuitable. The traditional practice of rewarding the specialist with promotion to a generalist managerial post can result in losing a 'good scientist' (Shepard, 1958) and probably not gaining an interested and good manager (Rosen *et al.*, 1976). An alternative solution has been attempted by introducing a specialist ladder, in parallel with the conventional managerial one, in which specialists are rewarded on the basis of their expertise rather than their managerial responsibilities. However, a survey of dual-ladder organizations in the UK (Gunz, 1980) showed that the system is classed as an 'organizational fix' and becomes very difficult to implement. Evidence appears to be inconclusive as to the real nature of the problem.

There is a literature on technical and professional posts in Anglo-Saxon organizations as compared with other countries. It has been pointed out that in Britain engineers are under-represented in management compared with their German, Japanese and American counterparts, for 'management ideology on Britain lacks a technical heart' (Lee and Smith, 1992: 9). In those countries, engineers are prepared for a management career. The contrast has been highlighted in particular in relation to the German view where management is always management of some substantive process (Lawrence, 1980) whilst in Britain and the United States Dalton's (1959) distinction between 'staff' and 'line' positions has been the dominant outlook. Accordingly, in Germany industrial management hierarchies are dominated by professional engineers (Armstrong, 1987) and an engineering perspective is a main ideology in industry (Lawrence, 1992), whilst in Britain engineers provide specialist support to line managers but their overall contribution to decision-making is largely unrecognized, for engineers, technicians and manual workers appear to

be anachronistically seen as sharing the same craft culture (Lee and Smith, 1992). To this Brewster and Soderström (1994) add that the UK has maintained entrenched unions, though no 'social partnership' approach, little legal intervention or support, and extensive decentralization of personnel issues, but little devolvement to line management. On the other hand, technical and professional posts may be acquiring a new recognition within the organization. McLoughlin and Clark (1994) are optimistic to the measure that they see in CAD/CAM systems and information support systems, not a deskilling factor, but, instead, a source of a greater sense of authority for middle managers with an engineering background.

On the topic of how British managers are 'made', Storey (1994) comments that there is a deep-seated preconceived notion that people either 'have what it takes' or they do not, and as a result a sink-or-swim philosophy tends to prevail. Perhaps there is a correlation between this phenomenon and military experience, as suggested by Randell (1994) in respect of employee appraisal and selection. A large number of people gained their first management responsibilities through work in government and the armed forces during the two World Wars. They continued to use war-time criteria biased towards the social qualities of the people being assessed, when they returned to civilian life and took on managerial posts in post-war organizations. Empirical evidence is required as to how managers are being 'made'. Are old preconceived notions prevailing, or are new criteria of evaluation for a managerial post being applied?

As discussed earlier in this chapter, much in HRM hinges on ideas such as those voiced by Kanter (1983, 1989), in contrast with the bureaucratic model: entrepreneurship, horizontal dimension, integrative approach, reliance on self. With its emphasis on self-interest and self-help, HRM has been seen to embody the new individualism of post-industrial society (Guest, 1990). In Britain this trend also found expression in the

Thatcherist measures to weaken collectivist regulation and empower the individual (Kessler and Bayliss, 1992). In an organization with an integrative approach, individualism can be closely associated with personnel techniques like direct communication with employees and individual performance rewards (Kessler and Purcell, 1995). Is this likely to foster new criteria of evaluation for managerial posts? Or will it reinforce the sink-or-swim philosophy discussed above?

What has become generally known as ‘non-standard’ or ‘atypical’ forms of employment – part-time, temporary, and others – continued to grow in the 1990s, at the expense of full-time employment (Nolan and Walsh, 1995). Although this has been observed mainly in the services sector and involves mainly the female labour market population, it will be useful to have clear empirical evidence of where some managers stand in relation to the core-periphery (Atkinson, 1984) divide – whether in the primary or in the secondary labour market. This evidence would also be conducive to a better understanding of statements such as those made by Kessler and Bayliss (1992) who argue that the Conservative Government intervention throughout the 1980s resulted in managerial empowerment. Management was ‘firmly in charge’ and ‘sought greater cost effectiveness through the use of new technology, through increased labour flexibility – both numerical and functional – and through changing reward systems and changing contracts of employment’ which included part-time and other atypical forms (1992:265). Is management here meant as a corporate group? Or is there a growing divide between different kinds of manager?

The interlinkage between the occupants of the core and the periphery labour markets needs exploring also for a better understanding of the management career in face of some HRM practices. These may be an ambiguous coalition of a soft version, in line with the human-relations school, and a hard version, in line with a Taylorist instrumentalist

approach (Storey, 1989). Central to HRM is the principle of using enhanced human resources to maximise competitiveness (Storey, 1992, 1997). Where in the firm's organizational context do different managers stand in relation to the implementation of this principle and the soft and hard facets of HRM?

Furthermore, as Sisson and Timperley (1994) have pointed out, career planning can be understood as implying an effort to find some fit between organizational and individual goals; but there appears to be a pull away from this balance of interests. As an example, Kanter (1989) talks in terms of the balance moving away from the 'corporate', who maintain the organization, toward the 'professionals' and 'entrepreneurs' who supply skills, expertise and creativity. Organization, it is argued, can no longer guarantee employment for life but can help its employees improve their 'employability' in the labour market. First, the key assumption here is that professionals indeed have skills which are transferable and that employers are dependent on these skills. Where this is not the case, the model of employability arguably fails. Second, there is also the assumption that the firm will provide the employee with skills that will confer employability. This poses two main questions in association with the concept of the 'learning organization' (Senge, 1990): Will the learned skills be transferable? and Who will be given valuable skills? As discussed earlier in this chapter, corporate investment is likely to be directed to those in the 'core' sector of the firm. Empirical evidence is required for a clearer understanding of this situation.

Span of control may play a crucial role in the correlation between managers' working context and their careers. Sisson and Marginson (1995) have found a complex situation in apparently decentralized forms such as divisionalization in different sectors including the automotive industry. Often the organization is operationally decentralized but strategically centralized, which has been increasingly facilitated by the advancement in information

technology. Osterman (1996) adds further evidence and theorization on this issue. Focusing on American examples, this researcher has investigated the managerial internal labour market in a variety of situations, including the automotive industry. Across the different organizations studied, two contrasting tendencies were identified:

(a) A cost cutting / centralization model, in which local autonomy is reduced and layers of managers eliminated. This is made possible by concentrating power in headquarters and making greater use of information technology and expert systems to manage.

This model essentially represents an effort to perfect the traditional hierarchical model of organizations. It does not represent a fundamental shift in views about the purpose, or structure of organizational forms.

(b) A decentralization / empowerment model, which, by contrast, is based on a different vision of the firm, one in which organizational boundaries become diffuse, due to networks across organizations and teams within them, and in which managers have greater responsibility and discretion for managing these relations. In this scenario, the world of managers has changed, although the story is not the same everywhere:

insecurity is higher; promotions are slower; jobs more complex; ranks fewer. (1996: 16)

This is a situation to be put to the test in a UK context, in order to see how the relative weight of the two tendencies correlates with different circumstances as prefigured in Burns and Stalker's (1961) mechanistic-organic model. There is, however, from some sources, a push for change in the latter direction, which is in line with Kanter's (1983, 1989) earlier writings and can be identified with the organic variety. For example, Cascio (1993) comments that in a large number of American companies the economic and organizational benefits expected from downsizing have failed to materialize, because these companies have failed to break out of the traditional approach resting on the principles of command, control and compartmentalization. He advises that reductions in headcount

need to be viewed as part of a process of continuous improvement that includes organization redesign. At the extreme end of this push for change there is Heckscher's voice announcing the demise of the corporate world and the rise of the empowered manager as a competitive entity in the open market.

For his managers in the open labour market, Heckscher recommends that a different infrastructure be provided by government legislation and support of professional institutions for the individual manager. This seems to be a novel form of unionization, with state support. There is perhaps another way of considering his suggestion. Under the title *Back to the Future: Time and Organization*, Burrell (1992) comments that the notion of 'change' relies heavily upon a conception of temporality. Typically, the progress of organizational forms is seen in this evolutionary way, with its origins in the guild system, through entrepreneurial subcontracting, to the bureaucratic pyramids identified by Weber and erected by Ford. Once here, the progress to Sloanism is usually chartered. These gave way in the 1970s to the matrix form of organization and 'are now being jostled by the flexible firm for fashionable recognition' (1992:170). From this perspective, much of the novelties proposed by HRM appear more like a recycled version of what has gone before. Moreover, in this line of thought, Heckscher can perhaps be seen as suggesting a recycled version of the guild system, which flourished in Europe between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries. This time the guilds, with governmental backup, would provide managers with protection and aid in the furtherance of their professional interests.

The situation is by no means clear. Variables are multiple. A detailed discussion of the changing nature of firms would fall outside the scope of this study, but empirical evidence is required which can bring light into what is actually happening in respect of the correlation between organizational design and management careers. Are there grounds for a pessimistic view of heightened job pressures and job insecurity for managers? Or are

there grounds for an optimistic view of empowered managerial posts? How prevalent is the organic trend and how will it influence management careers? Do unconventional alternatives such as Heckscher's anticipate what the future will be like for managers or are they utopian projections of revisited ideas and practices?

In focusing on the research question on the extent to which current and future organization design is likely to reproduce traditional management career paths or is instead bringing innovative alternatives, the aspects described below are leading considerations.

- * The impact of job cuts on the management career in the downsized organization:
intensity of merger / acquisition activity; extent and rapidity of position closure; number and level of missing ranks; mostly affected groups (by age, background, other); atypical forms of employment.
- * New opportunities that may be available in the restructured organization:
level of integration and cross-divisional movement; level and nature of centralization and decentralization (strategic and operational); grading structure and reward systems; specific characteristics (HRM, TQM, other); career planning schemes and tools; provision of competences for 'employability'.
- * The corporate handling of specialist posts as compared with line posts:
specialist-to-generalist progression; technical / professional ladder; other attempted solutions for parity; the place of the specialist in the overall organizational structure.

2 - Can a substantive evolution be identified in the relationship between the manager and the organization in respect of employee-employer dynamics?

Little distinction has been made in the past between 'management' and 'employer', to the point that on occasions the terms have been used interchangeably (Sisson and Marginson, 1995:89). This reflects a conceptual divide in which managers have been traditionally seen on the side of the employer as opposed to the employee, inasmuch as they have been occupants of the hierarchical ranks whose decisions affect the labour force below.

In the large bureaucracies which prospered after the Second World War, managers embodied the victory of meritocratic qualification over the hereditary class privilege which was dominant before. These 'organization men' were expected to subscribe to work values which gave priority to corporate demands over personal interests (Scase and Goffee, 1989:4). In their commitment and loyalty to their organization, these successful 'white-collar' employees could easily be seen as 'one-with-the-employer'. However, with the events of the 1980s, such as downsizing, managerial security was withdrawn. Now managers looked as vulnerable to job loss as 'blue-collar' workers had always been.

With downsizing came a profoundly different way of looking at the 'psychological contract', that implicit agreement of mutual expectations formed between the employee and the employer (Schein, 1970). Through various kinds of symbolic and actual events, it used to define what the employee will give in respect of effort and contribution in exchange for acceptable work and work conditions as well as organizational rewards in the way of pay, benefits and career advancement. The reduction of jobs and positions was perceived as a unilateral infringement, by the employer, of this implicit contract (e.g., Herriot and Pemberton, 1995).

Adding to job insecurity and diminished career prospects, HRM's measures to implement a competitive strategy are likely to put increased pressure on the employee, in a variety of ways. The remaining managers in a downsized firm may not only be expected to take on a heavier load, which used to be shared by a larger number of individuals, but may also be expected to accept travelling and working away from home. Fletcher and Williams (1986) remark that external mobility is demanded from about 50% amongst relatively new entrants, including graduates, and there is also an increase at higher levels, whilst the advantages and disadvantages this situation may have for the individual have also been discussed (e.g. Merrick, 1996). Forster (1992) comments that international careers are becoming more common features of the working lives of professionals and managers, and that international experience is fast becoming an essential stepping-stone to senior management or executive positions. A global elite is thus formed (Scullion, 1992) for 'many managers are simply not global animals' (Edwards *et al.*, 1993:18), although, as stressed in this last work, managers are not simply passively obeying demands imposed by their firms but they give their cooperation as a result of accepting and internalizing the need to do so.

Another point that has been considered is that pressure can be exerted in subtle and powerful ways. Following a Foucauldian perspective, Grey (1994) analyses the use of surveillance techniques in a large firm. He considers the self as a self-governing entity and career as a vehicle for the achievement of the self through work. In view of this, the employing organization can induce subjectivity through the use of disciplinary techniques that are understood by the employee as aids to career development. The employee self-manages his/her behaviour accordingly, for the firm is a place where the self may become what it truly is or desires to be. This is the case with appraisal exercises – where individuals are invited to self-assess strengths and weaknesses in their performance –

which tend to be presented as an almost benevolent means for individuals to realize their own aspirations.

Collinson and Collinson (1997) look at the monitoring of managerial work from another angle, as a practice reminiscent of the control over labour time and space characteristic of bureaucratic and industrial organizational forms. These authors have found that managers who survived delayering exercises are expected to be highly committed, heroic managers, and that, increasingly, they are being evaluated on their presence in the organization, being subjected to a 'time-space surveillance' (1997:376). Such practices undoubtedly contribute to an increased sense of job insecurity amongst managers.

Managers in the above situations are expected to excel, and may be psychologically manipulated to do so. On the other hand, the concept of 'job for life' has become obsolete and for some career may have collapsed (Pahl, 1995). In short, greater corporate demands are made on individuals who may have become rather vulnerable to job insecurity and career uncertainty. What is their reaction? Scase and Goffee (1989) found that the 'organization men', who for decades were expected to give priority to corporate demands over their own personal interests, now have become 'reluctant' managers in a low trust work setting. As a personal counter-strategy, these managers sustain feelings of psychological well-being through detachment in relation to their employing organization and seek alternative forms of satisfaction in other interests and leisure pursuits. This breakage in loyalty is observed mainly in middle-aged individuals in middle-level positions. In contrast, there are senior managers for whom occupational achievement remains a primary source of life satisfaction. The latter may find that bureaucratic forms of organization are better suited to achieve corporate goals when dealing with 'reluctant' managers.

Managers who can no longer regard themselves as managing change, but now find themselves at the receiving end instead, may be regarded as proletarianized professionals and in most cases without the protection of unions. This is how they are viewed by Herriot and Pemberton (1995), who see a solution in the 'new deal', which replaces the psychological contract. In the new deal there is no taking on trust, no mutual commitment. As the psychological contract was relational, the new deal will be transactional – it will be explicit contracting based on reciprocity (1995:20, 99). The new deal is the starting point of a revolution. This will be led by those who, contrary to the buzz word 'empowerment', may now have little autonomy in how to operate and, instead of receiving adequate resources, may have themselves become resources to be disposed of by those at the top (1995:77).

The notion of an explicit contract had also been put forward by Handy (1989). This will be the way now that the relationship with the organization has become cool and calculative (Handy, 1994). In this situation, a good package of skills and knowledge will give the manager a better bargaining power. This same author had also remarked that the nature of managerial work involves multiple roles to be performed and 'the real bases of continuing learning in management is experience at work' (Handy *et al.*, 1988:5). A link has developed between the idea of learning and that of 'employability', the latter meaning the provision of training and personal development that will enable employees to move on to alternative employment (Godswen, 1994). Empirical evidence, however, is insufficient for a clear picture in this area, as discussed in the previous sub-section. First, will the training and development opportunities provided by the firm leave the employee with a portfolio of skills which may have direct application elsewhere? Second, though perhaps foremost, will firms have the resources and the motivation to provide employability in the external market? This latter aspect may understandably be met with some scepticism, in

view that corporate provision for the management career may tend to be largely accidental (Ascher, 1983). Storey *et al.* (1997) have found that in the Britain of the 1990s arrangements for the planning of careers of individual managers have remained haphazard. Furthermore, these same authors have found evidence that, despite the odds, many managers spend their careers with the same company.

There are different kinds of manager in the existing literature. However, what a manager is and does varies from organization to organization. 'Job titles are notoriously unreliable guides to what managers do' comments Stewart (1976: 19). Stewart *et al.* (1980) remark that the definition that different researchers use of 'manager' varies considerably. In fact, the definition of 'manager' and 'management' has often been the object of inconclusive discussion (see Grint, 1995).

Notwithstanding, some particular cases have been given special attention. It is so with managers and aspirant-managers from a technical background. Torrington and Weightman (1987) report dissatisfaction amongst managers who had to abandon their technical work in order to take up administrative tasks. Lam (1989) found disillusioned engineers to have to move out of their technical roles into a management position as there is no other way of being allowed greater involvement in the product innovation process.

The older manager is another group who has received attention (e.g., Curnow *et al.*, 1994). The general message is that some have plateaued, may be seen as a blockage to younger newcomers, are often shed too quickly; but, on the other hand, some are 'young' elders from whose experience the firm can benefit and, on occasions, after having been pushed out in the delayering process, come back contracted as outside consultants on a part-time basis.

Another perspective from which managers have been viewed is that of outcome of downsizing, delayering and related exercises. MacDuffie (1996) has examined the 'Big

Three' US auto companies – General Motors, Ford and Chrysler – and considers how two profound changes which began in the 1980s – restructuring and diffusion of 'lean production' methods – have come to affect their white-collar employees in the 1990s. This is the case with management, at different levels, and technical professionals such as engineers. These individuals have been given more work and have to answer to more performance demands which include more decision-making responsibility and more cross-functional interaction. Nevertheless they have suffered an erosion of their previous status. A similar situation may have developed in the auto industry in the UK, or perhaps not. Research evidence is needed which can provide a clear picture.

Feldman (1996) offers two advice packages for downsizing organizations, one for the employer and one for the employee. The organization should use focused recruitment and selection systems for newcomers, give them informal guidance and the opportunity for a variety of job assignments. Mid-career employees should be subject to periodic skill assessment, retrained and cross-trained in other functional areas, and measures must be taken against age discrimination. For late-career employees, the organization should provide pre-retirement counselling, "open window" early retirement programs, "bridge employment" (e.g. part-time or temporary) and "outward career tracks" (coming back part-time after formal retirement). The individual should: (1) Seize the given opportunities for updated and cross-training, so as to become more valuable both in the internal and the external market. (2) Maintain technical excellence in order to be able to make informal operational decisions. (3) Sustain outstanding performance, avoiding absenteeism, seeking supervisor feedback, and in general showing the ability to shoulder the extra workload. (4) Demonstrate team contributions and promote member cooperation.

Feldman's advice may address a HRM's competitive strategy and, at the same time, minimize situations such as that found by Hallier and Lyon (1996) in relation to the older

managers who may have been regarded as 'dead-wood' to be disposed of. Their study is based on a sample of 42 middle-level long-serving engineering managers who had registered with a recruitment consultancy in South-East England soon after having been told by their employing organization that their jobs were liable to become redundant. They had all begun their careers in junior technical posts either as apprentices or graduate trainees and had subsequently progressed to management roles. There were different outcomes in the redundancy process. For the few reprieved managers, commitment to their organization was quickly re-established. In contrast, those demoted to engineering roles or re-employed by other companies became less trusting. The authors come to the conclusion that there is a contradiction between, on the one hand, employers' efforts to develop HRM unitarist values amongst their management workforces and, on the other hand, threats to managers' traditional psychological contract and a resulting situation of managerial disaffection.

Trust, or lack of it, from the employee has a correlative on the employer's side. This issue has often been taken from the standpoint of corporate supervision or surveillance, as mentioned above (Taylor, 1911; Grey, 1994; Collinson and Collinson, 1997). It has also been addressed, from the employee's angle, under the topic of 'careerism' and 'impression management' which sometimes supplants competence and integrity as a criterion for promotion and advancement (e.g., Feldman and Weitz, 1991; Feldman and Klich, 1992). This has a strong link with Jackall's (1988) account of management life and politics. It establishes that careers are often driven by luck and 'being in the right place at the right time' and that 'competence' is not an objective matter. This is an area in need of further investigation, so that clearer evidence is available on the levels of trust from both sides, the employee's and the employer's.

In close association with the issue of trust, Armstrong (1987, 1989) has addressed the contradictions inherent in the employer-employee relationship between the organization and the manager:

[T]he agency approach views [management] as a *relationship* (*) based either upon trust or upon performance monitoring and control, as substitutes for trust. Because trust is expensive, there arises a contradiction between its indispensability and employers' economic interest in substituting for it.

(*) Emphasis original.

There is thus some significant empirical evidence and theorization on the topic of the employee-employer relationship. Management, particularly top management, may have been empowered, but can no longer be easily confused with employer; and the employee is in a more vulnerable position where a flexible labour force is priority. In the existing literature, the emphasis tends to be on the breach of the psychological contract and the ambiguities of HRM. There is therefore a pessimistic literature on the decline of the internally promoted manager (e.g., Scase and Goffee, 1989; Grey, 1994; Pahl, 1995). There is also an optimistic literature based on the professional employment model (e.g., Handy, 1994; Godswen, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). Is this optimistic strand – and the associated exhortation to action in face of mistrust and hardship – anticipating the future? Or does the pessimistic strand correspond to a more realistic view? Elements from both appear to coexist in a scenario of contradictions and tensions, as found by Watson (1994). Highlighting the contradictions and tensions inherent in the employer-employee relationship between the firm and the manager, Armstrong (1987, 1989) may have provided a clue to a situation in which both a pessimistic and an optimistic perspective are valid. In my study I set out to examine the current reality and find out

about the possible correlation of these contradictions and tensions in respect of the management career.

In focusing on the research question on whether a substantive evolution can be identified in the relationship between the manager and the organization in respect of employee-employer dynamics, the aspects described below are leading considerations.

* The change in the psychological contract:

nature and extent of change (broken / damaged / altered / no change); in general and in relation to special groups (by age or other); level(s) of employee loyalty / detachment; level(s) of trust (from employee / employer).

* Possible changes in corporate expectations:

concerning the manager's role(s), formal qualifications, and competence(s); managerial mobility (cross-functional / cross-divisional / international); pressure on the manager (targets / working hours).

* Possible changes in managers' expectations:

concerning employment security; job satisfaction; career prospects; training and professional development; 'employability'.

3 - Can a correlation be detected between corporate culture and the understanding of career by different members of the organization?

Herriot and Pemberton (1995) as well as Handy (e.g., 1989, 1994) are fundamentally in the same line of thinking as Kanter (1983, 1989). It should be noted, however, that Kanter is aware of some of the tensions in the shift away from traditional employment security.

She recognizes that new structures will create new demands, but arguably plays them down and indeed seems to lack any cogent way of understanding them. She has however a special manner of conferring new meanings to old terms. For example, 'career growth' will not necessarily mean a change of job or title; and 'advancement' will mean 'the chance to take on ever-more-demanding or challenging or important or rewarding assignments that require greater exercise of the skills that are a professional's stock in trade' (1989: 319). Such definitions may also succeed in diverting from the traditional association of success with upward movement and may promote a better acceptance of lateral movement, including the external market.

Incorporating suitable meanings in corporate discourse and culture would be the task of those in charge of promoting 'transformational' leadership. Following influential publications such as Ouchi's (1981) *Theory Z* and Peters and Waterman's (1982) *In Search of Excellence*, this would mean a westernized version of the Japanese model, with priority given to creating a shared culture which would foster collective commitment to achieving organizational goals and which tended to be expressed in terms such as 'quality' and 'being the best'. In the 'excellent' companies who follow this practice, people are directed by shared values promoted by a 'strong' corporate culture (Peters and Waterman, 1982). As will be seen, in the firms in the present study the term 'career' has been entirely, or partially, removed from corporate culture and for example 'personal development' was used instead in corporate discourse. This is being used in the control of careers: employees develop / improve themselves, possibly moving around from job to job, whilst upward aspirations are being discouraged.

The extent to which culture articulated by 'transformational' leaders may, or may not, be influencing management careers is a multifaceted issue and matter requiring investigation. The existing literature contributes some empirical evidence, theorization and

debate. Schein (1984) distinguishes three levels of organizational culture. Visible artefacts – such as architecture, technology, office layout, dress code and public documents – are the surface level. The values that govern behaviour constitute the second level. The third level consists of the underlying taken-for-granted assumptions that influence how group members perceive, think and feel, i.e., this deepest level results in adaptive behaviour. This suggests a danger that power may be misused for example in surveillance techniques of the kind analysed by Grey (1994). Although advocating a strong company culture, Peters and Waterman themselves have alerted their readers to the ‘ever present possibility of abuse’ (1995: 78).

In his participant observation research carried out at a British large manufacturing company, Watson (1994) found little evidence that any of the managers he looked at conceived their work in terms of managerial control over those who supply labour power in order to deliver surplus value to the owners of capital, in which he quotes Braverman (1974). These managers’ interest in ‘control’ referred instead to their own circumstances. They wanted control over events so that they could fulfil their employment contract in a way which would enable them to meet their personal requirements for satisfaction, at the same time as contributing effectively to the organisation’s business. This was in harmony with the company’s official culture of ‘empowerment, skills and growth discourse’. However, there was also an unofficial or ‘actual’ culture, which involved a confused mixture of this discourse with a rival ‘control, jobs and costs discourse’. In a sense, these were ‘two scripts which were available to players on the managerial stage’ (Watson, 1994: 114-7). These findings concern both the organization and the manager, both the employer and the employee, for, as the author points out, in their work, managers ‘are helping – however effectively or ineffectively – to shape the organization which employs

them whilst trying to make sense of the “sort of person” they are and the “rightness”, in moral terms, of what they do from day to day’ (1994: 84).

Other factors may be imparting on corporate culture. Will international firms be particularly prone to cross-cultural influence? Evans and Lorange (1989) see corporate culture as especially important in ‘global’ as opposed to ethnocentric firms, since it can provide the former with means of trying to override, or compensate for, the specificities of national culture, through the socialization of personnel, in particular senior members. However, differences in nationally specific institutions mean that ‘the development of fully “transnational” corporations and market relationships which transcend national institutions seems unlikely as long as educational, financial, legal, labour market and political systems remain nationally distinct’ (Whitley, 1991: 46). This difficulty may be experienced particularly when companies expand abroad through acquisition rather than establishing greenfield sites, as they inherit the institutional culture and other features of the acquired companies (Edwards *et al.*, 1993; Ferner, 1993-4). The issue of a possible foreign influence has some relevance in the present study. As will be seen, for example, at Valeo, it was found that control from headquarters was exerted through ‘French’ procedures; and hopes were expressed at Rover that BMW’s German influence would improve the situation of technical and professional careers.

The possible impact of popular literature on managers may also be important. Mutually contradictory forces may be at work. The notion of ‘empowerment’ is at the centre of some ambiguities. In contrast with Heckscher’s (1995) managers empowered through their professionalism in a post-corporate world, other authors promise empowerment in the organization. For example, expectations for managers reading Franzén and Hardaker’s (1994) workbook include that managers in the downsized organization are keys to

economic success, and the key job of middle managers in the future is to improve TQM, which is a line job, from which they delegate to their 'empowered' subordinate managers (1994: 183). Their career prospects appear to be good: out of 1,000 middle managers surveyed, 75% were expecting promotion in the near future (1994: 11-2). Also, employers reading Krouwell and Goodwill's (1994) guide on management development programmes are given advice on MDO – Management Development Outdoors –, which evolved from WOSB – War Office Selection Board –, which, in turn, consisted of exercises practised during the Second World War and adopted and developed by the British Army, the US Marines and other organizations.

Schein's (1977) concept of 'career anchors' has since long highlighted the influence of environmental factors on the employee's career efforts. Career anchors will result from an interaction between the person, with his/her needs and talents, and the work context, with its opportunities and constraints. Each 'anchor' is a learned part of the self-image, which combines self-perceived motives, values and competences, which determines one's occupational choices. We do not have a clear picture of how, and how much, corporate cultures are impacting on today's managers' career anchors in the downsized organization.

The concept of career itself is a rather fluid area. Many definitions have been proposed (see Greenhaus and Callanan, 1994, and Arnold *et al.*, 1995). Gunz (1989:5) sums up the issue as follows:

'Careers [...] are in a sense complex paths through a kind of space-time continuum where the nature of the space is hard to define. Is the space the place in the organization the person occupies, and if so, how does one represent that? Or is it the person's own state of development – where, so to speak, they are at, at the time? These, I discovered, are just a few of the problems that beset the career researcher.'

Determining the career 'space' can help in the issue of who 'owns' the career, the individual or the organization, which 'is profoundly important for the working of the managerial labour market' (Storey *et al.*, 1997: 66). Furthermore, career extends beyond the work place and beyond the individual's self. Grandjean (1981) sees career at the intersection of societal history and individual biography. This wider perspective has further implications which were anticipated by Mills (1970) when he wrote that not everyone possesses 'the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world'. (1970:10).

At a pragmatic level, in the mid-nineties the following corporate view of career was advanced by a forum of twenty two leading companies: 'A career is most simply thought of as the sequence of work experiences which individuals have over their working lives (Hirsh *et al.*, 1995:11). In this definition there appears to be a shift of the centre of responsibility from the company to the individual. Furthermore, this individual-centred perspective seems to receive considerable support from some of the British media, as illustrated at the very beginning of this chapter.

In the above example from the forum of twenty two leading companies as well as in leading national newspapers, lateral movement may be presented as a replacement for upward movement, but in other instances they may coexist. In their attempts to achieve upward movement, managers are reported to engage in job moves, internally and on the external labour market, including international moves (Nicholson and West, 1988; Brett *et al.*, 1992). Furthermore, this may not be a novelty but an old practice in a new environment. Indeed, an indirect route to the top such as 'spiralling' through different business activities has since long been identified (Watson, 1964).

Research evidence, commentary and prescriptive literature do not always point in the same direction. Mutually contradictory forces appear to be at play. This study seeks to disentangle ambiguities and uncover what is happening in reality to management career and how the tensions in the agency problem (Armstrong, 1987, 1989) are managed through corporate culture.

In focusing on the research question on whether a correlation can be detected between corporate culture and the understanding of career by different members of the organization, the aspects described below are leading considerations.

* The corporate concept of career:

career orientation (traditional upward / new lateral / other) / professed corporate ideology (HRM / other / none); discourse (empowerment / development / other); unitarian culture or not (more than one script / foreign influence).

* The different managers' concept of career:

career orientation (traditional upward / new lateral / other) / level(s) of assimilation of disseminated corporate ideology and popular literature; view(s) on who should be the career driver (organization or individual); how managers are 'anchoring' their career aspirations.

IV - RECENT RESEARCH AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

This section comprises a number of recent publications which have come to my attention after my research design had been defined. Although they did not influence my

methodology, they address concerns similar to mine, and their findings will be taken into account in this study. In diverse ways, some of these authors have identified tensions and changes which affect the managerial employment and career after downsizing and delayering exercises, but evidence is lacking that would prove a replacement with an innovative new model.

First, there is recent evidence that the downsizing and delayering trend is not showing recognizable signs of declining. Worrall *et al.* (2000) report on the basis of a survey of members of the Institute of Managers that, in 1999, 67 per cent of UK managers had experienced some form of organizational change, with redundancy (their nearest equivalent to downsizing) being reported in 48 per cent of cases where there had been change, and with delayering being reported in 29 per cent of such cases. Does this correspond to any visible signs of a radical transformational change as announced by Heckscher?

McGovern *et al.* (1998) investigated eight major British-based organizations from quite different business sectors, as follows: pharmaceuticals; electronics; investment banking; distribution; telecommunications; food; retail banking; and the National Health Service. No evidence was found of the kind of transformational change associated with the introduction of a new model of managerial employment. Instead, these researchers found that the traditional model of managerial employment has been eroded rather than replaced. After downsizing and delayering job cuts, there is a further decline of the internally promoted manager. The most striking features in this scenario of eroded opportunities for the manager include the following: reduced job security, in particular for those over fifty; more emphasis on 'managing your own career'; fewer chances of upward promotion; and an increased emphasis on lateral career moves. There is also no evidence of 'employability', for corporate training tends to be firm specific and the acquired skills and

knowledge are not easily transferable. These findings are particularly important, because these eight employers were brought together in a consortium formed in 1992 by a self-selected group of Human Resource Directors. They gave themselves the title of 'The Leading Edge Forum Ltd', which would suggest that they might be at the forefront of a possible new emerging model. However, this does not appear to be the case. Gratton *et al.*'s (1999) work on HRM and careers in the eight 'Leading Edge' organizations further reports deep employee dissatisfaction with career management and very limited acceptance of the idea of employability as a replacement for traditional loyalty. They found a clear rhetoric of employee development but little evidence of the implementation of the associated career planning initiatives, which these authors interpret as a short term focus which was prevalent in the respective companies. They also found a 'profound disquiet' amongst many employees about the nature of the psychological contract.

In their case study of a downsized building society in the UK, Redman *et al.* (1997) found that managers were concerned about their career prospects in face of constrained promotion potential, not to mention job security which also looked rather problematic. On the one hand, the old style paternalism had gone, but on the other, there was no evidence of empowerment of the middle manager. Furthermore, there was an increasing isolation of branch managers from senior management. This is concurrent with the work of earlier researchers, such as Watson (1994) who found that middle managers are often distant from corporate decision-making. A gap appears to be recognizable also from another standpoint. Surveys show a clear gradient of occupational advantage in respect of pay levels and other benefits between the top and the bottom of the hierarchy (O'Reilly and Rose, 1998).

Thomas and Dunkerley (1999) based their study on a wide range of public and private organizations in the UK, in roughly a 50:50 split between public and private: oil, brewing,

insurance, local authorities, health service, military, civil service agencies, manufacturing, engineering, music industry, retail and distribution. Their findings have showed that middle managers report feelings of greater job satisfaction from increased empowerment over their work roles, although they are working in intensified work regimes with increased pressures and stress. However, many of these managers also experience some disappointment, for they are still looking towards hierarchical career progression as the main reward for their continued commitment, despite this being significantly diminished in the downsized organizations, where big jumps are required to bridge the gaps between levels. The denial of this reward is likely to lead to managers becoming increasingly bitter.

Anxiety over poor employment and career prospects may lead to competitive presenteeism, a phenomenon identified by Simpson (1998) in her survey of managers from different large organizations in both the public and the private sector. This rivalry is extended to a territorial astute over project ownership by managers who are anxious to display their commitment and their ability to perform. This helps to create an individualist, non-cooperative culture and an insular approach which often result in work being repeated.

Baron and Kreps (1999) argue that employment often is - and should be - an open-ended transaction, with details that are left unspecified at the outset being addressed on a day-to-day basis. Long-term employment is usually beneficial to both employer and employee, but this does not preclude hiring an employee on a single-project basis. If someone hired by a firm to work on a project has reasonable prospects of being hired on future projects, then the overall employment relationship between the two is open-ended but the overall situation may be seen as long-term employment.

These authors also discuss that long-term employer-employee relationship processes itself in the internal labour market (ILM), which has potential benefits, including firm-

specific skills and knowledge, staffing economies, and enhancing employee loyalty through escalating commitment. ILMs can also have a number of potential downsides, such as inflexibility and fostering mediocrity and conformity. Many firms have sought to overcome the system's limitations by segmenting activities, administratively or geographically; and another measure has been out-sourcing, but this is better reserved for other than "core" activities which are intimately related with the culture of the organization. Finally, the limitations of ILM fixed career routes could be overcome by decoupling autonomy and other rewards from the traditional hierarchical ranks.

Baron and Kreps appear to be advocating for the primary, or core, internal market a policy of short contract hiring which is usually associated with the secondary internal market. This is particularly interesting on two different grounds. First, for the formative influence this publication may have - this is a textbook for second degree university students reading Human Resources from the angles of Economics and Organizational Behaviour. Second, this teaching may be promoting the kind of situation identified by McGovern *et al.* (1998) in 'Leading Edge' organizations: a tendency among some employers to recruit employees with particular forms of expertise into senior management positions and this has led to an increasing blockage of internal promotions. These can be vulnerable posts for their holders. Gallie *et al.* (1998) have identified a correlation between rapid dismissal procedures and the use of 'technical' systems of management-performance control. These authors have equally identified a cumulative process for people who have had an experience of unemployment as they tend to enter a process of deterioration concerning future chances and have relatively poor prospects of escaping from temporary, low-quality, insecure jobs, though this applies mainly to non-managerial jobs.

As seen throughout this chapter, the existing literature includes a pessimistic strand (e.g., Scase and Goffee, 1989; Grey, 1994; Pahl, 1995; Hallier and Lyon, 1996) and an optimistic strand (e.g., Kanter, 1989; Dopson and Stewart, 1990; Kessler and Bayliss, 1992; Handy, 1994; Heckscher, 1995). We may be able to resolve some of the conflict between optimistic and pessimistic accounts of management careers by considering the different conditions under which each model may work. Optimists have a vision of empowered employees with substantial labour market skills. Pessimists stress job insecurity and heightened job pressures. They may both be right, in two senses. First, the optimistic model may apply to those occupations which are in high demand and where skills are transferable, whereas pessimism is more appropriate where managers have employer-specific skills and where demand is falling and job security is thus declining. Second, optimists tend to focus on moves in the labour market whereas pessimists focus on stress within the workplace. It is quite possible for managers to be mobile and 'empowered' in the labour market but also to find that they have to work long hours with demanding responsibilities when they are at a given place of work.

The purpose of the present study is mainly to provide new empirical evidence from a specific sector of the economy. This should permit firmer judgement on the nature of careers in a sector than is possible from studies which either survey managers as a whole or which draw from across different sectors. It is then possible to consider from the evidence on changing career patterns in the sector where that sector might lie in relation to optimistic and pessimistic models and why.

The point of the more critical studies reviewed above is that the managerial role has inherent tensions, for example between the demand for loyalty and reliability, on the one

hand, and the fact that employers also need to minimize costs and ensure performance to desired standards. These tensions emerge in critical reviews of corporate culture.

In line with Armstrong's (1987, 1989) work reviewed earlier in this chapter, Edwards (2000) has recently also addressed the agency problem: given that managers act for the owners of firms (the principal) and enjoy delegated authority, the principal may use a mixture of trust and monitoring of performance, as a means of ensuring that these agents act in appropriate ways. Also, means such as training, indoctrination and social assimilation could be used in order to increase trust. Edwards does not find evidence that will support those, such as Heckscher (1995), who argue that the nature of management is changing fundamentally. Indeed, Edwards comments that Heckscher's dismissal of loyalty is in fact less sweeping than first appears, as the managers in this author's work were replacing loyalty with a strong sense of commitment to specified goals, underpinned by 'unusual deep understanding' of their firms business strategy (Heckscher, 1995: 122). Edwards comments that this suggests not a collapse of trust but a redefinition of it, away from bureaucratic proceduralism and towards an engaged involvement in organizational goals, which, in some ways, may correspond to a deepening of trust if firms rely on managers' skills and enthusiasm instead of expecting them simply to follow the rules.

Quoting Armstrong (1989), Edwards highlights that the employer-employee relationship between the firm and the manager is contradictory in that capital depends on trust but wishes to minimize its cost, and goes on to point out that at particular historical points this relationship takes particular turns. This is the case of the 1990s, which were marked, on the one hand, by pressures towards cost-cutting and closer monitoring of managers and, on the other, by efforts to decentralize and to empower. Edwards illustrates his point with a number of studies, namely: an analysis of management careers in four British (and also four Japanese) firms (Storey *et al.*, 1997); a study of middle

managers in a bank based in California (Smith, 1990) and a similar analysis in the British public sector (Keen, 1995); an ethnography of managers in a UK manufacturing firm (Watson, 1994); and an analysis of accountancy (Hanlon, 1994). Further to the tensions inherent in the employer-employee relationship between the firm and the manager, Edwards has also found that the historical turn of the 1990s and the associated redefinition of trust may have brought in additional tensions of a 'class' nature between different layers in face of a changing position in the division of labour. This is illustrated with two main studies, namely one in manufacturing (Wright and Edwards, 1998) and one of sales.reps of a pharmaceutical company (Lloyd and Newell, 1998).

On this point, the present study is in line with the theorization developed by Armstrong (1987, 1989), and recently enlarged by Edwards (2000), that managers have inherent tensions in their roles. Therefore, in this investigation on intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers, my study considers that both optimistic and pessimistic views may be right as they stress different aspects of the managerial roles.

My review has covered arguments about changes in the structure of organizations and the consequent effect on management careers. To the extent that organizations have become 'post-bureaucratic' we might expect careers to reflect the optimistic picture. But if structures remain relatively traditional then we would expect a less optimistic picture to prevail. There will of course be change, for we have seen that downsizing and delayering have been widespread. The issue is the direction and extent of change. It may be that there is a consistent move towards either an optimistic or a pessimistic conclusion, but it is more likely that change will be mixed and contradictory and hence that managers have to make sense of conflicting signals rather than being able to embrace any simple model of their careers.

Finally, the purpose of the present study is not to address directly the issue of change over time. Recent debates, for example in the US between Jacoby (1999) and Capelli (1999), have addressed this issue. For present purposes, they have established clearly that ideas of a sharp break between the present and the period before 1980 are exaggerated, even though the extent to which career patterns have changed over time remains contentious. Similarly, Gregg and Wadsworth (1999) show for the UK that average job tenure has not declined as rapidly as some accounts of the end of careers would suggest. These authors also show that for men, and older men in particular, tenure has declined, and Jacoby (1999: 126) notes that in the US this is also true of managers in particular. As we will see, traditional career features remained in place in the automotive industry, for reasons connected to the continuation of established modes of management. The older men who dominate managerial grades in the industry are also among those most likely to experience declining job tenure. It is not being argued that this is necessarily a complete break from the past, for there has always been insecurity, but in this sector during the 1990s the generic changes noted by the writers just mentioned are likely to have been felt with particular force.

3 - Research Issues and Methods

The previous chapter discussed the existing material with relevance to the understanding of intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers. This is an area that clearly lacks research and empirical evidence, and, although there are some interesting contributions, the literature reviewed left a number of questions unanswered. This chapter will first revisit these questions and explain how my study endeavours to fill the existing lacunae. It goes on to describe details of the methodology and provide information on the companies researched.

I - QUESTIONS WAITING FOR AN ANSWER

The present section concentrates on the nature of the lacunae to be filled and the purpose of this work. Sub-section 1, 'The gap', sums up the main points in the area in need of research as identified when reviewing the available literature. Sub-section 2, 'Filling the gap', explains how my study seeks to produce new empirical evidence, revise current views, and offer advice to the corporate world and its managers.

1 - The Gap

As discussed in the previous chapter, there is a pessimistic and an optimistic literature on management careers, particularly in face of the downsizing and delayering exercises of the 1980s and 1990s. On the pessimistic side, we have encountered the vision of job insecurity and the end of the traditional career (e.g., Kanter, 1989; Scase and Goffee, 1989; Heckscher, 1995; Pahl, 1995), whilst the optimistic vision stresses empowerment (e.g., Dopson and Stewart, 1990; Kessler and Bayliss, 1992; Heckscher, 1995). The pessimistic outlook has developed to a great extent in association with the view of the end of loyalty to the firm (Kanter, 1989; Scase and Goffee, 1989; Handy, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995). The optimistic outlook came to hinge greatly on the notion of employability (Handy, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995) and has reached extremes such as Heckscher's (1995) forecast of a marketable manager in a post-corporate world.

It is now over ten years since Dopson and Stewart (1990) called for empirical work on middle management and internal labour markets. There has been some response to their call (e.g., Redman *et al.*, 1997). However, there is still a rather fragmented body of research-based information on management careers.

McGovern *et al.*'s (1998) research study is of particular interest inasmuch as it investigates a variety of firms who appear to see themselves as 'leading edge' organizations and yet evidence could not be found in them of the emergence of the 'employability' model. Gratton *et al.*'s (1999) findings from the same study develop the point. These authors underline for example a 'profound disquiet' among employees as to the state of the psychological contract, which they explain in terms of managerial short-termism.

In some specific areas, however, very little is known. This is the case with the automotive industry. In America, MacDuffie (1996) has examined the 'Big Three' US auto companies – General Motors, Ford and Chrysler – to find that managers are suffering an increase in pressure to deliver and a decrease in the status they used to enjoy. And in the UK, what is happening? What are the current, and what will be the future, intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers?

This is an area lacking empirical evidence. This is the 'gap' which was initially expressed in my research question – How is the concept of management career played out in the employing organization? – which consists of the three sub-questions discussed in the previous chapter, namely:

1. To what extent is current and future organization design likely to reproduce traditional management career paths or instead bring innovative alternatives?

(impact of job cuts on the management career / new opportunities after restructuring / career planning and tools / portable competences / technical and professional careers)

2. Can a substantive evolution be identified in the relationship between the manager and the organization in respect of employee-employer dynamics?

(trust and the psychological contract / corporate expectations and demands / pressure / managers' expectations / employee loyalty and 'employability')

3. Can a correlation be detected between corporate culture and the understanding of career by different members of the organization?

(corporate concept of career / corporate discourse / the different managers' concept of career / manager career efforts)

We do not know what is happening exactly in respect of management careers in UK automotive firms. Where do their managers stand in relation to the pessimistic and the optimistic strands in the management literature? Will they experience features from both?

2 - Filling the Gap

Given both the fragmented nature of the existing research-based information on management careers and the divergent pessimistic and optimistic paradigms in the management literature, an exploratory, theory-building approach was deemed to be the best route to take, with which my study contributes to the so far small body of critical analysis in this area. Accordingly, my primary aim is to examine what is happening to managers and their careers in the automotive industry in the UK.

I am aware that I may encounter contradictory answers to my research questions. On the one hand, Collinson and Collinson (1997) have found evidence that some managers are being closely monitored, indeed subjected to a 'time-space surveillance' (1997: 376). On the other hand, empowerment is a principle of the 'soft' varieties of HRM, at least in their rhetoric, though it may be absent from its 'hard' varieties (Storey, 1989, 1995). Watson (1994) found ambiguities and tensions acted out through 'two scripts which were available to players on the managerial stage' (1994: 114-17).

With his 'agency' approach, Armstrong (1987, 1989) theorized on the control-empowerment dilemma and the associated contradictions and tensions, which may correspond to a situation where, as Edwards (2000) points out, both a pessimistic and an optimistic perspective can be valid, because some aspects of one and some aspects of the other can coexist. My study will bear in mind that antagonistic forces and unsolved conflicts may be at work and also that some elements of the pessimistic view and some elements of the optimistic view may not be mutually exclusive. On this point, therefore, my work is in line with the theoretical approach developed by Armstrong (1987, 1989) and Edwards (2000).

Although my primary orientation is that of building, rather than testing, theory, I shall draw on previous views as a benchmark for comparison and contrast. My data will be addressing theoretical issues from the platform Dopson and Stewart (1990) and Heckscher (1995) have left open to further investigation. Both add a different dimension to a literature on management careers that tends to be psychological and both emphasize the manager as a key figure on whom business success greatly depends. However, the latter places the manager not within the organization but outside the organization, i.e., empowered in the open market.

There is, therefore, the opportunity to review major related debates. Important are the arguments which incorporate the notions of loyalty, employability and empowerment (Kanter, 1989; Scase and Goffee, 1989; Dopson and Stewart, 1990; Kessler and Bayliss, 1992; Handy, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995) as well as other issues such as the 'graduate barrier' (Roberts *et al.*, 1972) and the handling of technical and professional careers (e.g., Gunz, 1980; Lee and Smith, 1992), in a particular area of manufacturing. On the one hand, prescriptive literature (e.g., Krouwel and Goodwill, 1994) and, on the other hand, sensationalist literature that publicizes views similar to Heckscher's (e.g., Korten, 1999) will also be of interest to the measure that they may be influencing the actions of policy-makers, decision-makers, and other participants in the corporate world. At different levels, both scholarly and non-scholarly literature can be useful in the examination of established and developing assumptions about knowledge and society and, this way, point to the future.

Summing up, my intent is to address the unanswered questions on intra-organizational career routes open to managers and cut through the evidence that may emerge from my investigation so as to be able to achieve the following:

- (1) extend the boundaries of current knowledge with new findings and

conceptual frameworks;

(2) re-evaluate past findings and theorization; and

(3) find answers of a pragmatic nature for managers and other actors

in the corporate world.

In my pursuit, the focus will be the link between the manager and his/her working context. The argument on the employee-employer dynamics between the manager and the organization will frame the design devised for my research tools. Central to my exploratory research approach will be the case-study format, and my research measures will be the leading considerations explained in the previous chapter, namely:

- * the impact of job cuts on the management career in the downsized organization;
- * new opportunities that may be available in the restructured organization;
- * the corporate handling of specialist posts as compared with line posts;
- * the change in the psychological contract;
- * possible changes in corporate expectations;
- * possible changes in managers' expectations;
- * the corporate concept of career;
- * the different managers' concept of career.

II - RESEARCH DESIGN

The case-study was the chosen format for my predominantly exploratory endeavour. A holistic approach was felt to be best suited to deal with the complexity of the elements

involved. Field work was carried out in the automotive sector in the centre of England. Indeed, compared to previous researchers who worked with a wide corporate coverage in different sectors (e.g. Heckscher), I preferred the strength of an in-depth investigation of companies in the same industrial environment and with the same labour market. A more detailed justification of my choice of case-study organizations is given in Sub-section 2, 'The companies'.

My holistic theoretical approach and case-study format reflect my ontological assumption and philosophical position which tend to be associated with a qualitative option. However, I felt that my investigation would also benefit from a numerical input. This means that, although my research orientation and the methods I use fall mainly within a qualitative paradigm, they combine with some elements which tend to be associated with a quantitative paradigm. Sub-section 1, 'Methodology - the case-study', defines my philosophical position and epistemological stance as well as the methods and tools that were used accordingly for data collection and analysis of the data collected.

1 - Methodology - The Case-study

The paragraphs below define my position as a researcher and include a statement of the philosophical stance and the epistemological rationale behind the chosen data collection and analysis methods. There is also a description of my data collection and analysis methods which includes details of the following: the composition of the sample; the tools used for collecting data; and the analytical process. A final note presents the steps taken in order to maximize validity and discusses the generalizability and reliability of my study.

1.1. Philosophical position and epistemological stance

1.1.1. - Philosophical position and rationale behind the chosen data collection and analysis methods

My ontological assumption is that social reality is subjective and multiple as seen by those involved. Accordingly, human agency can often be unreflective but can also follow detectable trajectories. As I see it, organizations, as a phenomenon of the social world, appear as a socially constructed web of relationships that are continuously being challenged, re-negotiated, confirmed or changed. In the commercial enterprise, both the organization itself as a corporate body and the individual's professionalism further contribute to the complexity of this evolving but coherent system.

On the one hand, I can see a certain amount of continuous change. But I do not affiliate to the post-modernist point of view and therefore I do not distance myself from the assumption that there is a rational articulation of thought and knowledge. I accept that I may find patterns of relationships and that it may be possible to do some predicting. But I do not affiliate to a positivist and naturalist way of thinking, because I believe that feelings and attributed meanings play a crucial role in social reality and human agency. I think that I am in an intermediate position. I share the modernist view that there is an organizational coherence based on deep-lying modes of consensus. However, I see these as constructs which are permanently vulnerable to new sense-making and change which can occur through social inter-communication. My approach is broadly of a 'critical realist' kind, for which references can be supplied (see Sayer, 2000). As such, it considers necessity and contingency, rather than seeking regularity; operates with an open approach, rather than a closed system; and looks at causal processes in the context in which they produce a result.

1.1.2. - Epistemological stance

As a researcher, I see myself as a facilitator trying to help reality emerge through my interaction with those I am researching. This reality can present coherence and contain consensual reasoning but is also value-laden and biased, which must not be overlooked.

Therefore, in order to gain knowledge about the intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers, I felt that I needed to explore, within the *status quo* of the company, the following relationships and links:

- the cognitive and the emotional, at the individual manager's level;
- the cognitive and the emotional, at corporate level;
- the object of research and the wider societal context.

I explored these relationships and processes mainly via a qualitative paradigm, to which a numerical input was added for a triangulating effect. By approaching the research reality in this manner, I sought to best act in accordance with my beliefs as a researcher in the way I generated new knowledge and detected possible new developments.

1.2. Data collection and analysis methods and tools

In the academic discussion on methodology, the advantages and disadvantages of both qualitative and quantitative research have often been highlighted – e.g. Bryman, 1988, 1995; Martin, 1990; Turner, 1995.

The qualitative approach prefers methods such as in-depth interviewing and participant observation and has been deemed to be particularly suitable for the social sciences and an exploratory research. It can provide a multi-faceted evidence of the complex social reality. The qualitative approach has, however, received criticism on three main aspects. It is hard to balance a desire to capture naturalistically subjects' frames of meaning with the need

for a previously formulated theoretical framework. Another problem is that of generalizability. A case-study based on a single setting is unlikely to provide results that can be reliably generalized beyond the confines of that particular investigation. Thirdly, qualitative methods may not provide the adequate control of comparison groups and are not suited to disentangle confounding variables and detect causal relationships.

The quantitative approach prefers data collection tools such as survey questionnaires and experimentation and prefers deductive analysis based on hypothesis-making. It has sometimes been felt to be unsuitable for the social sciences as it may try to reduce a moving world to a few simple static categories. Its reliance on quantifiable data can lead to oversimplification where socio-cultural, psychological and cognitive aspects play a role. A quantitative approach can, however, give an appropriate contribution in sociology where knowledge has advanced to the point that hypotheses can be articulated.

In my research design, a qualitative paradigm is the fundamental form of approach but quantitative elements have been incorporated. I have sought the benefit of the advantages of both approaches and have taken measures to overcome their disadvantages, as it will be demonstrated throughout the rest of this chapter.

Case-study organizations	Rover	LucasVarity	G.K.N.	Valeo
Company name	Rover Group Ltd	LucasVarity Aerospace Ltd	GKN Plc ADD UK Operations	Valeo (UK) Wipers Systems Ltd

Table 3.1 – The four main companies

A case-study approach has been chosen because of the essentially exploratory nature of the research. I felt that a holistic strategy enabled to deal better with the complexity of

elements involved, when addressing the empirical and theoretical issues left open to further research from the Dopson and Stewart (1990) and Heckscher (1995) platform as mentioned in I, 2 of the present chapter.

In this investigation into intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers, the focus is the link between the manager and his/her working context. Therefore, the unit of analysis is neither the manager nor the organization but the management career.

The choice of research settings was free from any pre-theoretical assumptions. It was instead determined on the grounds of capturing the management career in one same business sector and socio-geographical context, the automotive industry in the Midlands, as a potential rich source of empirical evidence, as discussed in II, 2.2 of the present chapter.

Not one, but four main companies were researched – Rover Group Ltd, LucasVarity Aerospace Ltd, GKN Automotive Driveline Division UK Operations Plc and Valeo (UK) Wipers Systems Ltd, as shown in Table 3.1. Additionally, as a complementary contribution, my field work was also extended to Mayflower Vehicle Systems Plc and Peugeot Motor Company Plc, as shown in Table 3.2. Due to experiencing some difficulties at the time, Mayflower and Peugeot could not fully participate in my research. They did, nevertheless, contribute some interviews and a generous amount of printed material. Since the information supplied by these organizations was not obtained under controlled research conditions, the evidence it provides is not included in the main research body of my study. It is, however, called upon as additional qualitative data whenever it appears to further confirm a point that has been identified by the evidence from the four case-study organizations.

Complementary study organizations	Mayflower	Peugeot
Company name	Mayflower Vehicle Systems Plc	Peugeot Motor Company Plc

Table 3.2 – The two additional companies

In my case-study investigation the main tools of data collection have been a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews directed at managers. These were designed so as to provide evidence for areas uncovered and / or unsolved by the reviewed literature, as expressed in the research questions, and sought to address the respective research measures (please see I, 1 and 2 earlier in this unit). Background details on the companies were obtained mainly by consultation with top management, including directors, personnel management and also through company literature made available directly from the company as well as from other sources. Hence, the following are the three principal forms of information upon which I have drawn: 1. interviews; 2. questionnaires; 3. the companies' histories and declared policies.

When analysing the data, categories have been generated from within the same data through a sifting and codifying process that aimed to eliminate bias. Validity has been further enhanced with the quantitative controlling element introduced in the analytical process.

1.2.1. - The Sample

The unit of analysis being the management career, a sample was sought which might provide a variety of positions in the link between the manager and his/her working context. Bearing in mind the unreliability of managerial job titles as guides to what their

holders actually do (Stewart, 1976), companies were encouraged to influence the selection of managers for the sample, so that they would indirectly, by implication, provide clues on their own understanding of the managerial band. In this I see a strength, as by encouraging companies to influence the selection in this way, I felt that I was eliminating researcher's bias and allowing a clearer view of the frames of meaning within which subjects operate.

Case-study organization	Site	Number of participating managers at site	Total participating managers in organization
Rover	Gaydon	40	40
LucasVarity	Hall Green	14	41
	Shirley	11	
	Wolverhampton	16	
G.K.N.	Driveshafts	14	26
	Hardy Spicer	12	
Valeo	Birmingham	7	7
Total of case-study respondents			114

Table 3.3 – Number of employees participating in this study under research controlled conditions

As mentioned above, job titles are not reliable guides. It appears to be particularly so in the organization with a reduced number of ranks. Employees themselves may feel somewhat lost in the internal market. A LucasVarity participant in my study, in a middle-level managerial position, describes the situation he has experienced in the following words: 'It is difficult to see what you want to do next because job titles change, job specifications are virtually non-existent, okay, you have sort of bullet points for your job but you are expected to do a lot'. As a result, comparability based on job titles could not be established across the companies.

Also, divisionalization can add an extra element of incongruity where cross-comparison is sought. Criteria of employee ranking such as span of control may vary not only between

companies but also between separate business entities within the same wider company. A senior manager from Valeo expresses the situation as follows, when talking about the post he holds: 'Although it is hierarchically high up, this is a small business. So the position in the hierarchy is probably higher than the level that I have got'. In other words, his high position in the separate business entity may correspond to a relatively low position in the company-wide grading structure.

For the purpose of the present study, I have used a working classification into three wide categories, defined as follows: Junior, for level of supervisor; Middle, above supervisor and below divisional board level; Senior, at divisional board level and higher. Accordingly, quotes from respondents appear in the results chapters, in PART II, coded as Senior (S), Middle (M) and Junior (J), corresponding broadly to their relative position in the hierarchy. This also ensures the anonymity respondents have been promised.

Respondents in my research come from seven different settings. Field work was carried out at Gaydon (Rover); Hall Green, Shirley and Wolverhampton (LucasVarity); Driveshafts and Hardy Spicer (GKN); and Valeo Birmingham. As shown in Table 3.3, one hundred and fourteen managers were interviewed. The small number at Valeo in fact covers all the managers at this site. Out of all the managers researched, only one individual is female, in Rover.

All the interviewed managers have a technical background in the sense that they have specific skills and / or qualifications (university or other), but over fifty percent have an engineering background in the sense that they had begun their careers in junior engineering posts, either as apprentices or graduate trainees, and had subsequently progressed to management roles. Some came from what Mintzberg (1979) would call the 'operating core' and others from the 'technostructure'.

The strong engineering element in my research sample was an opportunity to test the findings of previous researchers on managers and aspirant-managers of a technical background (Roberts *et al.*, 1972; Torrington and Weightman, 1987; Lam, 1989; Lee and Smith, 1992). Gender issues constitute a wide academic field in their own right and are outside the confines of the present study. However, the fact that there was no more than one woman manager in my research sample was noted as a possible additional contribution to any general features and trends that might be revealed in my field work.

Finally, although this study is primarily qualitative in its orientation and although the purpose of this study is not to address directly the issue of change over time, I sought to obtain numerical data on changes in the size of the workforce at each organization, in particular in respect of the managerial band. However, I experienced difficulties identical to those reported by previous researchers (e.g., Guest and Davey, 1996). It was impossible to get meaningful figures, mainly due to mergers, take-overs and restructuring exercises in which spans of control were revised, the organization was reshaped and the workforce was reorganized under different job titles.

1.2.2. - The Questionnaire

The empirical and theoretical issues that framed my research questionnaire are those open to further investigation from the Dopson and Stewart (1990) and Heckscher (1995) platform, as discussed in I, 2 earlier in the present chapter. This was devised so as to elicit new evidence in the light of which previous findings and theorization could be reevaluated and a step forward could be taken which would both widen the boundaries of current knowledge and find answers of a pragmatic nature for members of the corporate world.

The questionnaire [see Appendix 1] was designed so as to gather basic data that (1) would enable some insight into the individual to be gained before the interview took place;

(2) could be further explored during the interview; and (3) could be used for numerical information.

The questionnaire was divided into several sections. A number of questions were adapted from previous work by Storey *et al.* (1997), giving it an enhanced degree of validity. Firstly, some general information about the individual was sought, followed by their educational background and membership of any professional organizations. Then, respondents were asked for information as to their career to date. The next section concerned management development schemes available and used by the respondents in their present company as well as more general information on training and career. Finally, other aspects such as family commitments and mobility were enquired about.

All sections were structured so as to be informative but also user-friendly. Throughout there were tables to fill in, multiple-choice and other questions with boxes to tick, but spaces were provided for alternatives not included in the options listed. Respondents were also asked to give a definition of what a career is, using their own words.

One hundred and fifty questionnaires were sent to the companies well in advance of the interviews. Out of this total, one hundred and fourteen completed questionnaires were received, i.e., a response rate of 76%. As to the representativeness of the sample, there was a broadly even distribution across the companies, with the following overall percentages in the three different hierarchical categories: 54% Middle; 29% Senior; 17% Junior.

The good response rate left me under the impression that the exercise had been enjoyed. As I see it, the respondents' openness at their interview was also a good indication that the questionnaire had been appreciated.

1.2.3. - The Interview

The interview was designed so as to address the same fundamental concerns that were addressed by the questionnaire and to expand on any new avenues that might open up. Similarly to the questionnaire, the interview took as a platform of departure the empirical and theoretical issues Dopson and Stewart (1990) and in Heckscher (1995) have left open to further research, and sought to elicit evidence that would extend the boundaries of scholarly knowledge and provide timely advice to the corporate world.

The interview [see Appendix 2] was semi-structured around four main areas. Firstly, the concept of career was explored, both from the individual's own perspective and that of the corporation (the corporate view might coincide with the expressed personal view from managers who would identify themselves with the employer rather than speak as an employee). Next, the systems of career management or development provided by the organization were looked at. Historical, current and future issues were then discussed, including mobility, working hours and pressure. Finally, there was a look at the individual's career planning, first, up to the present, and second, considering the future.

Following loose guide-lines throughout enabled comparability to be maintained between the interviews. There was, however, plenty of latitude for interviewees to expand in their chosen direction, both during the interview and at the end of the semi-structured guidelines, and for me to do in-depth probing. Concerning topics, the interview was broadly related to the questionnaire.

Respondents were interviewed in their own company, i.e., the research setting. The length of each interview varied between one and two hours. All interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and invited to have the conversation taped. Only two out of the one hundred and fourteen preferred my writing down notes instead.

The interview proved to be the most valuable tool of data collection. In addition to providing a wealth of factual information, it was crucial in exploring the culture-bound facets of career, both from a personal and from a corporate angle. Throughout the five chapters of PART II, there is an abundant number of quotes from interviewees which help bring to life my research findings.

1.2.4. - The Analytical Process

The large amount of material collected was classified into sets and sub-sets which were derived from the actual data, thus removing as much as possible any pre-judgment. Data control was enhanced by a numerical account which also served as a triangulating tool. This was a combined process, as described below.

The material collected was sifted for primary dimensions and sub-dimensions. These were codified, respectively, into categories and sub-categories which provided an articulated system of evaluation. Categories came thus from within the collected material, avoiding preconceived judgment. The main process of analysis was carried out within this articulated system of evaluation.

A statistical contribution was brought in as a complementary exercise of percentage evaluation with the purpose of measuring the degree to which components correlated with each other. This enabled to detect regularities that had been suspected in the evidence emerged from the exploratory research exercise, mainly the interviews. Its confirmatory effect also assisted in identifying causal relations and the direction of causality.

Corporate discourse is a field of study in its own right and a subject matter which lies outside the confines of the present study. However, from my field work some evidence has emerged in this area which must not be ignored. These findings were dealt with as

contributions that might illuminate aspects of the socio-cultural reality of intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers.

1.2.5. - Validity, Generalizability and Reliability

A paramount concern in my research study was maximizing internal validity, i.e., the accuracy of the information and its match with reality (Merriam, 1988). I was aware that my investigation could be vulnerable to some limitations, as follows:

- When choosing the research sites, etc., there was always the danger of being biased in the selection made, misled by one's pre-theoretical considerations.
- I might find it difficult to penetrate the frames of meaning within which managers and organizations operate; and so, I might find it difficult to see their corporate social and individual reality, through their own eyes.
- Prejudice could be introduced in the pre-theoretical handling of the gathered data.
- Some ambiguous elements might be left undetected.
- Finally, causal relationships would not be demonstrated.

As a result, in order to counteract these possible flaws and enhance the validity of my results, I took the following precautions:

- The choice of companies was made on a pragmatic basis rather than a pre-conceived theoretical assumption: automotive industry in the UK Midlands.
- The sample was chosen within the companies' own frames of meaning and their own understanding of the managerial band.
- Throughout, respondents were ensured anonymity. Validity was increased by the fact that I was an outsider, someone who was not appraising them, and what they would say was anonymous and would not affect their careers.
- In the questionnaires spaces were provided for possible alternatives not included in the

options listed and the definition of career was entirely open to the respondents' own views.

- The interviews I carried out were loosely structured, in order to reduce bias though retaining a means of comparison.
- Oncoming data were classified into categories generated from within the data.
- Triangulation was used with complementary quantitative data, with the following specific purposes:
 - increasing controlled comparison;
 - treating confounding elements as variables and disentangling their meaning;
 - exploring the existence and direction of causal relationships.

The validity of my study is thus further enhanced as any bias inherent in any particular data sources and methods of investigation can be neutralized when these are used in conjunction with other methods of data collection and analysis (Jick, 1979).

In respect of external validity, as pointed out by Merriam (1988), the primary intent of qualitative research is to form a unique interpretation of events rather than generalize findings. However, in my investigation, generalizability, albeit limited, can be found to the extent that similar categories and themes have emerged from the data analysis across the different firms studied. Given that all the different research settings in my study are in the automotive industry, a level of generalizability is present within this sector of the economy.

At a wider level, there is research evidence that some of my key findings are not unique to the automotive industry. Indeed my results have some parallels with those in a work which came out when I was completing my thesis and which did not in any way influence my investigation. McGovern *et al.* (1998) examined eight major British-based

organizations from eight quite different business sectors. Similarly to some of my findings, these authors have found that, after downsizing and delaying job cuts, there have been changes in the traditional career model, but no evidence could be found of a transformational change into a new model. Also, Gratton *et al.*'s (1999) work on these same companies found a very limited acceptance of the idea of 'employability' as a replacement for traditional values. Other recent research evidence coincidental with mine includes Thomas and Dunkerley's (1999) finding, also in various sectors, that managers still look to hierarchical career progression as their main reward.

Reliability, as concerns replication in a different setting, is an issue comparable to that of generalizability in relation to a qualitative approach (Creswell, 1994). The uniqueness of a case-study within a specific context mitigates against replicating it in other contexts. However, in my investigation there is, in a sense, a replication in different settings – the seven research sites – although within the same sector – the automotive industry. This successful exercise through which similar categories and themes have emerged, as mentioned above, is, as I see it, a strong indication that my study could be successfully replicated in different settings outside the sector. Researchers would be recommended to follow as closely as possible the data collection methods I have used, as explained in the present chapter.

2 - The Companies

The remainder of the present chapter concentrates on the companies. It contains detailed background information on the case-study organizations, highlights their commonalities and differences, and presents my justification for the choice made, namely Rover Group Ltd, LucasVarity Aerospace Ltd, GKN Automotive Driveline Division UK Operations

Plc, and Valeo (UK) Wipers Systems Ltd. This section also includes information on the two extra organizations – Mayflower Vehicle Systems Plc and Peugeot Motor Company Plc – which have been used as an additional contribution to my study, as explained in II, 1.2 of the present chapter.

2.1. About the organizations

Information on the companies presented as being current data relates to the period of time in which field work was carried out, that is 1997-1998.

Case-study organizations	Rover	LucasVarity	G.K.N.	Valeo
Business sector	automotive engineering	automotive engineering	automotive engineering	automotive engineering
Geographical location	Midlands England	Midlands England	Midlands England	Midlands England
Organizational orientation	functional	functional	functional	functional
Organizational structure	few ranks	few ranks	few ranks	few ranks
Grading structure	Dual ladder ('Hierarchy & Professional staff')	Dual ladder ('Management & Professional')	Dual ladder ('People management & Technical expertise')	Dual ladder ('Hierarchy & Expert system')

Table 3.4 – Commonalities between the case-studies

Case-study organizations	Rover	LucasVarity	G.K.N.	Valeo
International status	international sites global market	global sites global market	global sites global market	global sites global market
Size	Company / Group Research sites over 30,000 employees approx. 4,000	Company / Group Research sites over 30,000 employees over 6,500	Company / Group Research sites over 30,000 employees approx. 2,000	Company / Group Research sites over 30,000 employees approx. 1,000
Span of control	Company / Group Research sites decentralized centralized	Company / Group Research sites decentralized semi-centralized	Company / Group Research sites decentralized centralized	Company / Group Research sites decentralized centralized

Table 3.5 – Commonalities with a difference, between the case-studies

Case-study organizations	Rover	LucasVarity	G.K.N.	Valeo
Ownership: Group / Parent company	German: Bayerische Motoren Werke AG	Anglo-American: Lucas Varity Plc	British: GKN Group Plc	French: Valeo S.A.
Company's and/or Group's recent history	Take-over	Merger	Reorganization (at ADD level)	—

Table 3.6 – Contrasts between the case-studies

Tables 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 highlight commonalities, partial differences and contrasts that can be found between the companies in my research. These tables enable to see, at a glance, the strong basis of features shared by the four case-study organizations as well as significant variables between them.

◆ Rover Group Ltd - Gaydon

The Rover Group Ltd has its headquarters in Warwick, Midlands, England, but its ultimate holding company is Bayerische Motoren Werke AG with headquarters in Munich, Germany.

Company history and background:

Rover started in Coventry in the late nineteenth century as a cycle manufacturer. The first Rover car, an 8hp vehicle, was produced in 1904. The four-wheel drive Land Rover was launched in 1948.

The company developed over the years through the continuous grouping, regrouping, merger and take-over of other names in British motoring, and finally became Rover Group Ltd in 1986. Just before this event links had been established with Honda Motor Co.

which were to be maintained for nearly a decade. The year of 1988 saw the selling out of the Government's shares in the Rover Group to British Aerospace.

In 1994 Rover Group Ltd became a subsidiary of the Bayerische Motoren Werke AG, Germany, but continued to operate as an independent company. There were delaying exercises before and after the BMW AG take-over as well as repeated reorganizations and restructuring in the course of the 1990s. The Gaydon site has experienced dramatic alterations. These have included amalgamation and a whole new organizational make-up with changes between business units and functions.

Company profile and research setting:

The Rover Group Ltd designs, manufactures and markets a wide range of cars, car derived vans, and specialist four-wheel drive vehicles. The Gaydon site concentrates on Group design and engineering resources. Rover's parent company BMW AG has as its main business the manufacture, sale and leasing of cars and motorcycles; and it is also involved in the production of aircraft engines, electronic systems and hardware.

Rover has become a global player who exports vehicles to over a hundred countries worldwide. It has major markets in Western Europe, Japan, North America, Australia and South Africa, with an increasing presence in Asia and the Pacific Rim and a growing number of international joint projects and technology transfer programmes. The Group has average annual sales of over £4 billion. It has over 30,000 direct employees in the UK and a total of over 40,000 including overseas. Rover employs approximately 4,000 at Gaydon, in the Midlands.

Rover is currently organized by 'functional areas'. There is a well defined line of command and representation for each area both in respect of UK and overseas business. Concerning management career routes, there is a management development scheme for graduate recruits; and some 'qualified engineers' have worked their way up. Rover's

grading structure comprises a 'dual ladder' which consists of parallel opportunities for 'hierarchy' positions and 'professional staff'.

◆ LucasVarity Aerospace Ltd - Hall Green, Shirley and Wolverhampton

LucasVarity Aerospace is owned by the British based Anglo-American group LucasVarity Plc, its ultimate holding company with headquarters in Birmingham, Midlands, England.

Company history and background:

British company Lucas Industries Plc was founded in the second half of the nineteenth century and developed mainly as an automotive component supplier. As the motor industry declined, Lucas reorganized itself into three major divisions, one focusing on motor vehicles, and the other two being an aerospace and an industrial division. Lucas Aerospace has been at the forefront of development from the earliest years of aviation in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The Varity Corporation is one of the largest industrial businesses in America. It is a worldwide company that supplies components and systems to manufacturers of original equipment. In 1996, Lucas Industries Plc, of the UK, merged with Varity Corporation, of North America, to form the British based Anglo-American company LucasVarity Plc. The merger did not result in amalgamation changes for Aerospace – as this was new to Varity – but there was a deep reorganization which included drastic delayering exercises.

Company profile and research setting:

LucasVarity Plc includes the designing, manufacturing and supply of technology systems, products and services to the automobile and aerospace industries. LucasVarity Aerospace manufactures systems and equipment for cargo handling, engine controls, aircraft and missile flight controls, hoists, winches and power generation equipment for civil and military aircraft.

LucasVarity Plc is a global Group. LucasVarity Aerospace is a global supplier with joint ventures, manufacturing operations and customer services centres in Australia and Asia. In addition, the company has manufacturing and customer support operations in North America, France and the UK, and joint ventures in Germany and Spain. LucasVarity has reached worldwide sales of over \$6 billion, that is, well over £3 billion. The Group has over 30,000 employees. The Shirley, Hall Green and Wolverhampton sites employ, jointly, over 6,500 people in the Midlands.

LucasVarity is organized, by type of product and system, into 'divisions' – as is the case with Aerospace – and decision-making is carried out at division level. There are cross-business functional responsibilities. Divisional directors sit on a strategic planning committee which liaises with functional councils and the headquarters corporate management committee. Concerning management career routes, there is a management development scheme for graduates. LucasVarity has a two-fold grading structure, respectively for 'management' and 'professional' employees.

◆ GKN ADD UK Operations - GKN Driveshafts Ltd and GKN Hardy Spicer Ltd

GKN Automotive Driveline Division (ADD) UK Operations is owned by the British group GKN Plc, its ultimate holding company with headquarters in Redditch, Midlands, England.

Company history and background:

The GKN name is derived from Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds and has deep roots in the eighteenth century and the industrial revolution. The Group was formed in 1902 when the iron and steel making interests of Guest in South Wales were joined with those of two large Midlands companies, Keen, a maker of nuts and bolts, and Nettlefolds, a maker of wood screws.

GKN became world renowned as a steel maker and a producer of screws and fasteners. Subsequently, it evolved from these traditional markets, and since 1980 GKN has focused on three main areas: motorized and agritechnical products; aerospace and special vehicles; and industrial services.

The core of GKN automotive business is centred around their 'driveline' systems and in particular the constant velocity joint (CVJ). These have become the primary activity of GKN Automotive Driveline Division which, in 1998, was reorganized on a national basis. The three UK sites – Hardy Spicer Ltd, Driveshafts Ltd, Birfield Extrusions – were brought together under the label GKN ADD UK Operations, where Birfield Extrusions was amalgamated into the larger organization Hardy Spicer. There have been delayering and restructuring exercises involving a large number of changed roles.

Company profile and research setting:

GKN Plc Operations includes designing, developing and manufacturing motor vehicle and agritechnical components, aerospace and defence products, as well as the provision of a range of industrial services. Under the umbrella name GKN ADD UK Operations, Hardy Spicer concentrates on the production of constant velocity (CV) joints for front-wheel drive, four-wheel drive and rear-wheel drive vehicles with independent rear suspension, whilst Driveshafts concentrates on the production of CV propeller shafts for passenger cars, commercial vehicles and other transport as well as industrial applications.

GKN is a global industrial group of companies. In addition to its UK locations, GKN's operations are also located in more than forty countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Australia. The Group's annual sales exceeded £3 billion both in 1997 and 1998. GKN has over 32,000 employees worldwide, with over 14,000 in the UK, plus a further 11,000 in associated companies. GKN ADD UK Operations – Hardy Spicer and Driveshafts – employs approximately 2,000 people in the Midlands.

GKN's organizational structure is process-driven, with functional links. Each site of each 'division' operates independently in the market it serves. Work is team-based; and division leadership teams are directly responsible to the directors of the company. Concerning management career routes, some people have worked their way up from the shop-floor, but now the emphasis is on a management development scheme for graduates. GKN's grading structure caters for two different pathways: 'people management' and 'technical expertise'.

◆ Valeo (UK) Wipers Systems Ltd - Birmingham

Valeo (UK) Wipers Systems Ltd is a Division of Valeo (UK) Ltd with headquarters in Birmingham, Midlands, England. It is owned by the French Valeo Group, its ultimate holding company being Valeo (France) SA with headquarters in Paris.

Company history and background:

Valeo was originally the Société Anonyme Française du Ferodo (SAFF), a company set up near Paris in the 1920s. From its early beginnings as a manufacturer of friction materials for French vehicle manufacturers, in the post-war years the company diversified and expanded internationally. The Group's name was changed to Valeo in 1980.

The Valeo Group downsized in the early 1980s, and in 1986 Cerus became its major shareholder, but in 1996 the controlling stake was sold to three separate buyers. The year of 1996 also saw the disposal of Valeo's non-strategic businesses and a reconfiguration of the Group's organization. Cerus was the catalyst for Valeo's drive to restructure and intensify its globalization.

Valeo Wipers Systems has been implementing a development plan in the past few years. This includes technological innovations leading to a complete renewal of its wiper system

and electric motor ranges. There is also a geographical widening of its international facilities by setting up a unit in Brazil to serve the requirements of the Mercosur countries.

Company profile and research setting:

Valeo designs, manufactures and supplies components and systems for cars and trucks. Valeo (UK) Wipers focuses on complete wiper systems (arms, blades, linkages, motors); wash-wipe systems and headlamp washers; fuel filling systems; anti-theft gas tank caps; and electric motors.

Valeo is a global Group with over a hundred production, research and development facilities in nineteen countries in Europe, North America, South America, Asia and Africa. In 1997 the Group generated close to FF 30 billion (£3 billion) in sales. Valeo has over 32,000 employees worldwide, including approximately 16,000 in the parent country – France. Valeo (UK) Wiper Systems employs approximately 1,000 people in the Midlands.

Valeo is organized into operating units, by type of product and system. Each of these units, known as ‘branch’, comprises a certain number of ‘divisions’ which are organized as autonomous profit centres. There are cross-branch functional networks. A coordination system ensures the necessary liaison between branches, national directorates and headquarters. Concerning management career routes, there is a management development scheme for graduates. Valeo’s grading structure has equivalent ranks in ‘hierarchy’ and ‘expert system’.

Two other companies were used with a complementary role in my study. As shown on Table 3.7, they share a number of commonalities between themselves. These are features they equally share with the four main companies in my investigation, as can be seen by comparing the contents of Table 3.7 with the contents of Table 3.4 and Table 3.5.

Complementary study organizations	Mayflower	Peugeot
automotive engineering	√	√
Midlands England	√	√
functional	√	√
few ranks	√	√
international with a global market	√	√

Table 3.7 – Further commonalities as an ancillary contribution

◆ Mayflower Vehicle Systems Plc - Coventry

Mayflower Vehicle Systems Plc is British owned. Its ultimate holding company is The Mayflower Corporation Plc, based in England, and Vehicle Systems is the Corporation's largest subsidiary.

Vehicle Systems designs and manufactures bodies and body panels for the niche market including specialist vehicles. It employs around 1,500 individuals, has a turnover of approximately £200,000 and is an international organization with global customers. The firm has few ranks in its line of command and is functionally led. It enjoys a relative autonomy from the Corporation, has operations in Europe and North America and is hoping to expand further globally.

◆ Peugeot Motor Company Plc - Ryton, Coventry

Peugeot Motor Company Plc is French owned. It is part of the PSA Peugeot Citroën Group, and its ultimate holding company is Peugeot (France) SA.

The Peugeot Motor Company designs and manufactures motor vehicles as well as replacement parts and accessories for motor vehicles. It employs 4,000 individuals and in

the Group has a turnover of more than £2 million. The firm has few ranks in its line of command and is functionally led. It enjoys a relative autonomy from the Group but benefits from its parent company's global status.

These six companies share a same industrial environment. There will be competition between them at different levels. There are also intertwined customer-supplier links between them, be it in the studied firms, their parent company or another organization within the Group. For example, Rover is a client of LucasVarity, Valeo and Mayflower; BMW is a client of LucasVarity and GKN; Peugeot is a client of Valeo and LucasVarity.

In some of their major features (Tables 3.4-7), the companies in my study confirm the picture given by Marginson *et al.* (1995) and Sisson and Marginson (1995) of companies in Britain since the 1980s. This includes a high level of merger and acquisition activity, internationalization, and a span of control with varying degrees of centralization and decentralization. Restructuring tends to be in a few-rank, downsized format, a tendency which continues to persist according to recent evidence (Worral *et al.*, 2000).

Features such as these are present in the organizations under investigation, and change has been experienced perhaps with a more dramatic impact in LucasVarity, Rover and GKN. Further dramatic events were to follow soon after I had finished my field work. The following is a note on the two major developments affecting the companies in my study in the immediate future, i.e., within the next eighteen months after I visited the sites:

* LucasVarity was taken over by the US car components Group Thomson, Ramo & Wooldridge in 1999.

* Rover lost its independent status in relation to its German parent company BMW in 1999; and in February 2000 new contracts were issued by BMW which no longer honoured the 'job for life' policy which dated from the British Aerospace period and was initially retained by BMW. Soon after, in the Spring of 2000, BMW initiated its sale of Rover.

2.2. Advantages of this choice of organizations

I want to look empirically at what is happening to managers and careers. With this primary aim in mind, I selected a set of firms that would be rich in material that could provide fresh, hard evidence.

All the companies in my study are in the automotive industry sector as manufacturers and suppliers of whole assembled powered vehicles and/or components for powered vehicles. Also, the sites visited are all in the Midlands, in central Britain. Why have I chosen to carry out my study in one sector of the economy? Why the automotive sector? Why in Midlands firms? Having brought my analysis down to sector and organizational level, as well as geographical area, may be seen, in a superficial judgement, as narrowing the scope of my study. On the contrary, I have opted for the strength of an in-depth investigation of organizations with a substantial base of shared commonalities.

The Midlands is historically a major centre of the UK automotive industry at the heart of the country. Firstly, this can be expected to enhance the chance of a highly authentic picture to emerge which may reveal deep-rooted aspects. Secondly, the important role that the automotive industry has traditionally played in British economy and labour market may point to one of two opposite developments. On the one hand, a long established industrial sector may anticipate expectations of conservatism. Established modes of

management may be adverse to innovation. On the other hand, a declining manufacturing industry may suggest a need to introduce substantial changes so as to move with the times. Furthermore, this argument and counter-argument cannot ignore the reality of a turbulent background of mergers, take-overs, and restructuring exercises, including downsizing and delayering. How is this turbulent reality impacting on management careers? If traditional career features remain in place, will traditional career opportunities remain in place too? How, after rungs have been removed from the climbing ladder? Will instead the 'employability' model (e.g., Heckscher, 1995) be a reality?

Will the managers in these firms be 'anchoring' (Schein, 1977) their careers in a type of organization like that found by Mintzberg (1979) or in a 'post-bureaucratic' organization? Will there be signs of hope for these managers in the internal market (Dopson and Stewart, 1990) or will their future be in the open market (Heckscher, 1995)? Will they be faced with a working environment full of ambiguities and tensions (Watson, 1994)?

My study is a multi-site investigation with a total of 114 case-study respondents. My case-study is based, not on one, but on seven different settings, to which two complementary settings have been added, in a wide range of rich field work material. Once industrial sector and geographical area had been chosen, with the same employment market, companies were selected which could provide further terms of comparison between them. With this measure, a common criticism to a qualitative approach has been overcome. Indeed, a control of comparison groups is provided which will be conducive to disentangling confounding variables and possibly detect causal relationships, which is further enhanced with a numerical input, as seen earlier in this chapter (II, 1.2).

As shown in Tables 3.4 and 3.5, the four case-study organizations – Rover, LucasVarity, G.K.N. and Valeo – share a total of eight key features in common. In addition to being in the automotive industry in the Midlands, their commonalities cover a

variety of other aspects. They all present an organizational structure with relatively few ranks and a function-led orientation, whatever their specific style of activity grouping; and each one offers their own brand of a dual career ladder provision catering for line of command and technical specialism. They all operate at an international scale with a global outlook and sales projection. They all are part of a large corporate group or affiliated to a large parent company in relation to which they enjoy a decentralized level of autonomy.

Within a broad base of commonalities, the four main companies in this study, on the other hand, present two important different features, as shown in Table 3.6. As for their ultimate holding company, Rover's is German, LucasVarity's is Anglo-American, GKN's is British and Valeo's is French. In their recent past, Rover has undergone a take-over and LucasVarity a merger, whilst GKN and Valeo have not experienced such drastic changes. However, GKN's Automotive Driveline Division has had a reorganization which directly affects the case-study firm. In the Valeo case-study setting there have not been any significant organizational alterations and there is not a long past history.

These contrasting features mean that the commonalities shown in Tables 3.4 and 3.5 exist in different corporate circumstances, as is the case with a few-rank structure which greatly reduces the prospects of career progression in the traditional sense of hierarchical advancement. Few ranks may be experienced as the result of a, sometimes, traumatic process of downsizing and delayering and it may be, at least partly, associated with a take-over, as in Rover, a merger, as in LucasVarity, or a reorganization, as in GKN; or it may be the only format available since the inception of the organization, as in Valeo. Therefore, the differences shown in Table 3.5 and, even more so, the contrasts shown in Table 3.6 are useful variables inasmuch as they can act as stimulators for comparisons against a common background of eight shared features, illuminating specificities in what may prove to be a generic story in the industrial sector under study.

Like the four main organizations in this study, Mayflower and Peugeot have varied ownership, British and French, respectively. These additional two firms are useful for ancillary confirmation of some general trends that may be suspected in the case-study organizations, as can be seen in Tables 3.4, 3.5 and 3.7. All these six companies in the automotive industry in the Midlands appear to have (re)shaped themselves as a few-rank functionally-led firm and operate internationally with a global vision. As sources of adjuvant information, the two extra organizations will, therefore, play a peripheral, albeit significant, role in my study in the testing of general themes.

The features displayed by the organizations I have chosen for my investigation also help testing some important themes that have deserved the attention of previous researchers. This is the case with these companies' functional orientation and their level of centralization and decentralization in relation to the existing literature on span of control and monitoring (e.g., Sisson and Marginson, 1995; Marginson *et al.*, 1995; Osterman, 1996). An associated issue is that of corporate demands and pressure (e.g., Fletcher and Williams, 1986; Foster, 1992; Edwards *et al.*, 1993; Merrick, 1996; Collinson and Collinson, 1997). The 'dual ladder' in the four main research organizations is an opportunity to revisit the literature on technical and professional careers (e.g., Roberts *et al.*, 1972; Gunz, 1980; Torrington and Weightman, 1987; Lam, 1989; Lee and Smith, 1992). There is a strong international, and global, dimension to the companies in my research study. Except for GKN, and also Mayflower, which are British centred, LucasVarity is Anglo-American owned, and the others – Rover, Valeo and Peugeot – have a foreign ultimate holding company. This relates both to the issue of span of control (e.g., Marginson *et al.*, 1995) and that of foreign influence (Evans and Lorange, 1989; Whitley, 1991; Edwards *et al.*, 1993; Ferner, 1993-4).

Finally, central to my investigation is finding evidence on whether or not the traditional career is being replaced with a new model of managerial employment. Main themes in this area are that of loyalty (e.g., Kanter, 1989; Scase and Goffee, 1989; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995) and that of employability both in the internal and the external markets (e.g., Handy, 1994; Godswen, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995). If the employability model is to become a reality, then the companies in my investigation present some features that might be conducive to its emergence. First, these firms draw from a same labour market. Similarity of roles in nearby firms will mean that cases may exist in which managers will look at what there is on the other side of the fence and the boundaries of intra-organizational routes may be crossed on to the wider circle of inter-organizational routes. Secondly, all the firms studied have some form of involvement outside the UK which may be a gateway for managers to expand their career route prospects at an international, even global, scale, either as an intra-organizational or as an inter-organizational move. My choice of companies will thus be favourable to testing the employability view.

In conclusion, my case-study organizations display a cluster of features that should provide a fertile source of evidence for my investigation into intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers. This ranges from the working context and environment where managers are anchoring their careers to a number of related themes including the central issue of career in a traditional or innovative model.

PART II

4 - The Company Context

This chapter aims to act as a platform for the evidence laid out in the following four chapters. As such, it expands on the information previously given on the companies studied, concentrates on their current features as at the time I carried out my field work (1997-1998) and includes an account of their career planning systems.

Respondents were given the opportunity of providing evidence on the latter and were proffered a list of possible career tools such as: career counselling by supervisor; career counselling by Personnel; informal mentoring; formal mentoring; assessment centre; development centre; postings of internal job openings; formal education / training as part of career development; tuition refunds for education undertaken by the individual; career breaks; secondments; succession planning / retirement preparation programmes. Most of the different items in the list could be identified, to some extent, across the companies.

However, when the topic of career planning was put to respondents free from any guidelines as to the answer, one method usually came to mind first, often followed by a few more. I find this a useful source of evidence in respect of the relative weighting of different career tools as perceived by those directly involved. Mainly based on these responses, a report is given in this chapter of each firm's career planning systems with which its employees are most familiar. The emphasis is on factual statements made by

respondents, while matters of opinion on the efficiency of the existing corporate programmes and other related issues are dealt with in detail in the chapters that follow.

In order to preserve anonymity, respondents' quotes are code-labelled as follows:

- not by site visited, but by the name of the wider organization, e.g., LV for all the LucasVarity research settings; RG stands for Rover Group, GK for GKN and VL for Valeo;
- not by each firm's grading nomenclature, but by a 3-level classification - junior (J), middle (M) and senior (S) - where S also includes top managerial posts and directorships.

I - THE CASE-STUDY ORGANIZATIONS

1 - Rover

1.1. The overall picture

Although the BMW take-over in 1994 was the most recent major landmark in the history of Rover prior to my research, an earlier event may be felt by some to have had a more radical effect. This was the 'Rover Tomorrow' New Deal. It took place in 1992, when the Rover Group was a subsidiary of British Aerospace, and introduced a deep cultural change. With the New Deal, the terms and conditions of employment contracts were altered. Rover became a 'single status' company ending the distinction between 'staff' and 'hourly paid', and put into action a single grading structure for all employees. Retraining schemes were introduced. Job security was increased with a 'job for life' policy and the establishment of no compulsory redundancy. This may have helped some shop-floor

employees to ascend to a managerial post and retain their employment but its significance will naturally have been weaker at the higher levels of the managerial band.

Also during the Rover 'Aerospace' period, the setting up of Product Supply in 1991 was a radical alteration in the organization's design as it saw the change from a functionally based structure to one of business units. In the March 1996 major reorganization of Rover by BMW, the Group returned from business units to a functionally based structure. What is now Group Design and Engineering, at Gaydon, has been caught in the process. After BMW's take-over in 1994, Concept & Design and Group Engineering came together to form the business unit called Group Design and Engineering. In 1996, further changes took place. Group Design and Engineering has centralized its resources on the Gaydon site and is no longer a business unit but became a 'function'. The make-up of Group Design & Engineering as a function underwent a subsequent reshaping process.

Function directors were to report directly to the Chief Executive and through him to the Chairman of the Board. Component areas and special vehicle areas were organized as departments, side by side with areas such as Purchasing and Personnel, which were, in turn, subdivided in a matrix type structure. In February 1997, an organizational reshuffle brought a new development. A senior rank was created between functions and the BMW Board where each one of the Board members oversees one particular set of functions and departments.

BMW-owned Rover retained the 'Rover Tomorrow' New Deal single-grading structure, with the following levels:

Non-management	A, B, C
Management and professionals	D

Senior management	E
General management	F
Executive management	G

An effort has been made to bring parity between professional staff and the managerial line of authority in the way of a dual ladder. This can be seen in the nomenclature for grade D: Management and professionals. There is, however, scope for improvement, as the present grading nomenclature does not appear to cater for professional careers at the higher levels. BMW could perhaps have been influential in this respect in that technical knowledge is given a higher status in Germany than it has traditionally been the case in Britain.

There is no uniform career path at managerial level and no one standard way of 'going up' through the organization, but recently a graduate development scheme had been created. Rover has courses at Warwick University (also at Coventry and some other places) which are Group specific and are available only for higher grades, middle manager and above.

In short, a structure with fewer ranks means that higher positions are restricted. On the other hand, against the danger of job loss, there is the security inherited from the 'Aerospace' period of Rover history. The BMW take-over brought in a new international dimension; and measures were initiated for career opportunities in technical specialism.

1.2. The main career tools

When approached on the topic of career planning systems at Rover, one major tool seemed to spring to the respondents' mind: the PDR (People Development Review) which

had been changed recently to the ADRP (Associates Development Review Process) where the acronym is often shortened to ADP or ADR. This system appears to play an important, though different, role for individuals at different grades. A respondent explains how it works in his case: 'A situation when we have a PDR, I have a regular review with my director once a month and during that discussion we talk about the business issues and we also talk about personal issues'[RG:M]. Good PDR / ADR results will then mean prospects of better pay, a higher grade or both. A more senior colleague explains how he uses PDR / ADR: 'We did a "180 degree" appraisal; then I got my managers to look at twenty six major management items and to rate me on them and I rated myself as well and when we put the two together most of them were a few percent off but one of the questions was how good I am at effective listening and I put something like ninety percent and they put twenty to thirty percent [...] So this is one example of how I have used PDR to help me, because I needed to improve my effective listening'[RG:S].

The PDR / ADR appears to be an umbrella term that houses a number of other career planning tools together with appraisals. When talking about career counselling by supervisor, a respondent says: 'Well, that is part of the PDR' and, as to mentoring, he explains as follows: 'Well, again, this is all coupled with the others (i.e., PDR and counselling)'[RG:J]. It may also include informal mentoring, according to another respondent who prefers using a different term: 'Networking really, finding somebody who respects you and helps you out'[RG:S].

Assessment centres appear to function with the purpose of selecting candidates to a post. A respondent describes his own experience: 'That simply relates to when I was being put forward for a promotion.[...]. You didn't ask for them, you were just given them. It was part of the standard process'[RG:S]. Further to this information, a colleague,

who might have been less successful at getting a promotion, adds the following: 'Yes, I have been on them. I am not sure how it has been used for me because you are not allowed to see your report, you only have a verbal debrief'[RG:M].

Corporate support is given to formal education and training as part of career development. It ranges from language classes in German to post-graduate studies. Talking about their own experience, a respondent says 'I did a MSc since I joined Rover, part-time'[RG:S] and a colleague who did a MBA and is trying to do an Eng. Doc. explains as follows: 'The MBA was available, so I did it [...]. If I can get my Doctorate, that will definitely be useful to me, particularly in the BMW set-up'[RG:S].

Postings of internal openings are a source of opportunities for most employees. However, a respondent in a high position puts the system into perspective: 'As you go up through the grades, then, although it is available, you don't use it. The changes I have made career-wise from senior manager onwards have been because I had heard that they were looking for someone to do the job and I did something about getting it. I was fortunate'[RG:S].

Secondments also play a role, and this is an area in which an international dimension has been developed recently. A respondent explains that 'secondments are available, they have always been available throughout the company'[RG:M], whilst, talking about the present, another respondent adds the following piece of information: 'There are quite a few managers who are on two-year secondments to BMW, there are international assignments there that have come out of the BMW take-over'[RG:M].

Some aspects stand out. There has been a tightening up of control by parent company BMW, although Rover remained a company operating in its own right and, as such, maintained its previous job security. As for career planning, ADR appears to be central

and to play a number of roles. It offers the general formalized means of appraisal and recognition that may lead to better monetary remuneration and possibly also to promotion. Also, the higher up a manager gets, then the more ADR becomes a means of influencing and selecting subordinates.

2 - LucasVarity

2.1. The overall picture

After the Lucas and Varity merger in 1996, the resulting LucasVarity Group was originally organized into seven divisions which corresponded to four different business areas: Automotive, Aftermarket, Diesel and Aerospace. This was reduced to six divisions in 1998 when Diesel Engine was sold. Aerospace is a division and a business area in itself.

Decision-making is carried out at individual business level but there are cross-business functional responsibilities, and businesses with common technologies or customers are grouped together in respect of managerial control. There is a six-man corporate management committee, consisting almost exclusively of Varity executives, which is to oversee the main administrative functions, and there is a separate strategic planning committee, which includes the six divisional directors, involving most of the former Lucas executives. As a division, Aerospace is represented on the strategic planning committee. There is also a series of 'functional councils' and advisory boards which have been set up in different parts of the world and which will invite outside industrialists to scrutinize strategy.

LucasVarity has a dual career ladder with 'management' and 'professional' grades which are jointly encompassed in the nomenclature used and merge at the top 'executive' level. Grades are as follows:

Management and Professional (Grade B)	MPB
Management and Professional (Grade A)	MPA
Senior Management and Professional	SMP
Executive	EG

Sites have mostly MPBs and MPAs and a few SMPs on them. At divisional level there will be EGs. Intra-Group moves are encouraged, internationally for senior positions.

After the merger, the LucasVarity corporate management committee was put under the leadership of the former chief operating officer of Varity who is in charge of integrating the two companies. As part of the implemented policy, there have been disposals of LucasVarity businesses that could not be at the forefront in global or regional markets. The agenda of the Varity-led LucasVarity Group also aims to change the old Lucas corporate culture to a more aggressive, performance-orientated approach, and specific forms of assessment have been implemented for senior grades, whilst some graduates have been brought in from the external market.

The aim of the merger was to combine Lucas's brakes business with that of Varity, a world leader in anti-lock systems for light trucks. LucasVarity turned brakes into a joint venture. Aerospace, on the other hand, is a business that is new to Varity. It was also a successful area of Lucas, and it is deemed as a core business that could be expanded through bolt-on acquisitions. Aerospace has, however, suffered similar drastic changes as the other divisions and layers have been wiped out as part of the cost-cutting drive and the streamlined operational and administrative functions.

Summing up, after the merger and associated restructuring, tougher demands are being made on managers' performance. However, a relatively decentralized organizational

structure, with possible expansion, has the makings of intra-organizational opportunities. Another aspect is that there is a dual grading structure in place which provides for both managerial line and technical expertise at different levels.

2.2. The main career tools

On the topic of corporate career systems, for LucasVarity respondents the first that comes to mind seems to be assessment and appointments. On the latter, a respondent in a senior position, looking at the organization from the top, gives the following explanation:

‘I think that the main primary mechanism for moving people from position to position is by internal job openings. It is left to the individual to apply.

There are occasions when management create positions specifically for individuals but they still have to apply, the protocol of the system is that you advertise a position so it is freely available to everyone. Sometimes vacancies are posted with somebody in mind who already fits the requirements.

That really is true for ninety percent of the opportunities. For a small percentage, it is down to their head of department to suggest movements. With reorganizations and structure changes, some people move on towards a new role which in the last two years has been quite a lot’. [LV:S]

Assessment was very much on the mind of LucasVarity managers, for testing had been introduced recently as a tool of selection for higher grades. A respondent gives his testimony: ‘I went to an assessment centre with all the psychometric tests and all that. What they do is numeracy etc., some of the things you haven’t touched for fifteen years’[LV:M]. Another respondent makes a more revealing statement: ‘For corporate

roles, you all need to have psychometric tests. [...]. When Lucas and Varsity joined, I don't know if you know this, they had something like two hundred and fifty people at director level across the organization and the way they got rid of one hundred and fifty or so was through psychometric tests and interviews'[LV:M]. The introduction of psychometric testing and the reduction of the managerial population appear to coincide, chronologically, with another change, as declared by the respondent who says the following: 'Pre-merger, there was within Lucas, and within Lucas Aerospace, a Management Development department. I am not aware that there is a Management Development department within LucasVarsity. Now, that may be just because it hasn't been communicated very well'[LV:M].

As for appraisals, the following overall view was given by a senior respondent:

'Normally, the appraisal is given to management to do for their subordinates, that is, people are graded as very effective to limited. [...]. The problem with Lucas's (*sic*) appraisals is that in the past they have tried to link appraisals to performance but individuals have in their minds that "I have an appraisal and if I do well then I get extra money", then we went into a recession and merit awards were just stopped. [...]. Another problem that has occurred is that, with the personal development, it was also linked to training, again when the recession hit training budgets were also hit, so the other benefit that they thought they would get of the process they weren't getting either. So it takes a while to recover from that situation because people are just dismissing appraisals as being a waste of time'. [LV:S]

Before and after the merger, 'informal mentoring is a main thing really', explains a respondent, and, drawing a comparison with appraisals, adds that 'it depends who you

are, I mean, it suited me better but for other people who are may be a little bit more shy or uncertain as how to even start, I think that a formal system has got to be a safeguard really'[LV:M]. Close to informal mentoring is, according to a respondent, career counselling by supervisor; and he explains why by saying that it 'basically means talking to your boss'[LV:M]. Informal advice also plays an important role as to secondments, some in the US and elsewhere abroad.

Differently from the budget constraints reported above, some individuals recollect pre-merger help in the way of formal education, training and tuition refunds. A respondent who had done a MBA at the University of Wolverhampton explains: 'When I wanted to do it, it came out of a pilot scheme that they were doing and my manager didn't mind me going on this pilot scheme'[LV:M]. Another respondent also has his own story to report: 'I did a MBA for which I got a tuition refund. It was part of a Group training, it was a pilot scheme. I don't think that Varsity do it' (it has been closed down) [LV:M].

In the merged LucasVarsity, a key facet is the Varsity-led aggressive demand on managers' performance and tough appraisal measures. Psychometric and other tests are being used to select and eliminate managers on, or aspiring to, higher grades. Also, the pre-merger Management Development department appears to have become inoperative, and the great majority of vacancies are posted with someone already in mind.

3 - G.K.N.

3.1. The overall picture

I carried out my field work at the time when GKN Automotive Driveline Division (ADD) was converted into GKN ADD UK Operations which was followed by the amalgamation of Birfield Extrusions into the larger organization Hardy Spicer. While in the late 1980s

there were three sites, each one with its own board, now one single board covers the two remaining sites, Hardy Spicer and Driveshafts. Job opportunities have thus been reduced at middle and senior management levels.

On the other hand, cross-moves are facilitated by the new organizational structure which is process-driven within a functional network. Another favourable aspect is the increase in best practice shared across the GKN Group, in its companies outright or joint ventures; and hence there are more intra-company transfers of people. This includes overseas secondments, particularly for those aspiring to senior positions; however, GKN has the unsolved problem of integrating them back on their return.

GKN's grading structure and nomenclature considers both 'people management' and 'technical expertise'. At managerial level, there are engineering grades ranging from ET1 to ET4 and managerial engineering grades ranging from EM2 to EM3. Finally, there is a management grading system with positions that run from M2 to M4. The highest level is M4 which includes the Leadership Team where team leaders are directly responsible to the directors of the company.

Current directors have reached their position via different routes - graduate scheme; from the shop-floor; and as a 'qualified engineer', the more traditional route in the company. A new trend, however, is the external recruitment of graduates. Another novelty has been the introduction of senior management appraisal exercises which are being implemented from grade M4 downwards.

There is, therefore, a mixed picture. The structure has lost some ranks, and requirements for top positions are being tightened up with a senior management appraisal system. On the other hand, cross-moves have been made easier; however, a temporary post abroad may not guarantee a job at home when the employee comes back. In the

company's grading structure, technical expertise is being taken into account at a range of levels.

3.2. The main career tools

The Assessment Centre, Group Management Development Programme (GMDP) and Driveline Leadership Programme (DLP) were at the centre of what GKN respondents had to report in respect of their company's career planning system. As part of the GMDP, which recently had been closed down, tests were carried out at an assessment centre where candidates to managerial posts were evaluated against performance indicators. A respondent explains as follows: 'That basically came up with a sort of ten management criteria, they picked your weakest items that you need to concentrate on and develop, in a low risk environment. You did learn something about yourself the easy way and not the hard way'[GK:S]. This has now, to some extent, been replaced with the DLP which is described by a respondent as follows: 'I have just started on this, and that certainly wasn't available before UK Operations was formed. It does two things, it allows you to develop yourself in a less stressful environment because you can take risks and explore areas, and also to network with other people inside GKN'[GK:M]. The change seems to be, therefore, more in format rather than in principle.

Postings of internal jobs used to be distributed through the GMDP as 'vacancy lists' and now 'internal vacancies are actually posted on notice boards throughout'[GK:S], reports one of the respondents. Equally, support existed before UK Operations and continues to exist concerning formal education and training. A respondent explains: 'Well, they have always supported any courses that I have wanted to do, and GKN have just committed to let me go to Cambridge University for three weeks'[GK:S]. Another

respondent says the following: 'I am doing a part-time degree now and some of the people who are working for me are doing external education'[GK:M].

There also appears to be a recent emphasis on in-house training. 'GKN does provide a lot of in-house courses through UK Operations now'[GK:S], says a respondent, whilst another respondent, talking about current practice, explains as follows: 'We all tend to do the same programme of training courses where you are looking at management skills. Historically it was very much the case of "oh, you are a manager now, get on with it and you can learn as you go along"'[GK:M].

However, managers who aspire to reach top grades may be encountering new difficulties. This is the general feeling. A respondent who himself is not in that position explains about others: 'The different periods (before and after the reorganization into UK Operations) didn't really have an effect on me. The reorganization of GKN into UK Operations doesn't have any effect on the lower levels of management, it is only the very senior levels'[GK:M]. Indeed, this may well be the case, bearing in mind some new corporate measures. In fact, for higher levels, from M4 downwards, appraisal exercises were just being implemented as a requirement coupled with the need to be available to work on overseas secondments. These are levels beyond those for which vacancies are posted on notice boards.

After the reorganization of ADD into UK Operations, the introduction of a senior management appraisal system stands out as the most striking feature in respect of the top end of the managerial band. No radical changes, however, appear to have developed at other levels. Perhaps there is an exception in what, in some respects, may be seen as a continuous feature that has evolved to a changed format, that is, the GMDP, before the

reorganization, followed by the DLP, since then. Both are felt to enable individuals to explore and demonstrate their capabilities in a low risk environment.

4 - Valeo

4.1. The overall picture

Valeo downsized in the early 1980s, even before the recession. It operates based on 'branches' by type of product and system. Each 'branch' comprises a certain number of 'divisions' which are organized as autonomous profit centres.

Although, in principle, Valeo is a decentralized Group, it includes a well defined controlling system. In spite of their autonomy, 'divisions' are subject to cross-'branch' functional networks which are responsible for the development and application of methods and procedures, information feedback, and the tracking of investment projects and achieved objectives. There is also a geographical dimension to the Group's overall structure - the 'national directorates' in each country are responsible for looking after the Valeo's interests locally and deal with public authorities.

The methods and procedures applied through the cross-'branch' functional networks are highly formalized, and in the UK they are translated from French originals. This acts as a unifying structure which can facilitate moves across the Group in that the business pattern will be familiar between 'divisions'. Valeo places great emphasis on mobility across the Group and prefers new recruits with more than a first degree.

A major unifying element is the 'Core Strategies School' which is designed to provide uniform training to all Valeo employees and thereby improve implementation company-wide. Initial in-house training is done by the itinerant internal 'college'; then there is training at a centre in France, for managers after three years with the company; finally,

there is access to the Valeo Management Seminar, also in France, but only for those who reach a senior management position. Training and appraisal go hand in hand.

At the time of interviewing, Valeo UK Wipers Systems was hopeful that a solution had been found in the recently introduced three-tier provision for individuals who choose to develop a career as a product or process specialist: Expert, Senior Expert, Master Expert. This grading structure runs parallel to the managerial 'Cadres' which comprise at least three levels. Upward career progression is restricted by a short ladder, with no more than seven levels in total, from the chairman down to the operator.

A key feature in this case is, therefore, the formalized framework which is superimposed by the parent company on an otherwise decentralized profit-unit type of organization. Ranks are few, but uniformity of procedures facilitates moves in the internal market at an international scale. Also, in the company's grading system provision has been set up for an 'expert' ladder as an alternative upward career route.

4.2. The main career tools

In-house training is central at Valeo's. Trainers come from inside and outside the Group. 'We have a huge budget for training'[VL:S], says a Valeo respondent in a top managerial position. As explained by him, there is the Core Strategies School, which is an itinerant internal college that gives a one week long training course to new recruits. Then there is the Training Centre in France, after three years. The Valeo Management Seminar is only for those who get to a senior management position.

Mentoring is for newcomers. A respondent describes how it works: 'We have an induction programme; for the first six months there is certain training that you have to do and that is supervised by what we have called a mentor. Then you sign off on every part

of the induction scheme when everything has been done and it is the mentor who makes sure that it is done'[VL:M]. There is also an appraisal exercise and career counselling by a supervisor which takes the form of an interview. A respondent explains as follows: 'You don't have a career interview every year but you have one when you come towards what we perceive as the end of a period in a certain job'[VL:S].

International mobility is encouraged, and details of intra-organizational openings are made available to everyone, except for some positions. An executive puts the matter into perspective: 'All our job opportunities are on the Intranet and everybody's computer has access to it and they can just log on and look at the jobs on the Intranet every morning. And that existed before on paper and now it exists on computer. I got a job through it, I didn't get this (his current) job through it though, this sort of level of job doesn't generally go through it. It wouldn't be advertised, we would look for somebody specific and it is networked within the organization'[VL:S].

At Valeo, a dominant aspect is that company procedures, training and appraisal are systematically led by the French parent company. This formalized system, however, may not apply to the higher levels of the managerial band. For these positions, selection may be left to top management decision on a personal basis.

II - THE EXTRA ORGANIZATIONS

1 - Mayflower

Mayflower Vehicle Systems offers a 'total project management service' in a flexible approach which includes a team-working partnership with clients; and its personnel often work in client locations. As a tier 1 supplier, this organization is also able to manage the second and third tier supplier chain on behalf of its clients. However, the firm has a narrow customer base, with sixty percent of its work coming from Land Rover. Its management are trying to increase work with other companies in order to become less dependent on Rover.

Vehicle Systems is functionally led; and Engineering is a function undergoing organization. Following the model of the Mayflower Corporation Plc in general, the Coventry firm's overall organizational structure has few ranks, although the number of grades may suggest otherwise. Above shop-floor manual labour, there are seven to eight grades, MP7 to MP0, in ascending order, followed by an ungraded rank at the very top (NB: MP stands for Motor Panels, not for management and professional). However, not all the grades are present in some of the different functions.

Mayflower Vehicle Systems promotes its employees' educational development at several levels. The firm has a graduate scheme and there is an Open Learning Centre where continuous skills-based training is provided. Vehicle Systems has also seconded some engineers to the US.

Appraisals are normally carried out twice a year and are the main career tool. There is an appraisal system in place and operating for Engineering, Manufacturing and Human

Resources; and this is being improved and extended to other functions, namely Purchasing, Finance and Sales.

Therefore, links between Mayflower Vehicle Systems and the Mayflower Corporation enable some international movement across the Group. On the other hand, Vehicle Systems has close links with other firms in the sector, which may elicit inter- rather than intra-organizational moves. The appraisal system is being expanded and perfected. The few-rank organizational structure keeps a nomenclature that may be reminiscent of a taller format in the past; but Engineering is a function receiving special attention.

In relation to the four case-study organizations, Mayflower Vehicle Systems strikes the observer as being slightly more conservative in its organizational design. It can thus usefully portray a stage previous to the scenarios encountered in the main body of this research. Although the incremental type of career progression is faced with missing rungs in the ladder, at the top a rank prevails which escapes grading. For the firm at large, training and appraisals are developing features.

2 - Peugeot

The Ryton manufacturing complex is Peugeot's biggest UK site and main assembly plant. It is supported by a network of Peugeot ancillary sites and suppliers also in the Coventry area, including Stoke, Aldermoor and Tile Hill. On the other hand, Peugeot Motor Company Plc is the UK arm of the Peugeot 'marque' and its manufacturing division based at the Ryton factory is part of the overall manufacturing resource of the PSA Peugeot Citroën Group worldwide, whilst, on the other hand, Peugeot in Britain also gains its strength from the Group's combined research and development effort.

In the Group there is a lot of matrix reporting. It is equally so in the UK, where part of the senior management team of Peugeot are also part of the senior management team of Peugeot in Europe. In the UK, there has been a change over the years away from a pyramid type structure where promotions used to be within set functions.

There is a policy of discouraging the up-the-ladder aspiration and, instead, generating broader career paths for managers and thus encouraging functional changes, which, for some, may lead to the right skills for a director's job. In the UK Peugeot has specialist managers in a number of disciplines including Engineering but for employees to get to director level they have to become generalists. Accordingly, the current grading structure above shop-floor manual employees, comprises two categories: ETAM, which is technical and professional, and, above it, Management 'Cadres', which consists of individuals with potential for directorship.

Systematic training and personal development are a permanent feature of employee life. Peugeot have a Graduate Traineeship system and their own Training Centre in Coventry. They also provide assistance for further study at external institutions where appropriate. The appraisal system is the main career planning tool. It is carried out annually across the grades, and senior management are equally subjected to this exercise. Secondments are promoted, mostly for high potential managers so that they can gain international experience.

Therefore, site and Group links, as well as in-house training, are favourable ground for intra-organizational moves at different geographical scales - from regional, in the Midlands, to global. The appraisal system covers all managerial levels, including senior posts. In a few-rank organizational structure, there is an emphasis on broadening one's

skills as personal development. Wider skills and experience may offer a route to directorship, a step which, for specialists, will entail changing to generalists.

In comparison with the four case-study organizations, Peugeot displays a similar phase of post-pyramid evolution in organizational structure. In common particularly with GKN, a senior management appraisal system is in place. A striking feature at Peugeot is the stated policy of encouraging lateral movement. Lower and middle managers moving sideways can do so in the hope that broadening their views will take them beyond the delimiting condition of specialists and, as generalists, as far as the realms of seniority.

CONCLUSIONS

Further to the main features outlined in the previous chapter, the present chapter has provided more detailed contextualization for the management career in the organizations researched. As highlighted earlier in this work, the six firms in my study – Rover, LucasVarity, GKN, Valeo, Mayflower and Peugeot – share a number of fundamental features in common. They all are in the same industrial sector – automotive – and the same industrial environment – in the Midlands. They all have a few-rank organizational structure, with a functional orientation in their different forms of activity grouping, and are affiliated to a parent company or company group from which they enjoy a relative autonomy. Either independently, or through their parent company or company group, they all have an international or intercontinental projection and a global market vision. Finally, these firms are trying to overcome the problems resulting from the traditional dichotomy between technical specialism and managerial line of authority. In an effort to bring parity

of career opportunities between both, the four case-study organizations – Rover, LucasVarity, GKN and Valeo – have initiated a ‘dual ladder’ system. There is no such provision in the two extra firms in my study. However, at Mayflower special attention is being given to Engineering and Peugeot is opting for the promotion of specialists to generalists.

Considering corporate career policy, there is a general emphasis on the employee’s personal development. In one form or another, a graduate scheme has been initiated in all the six firms. There are employees who can report having been financially supported to further their education, at different levels, including post-graduate studies at a university. In-house training is available, mostly so perhaps at Valeo, where this provision is made directly by the parent company, both through an itinerant college and in France, and is associated with employee international mobility across the Group, a requirement in particular for higher grades. In general, intra-organizational moves are being encouraged and have become a prerequisite for senior positions, particularly at GKN, LucasVarity and Peugeot, but in some cases the reintegration of expatriates may be a problem. Rover experienced an increase in international transfers following the BMW take-over. Mayflower has followed the trend with tentative secondments in the US.

Career opportunities in the way of intra-organizational vacancies are openly made known to everyone across the company. They are usually posted on notice boards or communicated by some other means including the Intranet. However, this can be just a protocol observed with someone already in mind to fill the post. Top level positions are not advertised but may be networked. Testing, usually carried out at an assessment centre, is another tool that can play an important role. In general, appraisals are the main tool of performance evaluation and selection for promotion, except apparently at LucasVarity. At

Rover, appraisals are widely used as a matter of routine; at Valeo, they are used when a promotion is being considered; at Mayflower, the system is being developed across different functions; and, at GKN and Peugeot, appraisal exercises are being used also on senior management.

As a final note, it sounds as though appraisal is reasonably developmental at Rover, and also Valeo, with a tougher 'fit in or get out' style at LucasVarity. Senior posts that in the past might have been beyond formal assessment are now being subjected to appraisal exercises at GKN and Peugeot. At Mayflower, appraisal is catching up with the general trend in the other companies.

Value judgments on career management and related matters are presented in the following chapters, which lay out the principal findings in my research, whilst the findings reported in this chapter have given an initial contribution to the picture which will gradually emerge of what the management career may be like in the firms under investigation. First, a functional orientation does not support Kanter's (1983, 1989) vision of an 'integrative approach' and a 'horizontal dimension' where managers will be 'hopping from job to job'. In contrast to this, however, intra-organizational moves are encouraged and working abroad is a prerequisite for those aspiring to senior posts, mainly so at GKN, LucasVarity and Peugeot, but expatriates may not have a job waiting for them back home.

Span of control is another area where contradictions and ambiguities can be found. In the Rover, GKN and Valeo research sites there is a centralized organizational configuration, and LucasVarity see themselves as semi-centralized, but in all the research sites the relationship with the company group or parent company is considered to be decentralized. Yet, particularly in Valeo, decentralization from headquarters is

counteracted with a tight group-wide system of procedures. This supports Sisson and Marginson's (1995) argument on operational decentralization and strategic centralization of divisionalized organizations and also supports Marginson *et al.*'s (1995) finding that in decentralized organizations the performance of operating units is closely monitored. There are signs of the empowerment Dopson and Stewart (1990) suspected for the slimmer middle management after downsizing, but contrasting tendencies appear to be at work which are similar to those identified by Osterman (1996): a cost cutting /centralization model and a decentralization / empowerment model. The former is reminiscent of the Weberian (1947) model and does not represent a fundamental shift from Mintzberg's (1979) model of the manufacturing firm. The latter suggests a 'post-bureaucratic' model but, in the organizations researched, falls short of Kanter's (1983, 1989) vision of managerial employment and shows no evidence of Heckscher's (1995) model of an empowered manager in the external market.

No evidence has been found in the companies researched that will support Kanter's idea of 'portable skills' (1989) and the 'employability' strand of thought (Handy, 1994; Godswen, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995). Training is provided, either in-house or externally, but the dominant aim seems to be a better employee performance and to address firm specific needs, which means that learned skills and knowledge may not be easily transferable. This is concurrent with the findings of other researchers of other organizations such as McGovern *et al.* (1998).

On the other hand, career planning and career tools is a complex area. In each firm there appears to be a process or tool that first springs to mind rather than a coherent system of processes and tools. There is the general understanding that career processes and tools are to be implemented in the interest of the firm and the employee, but for

example in LucasVarity the purpose of psychometric tests may be unclear. Also, there is not always a visible correlation between training, appraisal, remuneration and career progression. Instead, there is a considerable lack of available data for inspection in this area, including rates of pay and other rewards. Finally, the introduction at GKN of appraisal exercises from top grade M4 downwards highlights the need to take an industrial relations approach to managerial work (Edwards, 1995) including senior positions.

Academic qualifications are valued. Each one of the six firms in my study has its own version of a graduate scheme, and some managers have been given time and funding for a first or second degree or even for a doctorate. Corporate promotion of employees' academic qualifications may open a door for the technicians Roberts *et al.* (1972) found trapped behind a 'graduate barrier'.

Although in the past the 'dual ladder' system has been regarded as little more than an 'organizational fix' (Gunz, 1980), it is interesting to see that hope still persists that this may provide a successful way of handling technical and professional careers. The four case-study organizations have put in place a technical / professional ladder in parallel with the traditional line of command. It is also interesting to note that, despite corporate efforts for parity, the managerial leg tends to reach higher than the other, which may be apparent in the grading nomenclature, as is the case for example in Rover and GKN.

So far we have only an embryonic picture of what management careers are like in the organizations researched. However some ambiguities and contradictions have already started to emerge. There may be grounds for optimism and pessimism. Some elements may suggest managerial empowerment, others may suggest job insecurity and an uncertain career for the manager. We may have the outline of a scenario where both aspects can coexist (Armstrong, 1987, 1989; Edwards, 2000).

5 - Ranks & Routes

The previous chapter contains an account of the career planning systems in the different organizations studied. The present chapter looks at how these structures work in practice. therefore, it lays out views on career planning systems. Respondents are individuals on different management grades, including top positions. The latter should voice their own firm's outlook. Others will express their interpretation of, and often their response to, the corporate approach. I have thus conferred an extra strength to my method by seeking evidence from different vantage-points.

Evidence from the cases in this research brings a development on past work. Dopson and Stewart (1990) saw grounds for some optimism on the internal market and empowered middle managers. Watson (1994) found relatively empowered middle managers but that the realms of decision making were often beyond their reach. McGovern *et al.* (1998) found an erosion of opportunities for the internally promoted manager. The findings recorded in this chapter complement this qualified account, in contrast to the straightforwardly optimistic and pessimistic views analysed earlier.

The managers in my study may find themselves in a complex work context in which 'career anchors' (Schein, 1977) may have become difficult to establish. On the one hand, their work space (Gunz, 1989) may contain features that can be associated with Mintzberg's (1979) model of a traditional manufacturing firm. On the other hand, 'core-

periphery' (Atkinson, 1984) and externalization ideas may be shaping the options open to them. This chapter brings new findings on these matters.

Bearing in mind the fluidity of the concept of manager, I took some measures in the hope that I might find a clearer picture of the manager's role, as mentioned earlier, in the methodology chapter. The case-study organizations were encouraged to influence the sample according to their understanding of the managerial band, so that their own selection would give me pointers as to what a manager really is to them. Capitalizing on this situation, respondents were probed on the matter and the results are included in the first part of this chapter, 'The organization's viewpoint'. This is followed by the results on my probing in respect of the corporate understanding of career. These two aspects complement each other as concerns intra-organizational career opportunities for managers.

The second part of this chapter, 'The organization's career paths', looks more closely at corporate career management profile, at tools and policy in corporate career management, and at corporate provision for technical and professional careers. The contributions received help to elucidate a picture of the career planning systems in the study-case organizations as to the extent and way in which they are used and as to the purposes they may serve. During my field work, I came across evidence that there is a push for change in the pattern of career movement, which promotes a lateral orientation, away from the traditional upward orientation. This is partially an organization-driven movement, but is far from corresponding to a unidirectional evolution. A table of key findings can be seen in the final section of this chapter.

I - THE ORGANIZATION'S VIEWPOINT

This section examines the corporate understanding of *manager* and the corporate understanding of *career*, as perceived by members of the firm at various levels of the managerial band, including individuals who hold a top position. The evidence reported below comes from both questionnaire and interview responses across the different case-study organizations.

1 - Corporate understanding of *manager*

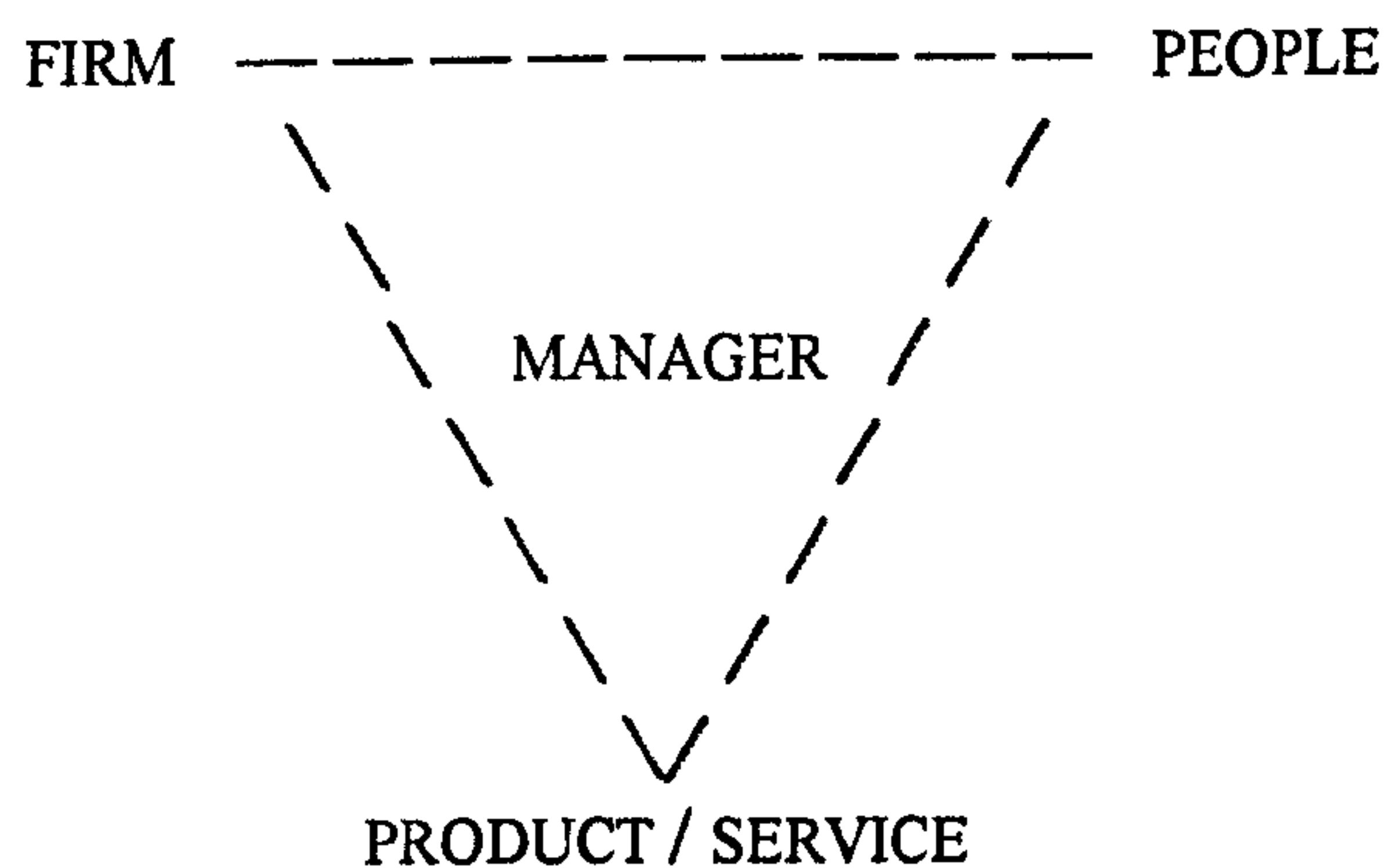


Figure 5.1 - The cornerstones of the **manager's** post

The sample managers were invited to indicate what a managerial position entails. This was asked as a questionnaire item and sometimes developed on during the interview. A succinct reply was sought in the hope that the main perceived aspects would be condensed in the manager's statement. In fact, with a remarkable consistency, three key points occurred throughout the different responses across the different firms, as shown in Figure

5.1. The picture obtained can be diagrammatically represented as a triangle with the manager in the centre and the following angles: the FIRM as a commercial enterprise; the PEOPLE as the members of the firm; the PRODUCT or SERVICE as the capital generating outcome of the firm's objectives and the people's efforts.

Explicitly or implicitly, the three angles are present in the respondents' outlining of a manager's post, as illustrated by the following examples:

- * 'Responsibility for management of people and / or resources to achieve the stated aims of the business'[RG:S]
- * 'Developing your department and company along corporate lines, developing and coaching your immediate employees, achieving targets and goals'[LV:S]
- * 'Responsibility for achievement of company and departmental objectives; to control, train and develop direct reports; to improve operation of department and company'[GK:M]
- * 'Management of human and material resources to achieve agreed strategic goals'[VL:J]

On the FIRM angle, commitment to the organization's well-being is systematically considered – aims, targets, objectives, (strategic) goals, improvement of operations. Some managers see themselves as making their mark, perhaps by steering the firm or bringing in innovative change. This tends to be the case with individuals on higher grades. A respondent from Rover, in a senior post, sees his position as entailing the following: 'Ownership and accountability for a distinct portion of the business and its personnel; making decisions on the business behalf'[RG:S]. Also in a senior post, a LucasVarity respondent presents the following list: 'Empowerment, responsibility, authority, problem solving, innovation, business process redesign, change management'[LV:S]. Though

without expecting to exert a top executive influence, managers on lower grades equally see themselves with some measure of empowerment. A Valeo manager in a middle position says the following: 'Responsibility and authority to create the correct environment to achieve the objectives, these objectives being jointly agreed to meet company needs; actual plans monitored by manager'[VL:M]. A GKN respondent in a more junior management position sees his responsibilities as follows: 'Development and implementation of strategies for the development of policy and business requirements identified by senior managers and directors'[GK:J].

PEOPLE in the last example above means, in particular, superiors. For other managers it will mean subordinates, and for many it will mean both superiors and subordinates. It can mean personal issues too: 'Managing one self and others to meet key objectives for the benefit of the company'[GK:S]. Managers have a double responsibility in relation to their subordinates, that is, to manage them and to look after them, as in the words of the LucasVarity respondent who says the following: 'A position which requires managing others in terms of their technical output, task setting to achieve company targets, and career development'[LV:M]. These aspects are also present in the statement by the respondent from Rover who sees his responsibilities as follows: 'To meet company targets; develop the organization; develop people (motivate, empower, train, etc.); exceed customer expectations'[RG:M]. In this last example, success in delivering the PRODUCT or SERVICE is measured by customer feedback. However, this angle of the triangle often appears implicitly contained in the reference to business goals, targets or objectives.

The managers' statements being considered describe how they perceive corporate expectations of their managerial role. I feel that the three identified key points capture the frame of meaning within which the subjects in my research operate. These cover the whole

of the managerial band which includes individuals at the top who project the corporate view of manager even if never verbally defined. Managers can give their contribution to the FIRM's policy making. They organize and motivate the labour that will deliver the PRODUCT or SERVICE. They handle, and most are also handled by, PEOPLE.

The above corporate picture of the **manager** may confirm Dopson and Stewart's (1990) suggestion that a slimmer middle management in time of rapid change has a more important role to play than before. Indeed, the idea of empowerment appears to be central. To some extent, there is a parallel with Watson's (1994) findings that there is a perceived need for control over circumstances which will enable managers to play their role(s) in a manner which will contribute effectively to the organization's business and to the individual's self-satisfaction. It is also interesting that from senior voices come statements such as 'managing oneself' as a means of benefiting the firm. This supports the need to move away from the traditional identification of management with employer and take an industrial relations approach to managerial work (Edwards, 1995).

2 - Understandings of the firm's *career* model

Case-study organization	Rover	LucasVarity	G.K.N.	Valeo	Total
UPWARD VERTICAL	17%	15%	0%	0%	8%
RISING SPIRAL	0%	2%	14%	12%	7%
FLAT SPIRAL	8%	17%	19%	0%	11%
UNKNOWN	21%	7%	10%	22%	15%
UNABLE TO ANSWER	54%	59%	57%	66%	59%

Table 5.1 - Corporate career model

In contrast with a clear image of 'managing', respondents were very uncertain about the meaning of 'career' as seen by their firm. At the interview, respondents were asked to give their view of what their company understands by career. The response obtained shows that fifteen percent see their company's understanding of career as involving some form of movement upwards. This can be vertical or as a rising spiral curve. Upward movement appears to be absent from the corporate concept of career as viewed by other respondents. For eleven per cent there is movement but this is lateral and circular, in other words, a spiral that will not rise. Fifteen per cent declared that their company's concept of career is unknown, at least to them. A remarkable fifty nine percent, for one reason or another, were unable to provide a conclusive answer. This means that considerably more than half the respondents cannot describe their firm's view of career.

Rover, with seventeen percent, and LucasVarity, with fifteen percent, are companies seen by some members of their own management as having an upward vertical notion of career, as can be illustrated with some respondents' own words. Of Rover, it was said that 'career is progression up the management ladder, a position on a structure that dictates salaries and benefits'[RG:S]. For LucasVarity the following view was given: 'As starting at the bottom and having a path, a clear idea of a vision as to where the individual was going to end up, and it could be as a managing director'[LV:S].

In the opinion of other LucasVarity managers, this company has a corporate understanding of career as a rising spiral curve, although this interpretation is shared only by two percent of their respondents. This format was equally identified in GKN and Valeo, by, respectively, fourteen and twelve percent of their respondents. 'Breadth of experience, rather than just movement within a single channel is encouraged'[LV:M], points out a LucasVarity respondent. Talking from his own experience of job moves

within the company, a GKN respondent explained that 'it has not always been an upward one but it has always been a career development and at times a few steps as well'[GK:S]. A Valeo respondent gave a full definition of his company's notion of career, as it is apparent to him: 'People not progressing through one direct chain, giving them (people) a full round of appreciation of the total business. I think that they (the company) understand that a career is a progression of a person through gaining knowledge in the different spheres and preparing you for the next jump'[LV:S].

Rover, with eight percent of their responses, GKN, with seventeen percent, and LucasVarity, with nineteen percent, are also seen by other managers as having a circular concept of career movement where an upward direction does not appear to be under consideration. A LucasVarity respondent explains that it is 'a series of jobs, either planned or unplanned, possibly with a goal'[LV:M]. A similar definition came from a GKN respondent - 'a series of activities or experiences, hopefully with an overall objective in mind'[GK:M]. A Rover respondent gave a more thorough explanation:

'You change to enjoy different areas of the business, you are encouraged to do so'. He went on to explain that 'within Engineering' you could become a 'rounded engineer', with 'engineers getting as much experience around the patch as possible'. This is seen positively as 'you could have one or two careers, if you know what I mean, within the context of one career you could have two or three opportunities to develop yourself and make you a more rounded person'[RG:M].

A relatively low figure of twenty one percent of the respondents from Rover, seven percent from LucasVarity, ten percent from GKN, and twenty two percent from Valeo

classed as unknown the corporate understanding of career in their company. However, an answer for the question on corporate understanding of career could not be found by a large number of managerial employees in the four companies studied – Rover, LucasVarity, GKN and Valeo. Addressing the cause of their problem in identifying their company's concept of career, some respondents made additional comments. From LucasVarity came the following explanation: 'I have never seen a written definition of it'[LV:M]. From Rover we have the following comment: 'I think that the company view of what a career is is very difficult to understand', the reason being that 'the term *career* is not used in the company'[RG:M]. These remarks may give clues as to why some people could not find an answer at all. The term may not circulate much.

These findings have been analysed for a possible correlation with the respondents' socio-educational background, particular managerial role and position in the grading structure. In general there were no significant differences in the respondents. The only significant aspect is that the RISING SPIRAL was preferred by directors and other top management individuals, who also contributed the UPWARD VERTICAL notion (the distinction being mostly implicit rather than explicit).

Numerical data were also called upon, namely the respondents' age-bracket and how long they had been with the company. UPWARD VERTICAL replies came from individuals of twenty five to forty four years of age. The date they joined the company ranged from 1979 to 1996. RISING SPIRAL replies were received from individuals of twenty five to fifty four years of age. The date they joined the company ranged from 1970 to 1992. Both FLAT SPIRAL and UNKNOWN replies came from the twenty five to fifty four year age range. The dates of entry to the company were, for the former, between 1964-1993 and, for the latter, 1970-1991. Finally, the UNABLE TO ANSWER group comprised individuals between

twenty five and sixty years of age with dates of entry to the company between 1965 and 1997.

This exercise has, therefore, yielded a complex cluster of data. In the wide spectrum of current age and date of entry, there may be the suggestion that some older managers may have plateaued. More significant, though, is the fact that, regardless of how old the respondent is, there is a strong correlation between seniority and the RISING SPIRAL concept. On the other hand, a critical finding is that nearly three quarters of the respondents either stated that their company's concept of career is unknown or were unable to provide an answer. This stands in contrast with the fact that respondents did not experience any difficulty in pointing out what their managerial position entails.

The lack of a well-defined corporate understanding of career may reflect a situation not too dissimilar from that encountered by Watson (1994) in which 'two scripts' were being played out on the managerial stage. In the firms I have researched, one of the scripts corresponds to the traditional career upward expectations. In a time of severed ranks in the hierarchy, 'spiralling' through different business activities would be a means of working one's way up, a process long ago identified by a different author, W. Watson (1964). The other script may correspond to a 'strong' corporate culture of the kind recommended by Peters and Waterman (1982) which is being disseminated by 'transformational leaders'. This script promotes a lateral circular movement, possibly with no rising expectations. However, as Schein (1984) points out, there is more than one level of organizational culture. There is a surface level one, consisting of visible artefacts such as office layout, dress code or public documents. Level two is deeper and consists of values that govern behaviour; and the even deeper level three leads to adaptive behaviour. The transformational culture in the firms I have investigated may have reached level two,

or perhaps three, amongst some group members, who may for example adhere to the idea of the 'rounded engineer'. However, in some cases, fertile ground may not be found for the idea of a lateral alternative to the conventional upward career, bearing in mind that nearly three quarters of the respondents experienced difficulty in giving their firm's understanding of career.

II - THE ORGANIZATION'S CAREER PATHS

This section contains value judgements on corporate planning systems. It includes opinions on how high a profile these systems have in the firm, how efficiently they operate, and what approach is being taken in relation to technical and professional careers. Finally, an overview is given of changing corporate features with a relevance to career path provision. The evidence reported below comes from both questionnaire and interview responses across the managerial band in the different case-study organizations.

1 - Career planning systems

1.1. Corporate career management profile

Respondents were invited to express their opinion on the profile of career management in their own company. They were asked whether they 'strongly agreed', 'agreed', were 'uncertain', 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement that career management

has a high profile in their company. There was an initial difficulty with the terminology used, as the expression 'career management' did not appear to be universal common currency amongst the participants.

Case-study organization	Rover	LucasVarity	G.K.N.	Valeo	Total
AGREES, STRONGLY	0 %	0 %	9 %	27 %	9%
AGREES, NOT STRONGLY	34 %	30 %	35 %	73 %	43%
UNCERTAIN	0 %	28 %	56 %	0 %	21%
DISAGREES, NOT STRONGLY	48 %	24 %	0 %	0 %	18%
DISAGREES, STRONGLY	18 %	18 %	0 %	0 %	9%

Table 5.2 - Whether career management has a high profile (1)

The need to overcome this slight communication barrier can be documented by the words of a Rover interviewee: 'I have a problem with the question because of the term *career*, but if I can call it people management and development, I would agree. The only reason why I agree rather than strongly agree is the effectiveness with which the development processes work sometimes'[RG:S]. As a result of the problem caused by the term *career*, the question was reformulated so as to guarantee a better general understanding of what was being requested. 'Career management', 'personal development' and 'people management and development' were expressions used with all the interviewees. Table 5.2 summarizes the responses obtained.

Only two out of the four companies received any STRONGLY AGREE responses on that they offer high profile career management - GKN and Valeo with, respectively, nine and twenty seven percent. A GKN interviewee explained that the company 'spend an awful lot of money and put a fair amount of resource into management development; they have the

graduate development scheme, a succession planning, and a very active mentoring scheme'[GK:S]. A Valeo respondent says of his company that he 'had never seen so much support and advertising to seek new people internally to put them in a new place so that the employee can develop in a different way to master the whole business in this organization'[VL:M].

The AGREE reply option was granted to each of the four companies, with relatively similar scores of around thirty percent from Rover, LucasVarity and GKN, but seventy three from Valeo. A Rover interviewee explains: 'We have an ADRP (Associates Development Review Process) which is sitting down on a regular basis and saying "right, where are you in your development, your own personal development plan" which is the same really as career; and, therefore, it is really a company policy'[RG:S]. A GKN interviewee confirmed that the company 'are looking at career development and there are certain areas that look quite clearly at it'[GK:S], whilst another states that he has 'seen evidence of people whose career has progressed'[GK:M]. A Valeo interviewee confirms that 'career management is important to them (the company)' [VL:S], whilst another explains that 'the focus is very much on the people that we have internally and we very much want to see them progress'[VL:S]. Finally, a LucasVarity interviewee pointed out that there are different situations to be taken into account when looking at the issue of career management. 'The whole thing has to be put into context. Thinking about the senior population and in hierarchic terms, the further up you go the more aggressive it is going. But throughout the organization, which is reasonably delayed, there is a terrific emphasis on personal development and career development even on the shop-floor'[LV:S].

Some LucasVarity and GKN respondents gave the UNCERTAIN reply option with, respectively, twenty eight and fifty six percent. A GKN interviewee commented that 'it depends on exposure'[GK:M], and another justified his hesitation on different grounds: 'Well, it becomes important when we start losing people, but when things are going smoothly and you are busy and your order books are full and people are staying, then it becomes very unimportant; so it is very much reactive rather than proactive'[GK:M]. Justifying his reply, a LucasVarity interviewee explains that 'there doesn't appear to be a group or a person who is recognized as developing the careers of managers'[LV:M]. Another LucasVarity interviewee seems to have related concerns: 'If you have a good manager, then you have got a career progression that will go forward; otherwise, I don't think it is particularly strong'[LV:M].

There were some DISAGREE replies on Rover and LucasVarity with forty eight and twenty four percent, respectively. 'I don't think that we have a strong policy, it is more about personal contacts'[RG:M], comments a Rover interviewee. Another Rover interviewee justifies his disagreement with the following: 'I don't think that there is a company process in place that guarantees it will happen, although I think that it would be fair to say that there is nothing that stops people who have the desire to achieve' through 'largely individual strong motivation to push'[RG:S]. A LucasVarity interviewee tries to find an explanation for the problem as he sees it: 'I don't think that there is enough feedback within the system to actually identify at certain levels people for certain positions'[LV:M]. Another LucasVarity interviewee bases his disagreement on his own personal experience: 'I have never seen any evidence of any career development plans other than what I have got on and done myself'[LV:M].

STRONGLY DISAGREE replies have come from Rover and LucasVarity, each one with eighteen percent. A Rover interviewee wishes to draw a distinction. He will strongly disagree that career management has a high profile, but 'personal development, which leads to enhanced roles, will probably support an individual's career - I think this has a strong profile'[RG:S]. For another interviewee the reason for strong disagreement lies in the impression that there isn't a proactive policy: 'The company has responded to certain individuals taking action themselves, in terms of either leaving the company or wanting to move inside the company, then Rover management has taken some reactionary type of action, trying to prevent this'[RG:S]. Lack of evidence of a proactive approach may also have disappointed a LucasVarity interviewee: 'I don't believe that there is a career development strategy for individuals, either management or other'[LV:S].

In total figures, fifty two percent of the respondents agree, strongly or not, with the statement that career management (or personal development) has a high profile in their company whilst forty eight percent do not think that career management is given a high profile. I have checked whether the obtained results differ by grade, age or some other feature. They do, the main influential variables being grade and age.

Some individuals in top posts and other senior positions may feel under the obligation of projecting the official corporate image. Some of their responses can be found both in the STRONGLY AGREE and the AGREE categories. Interestingly, the concept of development as compared with that of career occurs in some of their replies. Examples from the quotations above are, from Rover, the view that personal development equals career, and, from LucasVarity, the distinction that in hierarchical terms it is quite aggressive at the top but throughout the delayed organization there is great emphasis on personal development and career development down to the shop-floor.

However, throughout the organization, there are different kinds of response. These seem to be related to age rather than any other feature. Starting with the critics, some express their judgement openly, such as, in the STRONGLY DISAGREE category, the respondent from Rover who sees employees' threats as the means to motivate the firm to offer a good post. This type of stance comes from individuals in the forty-fifty year range. In the DISAGREE category, individuals between their twenties and forties take a more cautious though sceptical view, as the LucasVarity respondent who has had to rely on himself alone as to career development. The UNCERTAIN category houses the doubters, mainly in their thirties and forties. In the AGREE and STRONGLY AGREE categories we also find some individuals in their thirties and forties who, regardless of the post they occupy, appear to hold an optimistic outlook on their company's career management profile, as is the case with the Valeo respondent who is impressed with the firm's internal labour market.

Finally, there are those critics who may put on a happy front and are willing to go along with the system. It is an ambiguity that tends to occur in individuals in their forties and older. This is the case of the respondent from Rover in the STRONGLY DISAGREE category who, as an addition, speaks positively of personal development as a corporate career policy. The same phenomenon may occur in reverse. Some apparently satisfied respondents may be allowing their true opinion to be overrun by their perceived need to conform to the *status quo*. If it is so, a much deeper truth has been disclosed by this exercise.

In addition to the findings reported above, further insight can be obtained when grouping deviations of degree in different categories, as shown in Table 5.3 for the same results.

Unlike the results in Table 5.1, in respect of corporate understanding of career, in Table 5.3 there is an evident strong company difference in respect of whether career management has a high profile in the respondent's firm. We have a striking one hundred percent agreement from Valeo. At Rover, no one seems to be uncertain, and results polarize at sixty six percent disagreement and thirty four percent agreement. At GKN, there is no open disagreement, and the scales tip towards uncertainty, with fifty six percent, whilst there is a forty four percent agreement. LucasVarity displays the most even distribution of results, with the highest forty two percent of disagreement, the lowest twenty eight percent uncertainty and, closely above, thirty percent agreement.

Case-study organization	Rover	LucasVarity	G.K.N.	Valeo	Total
AGREES	34 %	30 %	44 %	100 %	52%
UNCERTAIN	0 %	28 %	56 %	0 %	21%
DISAGREES	66 %	42 %	0 %	0 %	27%

Table 5.3 - Whether career management has a high profile (2)

These results may have been influenced by a number of factors. First, as shown in the previous chapter, Valeo enjoyed a relatively stable situation while in the other firms circumstances might have been more conducive to uncertainty about careers. Rover had experienced a major change in ownership, LucasVarity was adjusting to a recent merger – for this company, Storey *et al.* (1997) describe a very bumpy history of management development initiatives – and GKN ADD was undergoing deep restructuring.

Second, there may be an element of corporate discourse and culture. Some senior voices may have given the official view of their firm's career management, i.e., that it has a high

or fairly high profile and internal promotion concerns. Also, a strong culture (Peters and Waterman, 1982) may have been at work in cases such as the problem with the term 'career' and a preference for 'people management and development' instead. The preferred terminology is more in keeping with Peters and Waterman's 'excellent' firms and their 'organic' orientation. The latter is associated with the 'integrative' approach defended by Kanter (1983), one of the ideas embraced by HRM. Notably, Kessler and Purcell (1995) comment that the integrative approach fosters an individualism which can be closely associated with personnel techniques involving performance rewards. This may result in an ambivalent situation. On the one hand, it can promote individually tailored career planning. On the other, it can encourage favouritism. Furthermore, it can perhaps be seen as potentially reinforcing the traditional way in which managers are 'made' (Storey, 1994), i.e., based on a deep-seated preconception that people either 'have what it takes' or they do not, and as a result a sink-or-swim philosophy tends to prevail. Lastly, a high profile does not necessarily mean efficient results, as seen in the next sub-section.

1.2. Tools and policy in corporate career management

The previous section has clearly shown differences between companies as to whether career management has a high profile. In contrast, this section reports on similarity across the companies as to the effectiveness of career tools. Different companies have different situations and different degrees of clarity of career management, but when it comes to the implementation of career tools no sharp differences were evident as shown below.

Both in the questionnaire and the interview, participants were given the opportunity of indicating what career tools are available in their company and of commenting on their effectiveness. In the previous chapter we saw what systems appear to be at the forefront

of career management provision in the different case-study organizations. Further evidence on career systems and policy can be found in the following paragraphs, with a particular emphasis on the respondents' opinion on how career tools are used in their company.

As testified by its own managers, Rover has been maintaining an extensive list of career management techniques for over a decade, that is, over an eventful time of its history with the following main landmarks: when British Aerospace became the parent company (1988), when Product Supply was set up (1991), when the 'Rover Tomorrow' New Deal was introduced (1992) and after BMW AG's major reorganization of Rover in 1996. Applicable to all the different phases over this period, the following career management tools have been reported by the respondents: career counselling by supervisor; career counselling by Personnel; mentoring, formal and informal; assessment centre; development centre; postings of internal job openings; formal education / training as part of career development; tuition refunds; career breaks; retirement preparation programme; secondments.

When asked how well their company's career management / development tools work, Rover respondents gave replies which range from 'don't work' to 'work very well'. The points of view that resulted in a wide variety of replies can be seen in a few examples of the explanation given by different respondents, as follows:

- * The theory is great, it is all down on how well it is accepted, but in reality we don't do it at all'[RG:S].
- * Sometimes the tools can hinder as well as help. Bureaucracy and analysis promotes paralysis. You need to get a delicate balance between the two'[RG:M].
- * I think that they work well providing that the individual is aware of the opportunities and is willing to be proactive'[RG:M].

- * Work poorly, but if a person is determined, he can generally achieve quite a lot'[RG:S].

LucasVarity respondents were asked to provide information on their company's career management techniques before and after the Lucas and Varity merger in 1996. The subsequent reorganization of LucasVarity Aerospace was taken as a possible historic dividing line. The same career management tools were reported for both periods, namely the following: career counselling by supervisor; career counselling by Personnel; formal mentoring; informal mentoring; assessment centre; postings of internal job openings; formal education / training as part of career development; tuition refund; career breaks; secondments.

They were asked how well their company's career management / development tools work. As in the previous case, their replies ranged from 'don't work' to 'work very well'. The following are further comments provided by three different respondents:

- * I think it varies from division to division. Within Aerospace, two or three levels of supervision, then it doesn't work quite so well down the organization'[LV:S].
- * The tools are there, but it is up to the individual or the individual's manager to use them'[LV:M].
- * 'I have to say "work well" from my point of view. [...]. I think it really does depend on the people involved, the person driving the career and their manager. If you have a mismatch with either the person not driving it or the manager not willing, then it won't work well at all'[LV:M].

For GKN, respondents provided information on their company's career management techniques before the organization of GKN into UK Operations in 1998 and any identifiable changes since the onset of UK Operations which occurred after this research study was initiated. The following career management tools were reported: career counselling by supervisor; career counselling by Personnel; formal mentoring; informal mentoring; assessment centre; postings of internal job openings; formal education / training as part of career development; tuition refunds; secondments. A development centre appears to be a post-onset of UK Operations addition to the list.

'Poorly' and 'very well' were at the extreme ends of the range of replies to the question on how well their company's career management / development tools work. The following are some explanations given by different individuals:

- * Tools good, the problem is within their implementation, only go half way'[GK:S].
- * 'Work poorly' in general but 'work well' for those of higher levels[GK:M].
- * 'Work poorly' but for 'fast track' people 'it works very effectively'[GK:S].
- * 'I think that they work well in most cases, but it is about allocating resources against costs. You need to cherry pick, you pick one of the high flyers and you focus on their career development because they are the ones that you need to retain and the ones who are, if you like, the wallpaper tend to get ignored'[GK:M].

Valeo UK respondents reported on their company's career management techniques before the reorganization of the Group in 1996 and since that event. Common to both, the following career management tools were mentioned: career counselling by supervisor; informal mentoring; postings of internal job openings; formal education / training as part

of career development, mainly in-house courses provided. Career counselling by Personnel is an addition mentioned for the current organization.

Respondents' answers ranged between 'poorly' and 'well' when asked how well their company's career management / development tools work. The explanations given were quite similar to some from the above cases, but there was also reference to the intensity of training courses. The following are two typical examples:

* 'I think more towards well than poorly, but certainly not very well. The tools are strong, it's just how well people are trained in using them'[VL:S].

* 'In-between work well and work poorly, because training is very condensed'[VL:M].

Across the case-study organizations, another issue was evident in connection with the use given to the existing career management tools. Concern was expressed by the interviewees that adequate career opportunities may not be available equitably. A high profile career management may be only for a few. It may be that some individuals are arbitrarily selected and favoured to the detriment of the majority, the latter being deprived of information that would make it possible for them to justly profit from the existing career management systems.

A GKN interviewee comments: 'It is fairly noticeable that some people get picked out and you can look at them and you can say "he is going all the way", and then there are people who are probably good that we don't focus on and develop'[GK:S]. Secrecy may be suspected by a LucasVarity interviewee who wonders whether information that can lead to new career chances isn't 'being played close to the chest, because it isn't visible and so aren't the people that might be the recipients of that activity'[LV:S]. Senior management may be suspected of taking advantage of their privileged position. A GKN

interviewee made the following remark: 'You see, it seems more that the higher you get up the tree obviously you have got more, at the lower levels you don't know what is available'[GK:M].

A LucasVarity interviewee explains: 'There are a few people, key people who they (senior and top management) think are going to be the general managers of the future. So I think that they spend time developing those'[LV:M]. A GKN interviewee expresses his opinion that attention 'is very focused on the development of people for senior management positions'[GK:S]. From a Rover interviewee comes a convergent opinion: 'I agree that for the younger graduate people coming in it has quite a high profile. Everyone seems to come here knowing what they are going to do and where they are going to go to, what they need to do to get to the next jump'[RG:M].

A contrast between favoured and disfavoured individuals is drawn by a GKN interviewee: 'I think that for certain groups of people it probably has a high profile almost to the annihilation of other groups. There is a lot of concentration on the personal development of graduates almost to the exclusion of developing other categories, which I think we need to get a better balance'[GK:M]. A similar view is expressed by a company colleague who defines the excluded people: 'It tends to be very much a high profile thing for the graduates and the graduate development programme but it does not extend very well to the people who are basically, shall we say, shop-floor engineers, apprentice trained people'[GK:M]. Another GKN interviewee appears to share this opinion when he says the following: 'I think it isn't done very well at the lower levels, I am not aware that they are saying "well, we have a graduate apprentice here" or that there is an engineer that has abilities that could potentially be developed'[GK:S].

How well career management, or development, tools work in their company was clearly a topic that had been discussed amongst the managers interviewed. The replies given seemed to reflect group consensus and affiliation to shared views rather than being an individually generated response. Perhaps for that reason, the respondents' grade or age did not add any further evidence, though, curiously enough, some of the critics occupy high positions. The overall message supports previous view, such as that corporate provision for the management career may tend to be largely 'accidental' (Ascher, 1983) and that there is a general scenario of haphazard career planning arrangements (Storey *et al.*, 1997). Another issue that came up – particularly in GKN and Rover – is the growing need, now a general prerequisite, for academic qualifications, or, in other words, the 'graduate barrier' in Roberts *et al.*'s (1972) earlier study.

1.3. Corporate provision for technical and professional careers

The fact that all the case-study organizations have put into place a 'dual ladder' system shows, firstly, that there is a general awareness amongst them that a problem exists which needs addressing and, secondly, that some action is being taken in connection with that problem. However, there may be doubts as to how effective this action is proving to be. Indeed, respondents often discussed the situation of technical and professional careers.

Despite Rover's Hierarchy and Professional Staff 'dual ladder', difficulties are still being reported. A respondent from this company explains as follows: 'The higher up you get I think the more flexible you are expected to be, less of a specialist and more of a general manager, which is obviously what is required, but if you are a specialist it becomes very difficult to improve your grades'[RG:J]. That this practice puts specialists in a position of disadvantage is equally the opinion of the colleague who makes the following

comment: 'I think that in the modern career development there is a great deal of pushing people into management roles as the way forward' and this 'may be counterproductive to the specialist'[RG:M]. Another colleague points out that there are disadvantages for the firm too:

'Progression up the management ladder' is 'how people (specialists) are rewarded', and 'I think that that is one of the mistakes that Rover makes. Some people have got some skills and attributes that can be deployed outside of their (the company's) management positions and therefore make a major contribution to the company but don't necessarily get rewarded for it'[RG:S].

At GKN, with its People Management and Technical Expertise 'dual ladder', the same issue is under discussion. With a certain degree of optimism, a respondent from this company says the following: 'There is more focus now on identifying what people are good at rather than saying "well, he is a good engineer, we could make a good manager out of him"; because in some circumstances it doesn't happen and this change has been taking place gradually over the last five to ten years'[GK:S]. At LucasVarity, with its Management and Professional 'dual ladder', a respondent remarks that career prospects have 'changed inasmuch as there is a lot more training available; we can develop people into more specific roles, and people are training to become more specialists than generalists'[LV:S]. This change comes together with another one, that of facilitated cross-moves within the organization. On its face value, this is an advantage. However, it may result in a problem wherever the pre-conception exists that a specialist belongs in the

lower levels of the organization, as shown in the following statement from another LucasVarity respondent:

I think that there has always been a desire in the organization to encourage people to move away to different divisions but only more recently this is being achieved more in practice. Previously, the divisions were quite insular, people were very rarely moved until they became a fairly senior manager, or director of that particular division, and then you might move across to another division in a similar role. But, now, you have people at much lower levels in the organization, such as engineers and so on, who move between different divisions, there is much more opportunity to do that. This change has evolved over time but there was a big step change when Varity took over'[LV:M].

A respondent from Rover equally views the situation of technical specialists within the wider context of career paths company-wide, as he sees it. He distinguishes between 'development', for people throughout the company, and 'core management', as follows:

Considering the former, 'we now look at developing people laterally in terms of expanding their knowledge within a particular role. So, people can actually develop within their own role and be recognized as experts and be rewarded for that and also in terms of their training'. He gives examples in Engineering. Then he adds: 'Now that could be argued that the salary structures that we have need to be revised to accommodate that instead of having to put people through grades to give them the rewards that they expect' and explains that 'within the salary structures you would have to go into a management position to get a management grade'. In respect of 'core management', he expresses the opinion that this 'is still not

as well managed as it could be, there is still a lot of ad hoc decisions made there, a lot of personalities involved in terms of career management'[RG:M].

Looking at the quotes above, a scenario can be seen in which engineers and other specialists may end up 'developing' laterally instead of going up the ladder. The following respondent from Rover appears to see benefits in the 'rounded' approach to engineers but, at the same time, looks elsewhere for a way out:

'People used to be hooked into a stable regime, so if you were trained to be a tool maker that is pretty much what you would do until you retired or decided to leave. Whereas I think that over the last ten years the business has got much more focused into what I believe a career ought to be, you can change to experience different areas of the business, you are encouraged to do so, I feel. It is nice to have a rounded opinion of what goes on. Having said that, I think that we are going to see a change again in the BMW phase, their strategy I guess has been to develop experts, particularly within Engineering, where there are experts in things down to gasket design and they have some of the world's leading experts whereas we here have concentrated more on rounding people over the last ten years'[RG:M].

Academic qualifications may be a decisive factor in upward rather than lateral movement for specialists across the case-study organizations. A degree appears to be a prerequisite for those who wish to climb the technical side of Valeo's Hierarchy and Expert System 'dual ladder', as presented by a respondent from this company: 'For people who are of a graduate level, the ability to progress in two areas, one through the "hierarchy", and the second one through what we call the "expert system" which is a

three-tier system, so you can have an “expert”, a “senior expert” and a “master expert”. So somebody who is at my level of the organization who isn’t a manager would get my sort of pay’[VL:S].

However, the ‘dual ladder’ may not be the only, or the best, route to find a solution. In fact, the whole issue appears to have got trapped in a dichotomy between specialists and generalists. This presupposes a duality based on the notion of the line of command as the prime model to follow. It could be, though, that the archetype used is also being superseded. This is a possibility suggested by the following contribution from a GKN respondent: ‘It depends on whether you are looking at a managerial position as being a manager who has specialist responsibility or if you are looking at somebody who is in a purely management role, and I don’t think that there are many of those left. [...]. Now the balance (between the two) varies with every management job; mine is probably about fifty-fifty, I would think’[GK:M].

The matter appears to be receiving considerable attention from people on different grades. The vivid contributions recorded above come from individuals whose age ranges between twenty five and fifty four years. There appears to be an evolution in progress, but it is not unidirectional. First, the official corporate handling of technical and professional careers is based on the ‘dual ladder’, a system since long regarded as not being very convincing (Gunz, 1980). Some respondents also refer to the previous system on which the dual ladder purported to improve, i.e., the rewarding of specialist expertise with a managerial post. This has also since long been regarded as inadequate, for it will probably result in losing a good scientist (Shepard, 1958) and gaining a manager who is not particularly good or interested (Rosen *et al.*, 1976).

In some of the respondents' contributions a more modern 'solution' is also, explicitly or implicitly, suggested for technical, and professional, careers which is associated with the 'core-periphery' (Atkinson, 1984) notion adopted by HRM: lateral moves would be a good way of 'rounding' people, notably engineers, who would occupy a secondary labour market in the organization. This approach would confirm what for example Lee and Smith (1992) found in an earlier study, i.e., that, in Britain, specialists such engineers are felt to belong in the lower strata of the organization. There is an ill-defined boundary between white-collar and blue-collar roles, where engineers are viewed as providers of specialist support for line functions but unsuitable for managerial decision-making. However, there may be a new vector of change which was not detected by these authors. It is expressed for example in the attempt to balance specialist and management responsibilities in one same post, as explained by a GKN respondent above. This may point to a development in which the specialist-generalist divide becomes diluted.

2 - Changes in corporate career pattern

TODAY'S CORPORATE CAREER PATHS	Rover	Lucas Varity	GKN	Valeo
FEWER RANKS TO CLIMB AND A BROADER BASE TO COVER	√	√	√	√
MORE EMPHASIS ON QUALIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	√	√	√	√
INCREASED MOBILITY BETWEEN ROLES AND GEOGRAPHICALLY	√	√	√	√
MORE FOCUS ON TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE ON A PAR WITH THE LINE OF COMMAND	√	√	√	√

Table 5.4 - Today's changing corporate career features

Respondents were encouraged to look at their company from the point of view of corporate changes that might have influenced career paths since they first joined the company. This probing was meant to help detect any company specific evolution as well as general trends. The results are shown in Table 5.4 and explained in further detail in the following paragraphs, in which the specificities of the different companies are taken into account.

In Valeo, respondents were relatively new to the company; the manager who had been there the longest having joined the Group in 1992. Valeo's career infrastructure was felt to have remained constant throughout the nineties. Also, this company presents today the same corporate career features that were identified in the other companies as the current stage to which they have evolved.

On the other hand, the sample population in my research of Rover, LucasVarity and GKN included recruits throughout the past four decades. Some had witnessed considerable changes in the history of their company. The major evolution they reported was the move away from a highly hierarchical format. A LucasVarity respondent who joined Lucas in the late 1960s describes what it used to be like: 'We had very hierarchical structures, as you do in the army where you have loads of ranks, where there were loads of positions to climb to'[LV:S]. A Rover respondent explains: 'When I first joined the company (in 1967), it was really dead man's shoes, you know, almost civil service; unless you had been here thirty years and worked your way up you weren't worthy of a position'[RG:M]. A GKN respondent recollects the situation in the mid-eighties: 'In one's "career progression" - I think that was the term they used - as long as you were the

director's cat you were okay and you would progress, it didn't matter about your ability or not, but that has very much changed'[GK:M].

The changes are deemed to have occurred over the 1980s and throughout the 1990s for the three companies, though for Lucas a few years later than for GKN and Rover. It was mainly a gradual process, but, in two cases, there were dramatic turning points. The 'Rover Tomorrow' New Deal, in 1992, and the LucasVarity merger, in 1996, brought a cultural revolution in corporate design in these two companies. A LucasVarity respondent describes the merger as 'a big step change'[LV:M]. Another explains: 'Oh, yes, I think that. It certainly has (changed) since LucasVarity was formed. It has changed considerably from what it was, I think fairly hierarchical before'[LV:M]. Of the New Deal a Rover respondent says that 'it put career on the map for the masses of the company'[RG:M]. The BMW take-over of Rover, in 1994, is seen as having some potential impact concerning career for technical specialists, as shown earlier in this chapter.

Notwithstanding the specificity of each particular company, some current features can be identified across the four case-studies. Throughout, the shape of today's corporate career displays fewer rungs on the climbing ladder and a broader base to cover. A Rover respondent notes that 'we are expected to become a bit more flexible now, to be willing to take on things that in the past you would not have regarded as being within your particular role'[RG:M]. This may give the employer an increased responsibility. A GKN respondent comments: 'I think that, with the introduction of flatter management structures, there has been an enhanced awareness that we as a company do have an obligation to try to provide them (people with career aspirations) with pathways that not only will benefit the individual but which will also benefit the company'[GK:M]. However, tough measures are being used in the way of formal qualifications as a prerequisite,

training and performance evaluation. A LucasVarity respondent remarks that 'there is definitely a strong move towards career development in terms of analysing people's performance, what their career aspirations are and training plans for those individuals'[LV:S]. Increased mobility is required between roles as well as geographically. A LucasVarity respondent comments that people are moved around and there has been an increase in 'cross-functional exchange'[LV:M] and a colleague of his remarks as follows: 'I think that the higher that you are the more important it is that you are mobile'[LV:M]. Finally, the setting up of dual career ladders can be seen as an indicator of a trend to value, and give particular attention to, technical expertise, although there are ambiguities, as seen earlier in this chapter.

On their surface appearance, the companies in my study set the scene for Kanter's (1983, 1989) vision of the post-downsizing manager: an 'integrative' career framework, with a 'horizontal dimension' of cross-cooperation between divisions, departments and business units, where the manager will be 'hopping from job to job'. The emphasis on competence and the focus on the specialist may even suggest Heckscher's (1995) vision of an empowered manager as a 'professional' in the wider market. However, a different reality emerges when this picture is seen in conjunction with the findings reported earlier in the current chapter, as summarized in the concluding remarks below.

CONCLUSIONS

Some major issues and themes stand out in the evidence gathered in this chapter. There is some support for Dopson and Stewart's (1990) hope of empowerment for middle management in an era of downsized organizations and fewer ranks in the hierarchy. Indeed, a corporate consensus was found as to the vital role, or roles, managers across the managerial band play in the business. However, in contrast with a sharp corporate picture of what the manager must give the firm, there is a remarkably unclear picture of what career opportunities the firm has in place for the manager. The term 'career' may not be used much, or at all, and there tends to be a corporate preference for a different terminology that stresses 'development', a people-centred term (Legge, 1994) which tends to be present in HRM and TQM rhetoric. In fact, nearly three quarters of respondents could not give their firm's concept of career.

Nevertheless, once the problem over terminology had been overcome, a picture could be formed of how prominent career, or people development, measures are perceived to be. Valeo respondents seem to be unanimous in that this has a high profile in their company. The respondents from Rover have well defined views and the majority share the view that people development does not have a high profile in their company. As to a possible high profile at GKN, respondents are divided between agreeing and feeling doubtful, with the majority to be found in the latter category. When considering the same situation in their company, LucasVarity respondents display a relatively well balanced range of opinions between agreeing, doubting and disagreeing, but this last category prevails. Overall, approaching half the respondents do not think that career management / personal development / people management and development is given a high profile; and

amongst those who appear to be satisfied, some may be giving a political answer. These findings have some strong parallels with Gratton *et al.*'s (1999) recent findings in other companies, where they encountered a rhetoric of 'development' although the impact of such initiatives had not yet been felt, a situation which these authors interpret in terms of corporate short-termism.

In respect of job movement, there is evidence of two divergent orientations. One, associated with the 'development' discourse, speaks of lateral job moves and building up skills that will lead to a 'rounded' person. The other is the traditional notion of upward career progression, through a vertical or spiral route, and includes the possibility of 'jumps' to the next position. A number of incongruities can be found in these coexisting, but divergent, orientations.

In first place, intra-organizational movement and the accumulation of skills may appear to support the trend of thought that sees an 'integrative' working environment, job moves in a 'horizontal dimension', and 'employability' (Kanter, 1983, 1989; Handy, 1994; Godswen, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995). However, there is a discrepancy between this vision and the lack of a coherent corporate career planning policy. An articulated system of career management has not been found which would support a systematic widening of managers' skills and knowledge. Career management tools may be available, but they are generally regarded as being inefficiently implemented. In short, as discussed in previous literature, corporate career planning for managers tends to be largely accidental and haphazard (Ascher, 1983; Storey *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, no evidence has been found that can support the employability model. First, given weak career planning systems, firms are not in possession of effective resources that would enable them to provide the employee with a portfolio of competencies designed to be used

in the external market. Second, but perhaps foremost, firms are unlikely to have the motivation to invest in providing their employees with employability in the external market.

In second place, the notion of upward career is alive. This may be difficult to conciliate with a flattened organizational hierarchy. Furthermore, there is also the notion of career 'jumps'. But where can one jump to in a flat organization? Perhaps these are jumps across different functions or distant geographical working places in an attempt to 'spiral' (W. Watson, 1964) to a higher position. There appears thus to be a cluster of incongruities inherent not only in the horizontal but also in the vertical job movement.

In fact, a two-tiered system may be operating in relation to career management: career for a few, development for the majority. If this is the case, then the two-tiered career management system may coincide with a 'core-periphery' (Atkinson, 1984) organizational set-up in which there is a first and a second internal market: career for those in the core, development for those in the periphery. At its best, career may have plateaued for some managers who may – like those in McGovern *et al.*'s study (1998) – be faced with eroded opportunities.

Different systems may also be in operation when it comes to filling vacant posts. An emphasis on skills testing and performance analysis may suggest an efficient process of selection. However, on the one hand, emphasis on competence monitoring may mean a better appreciation for higher calibre work, but, on the other, may entail procedures that can be ambiguous. Ambiguities can also be present in the case of the individualism associated with some appraisal techniques (Kessler and Purcell, 1995). This can promote a better fit in corporate selection of individuals but it can also encourage biased decisions.

Additionally, it may reinforce the sink-or-swim philosophy that tends to prevail in the way managers are 'made' (Storey, 1994).

The focus on technical and professional careers is another important issue. The 'dual ladder' system is the official approach, although this way of handling technical and professional careers has since long been deemed to be difficult to implement and unconvincing (Gunz, 1980). Nonetheless, there appears to be hope that this system can provide parity between managerial and technical/professional careers. On the other hand, there is what may be the embryo of a substantial development in which the traditional split between managerial and technical/professional posts seems to fuse into one combined notion. However, this possible development may take more than one direction. Current evidence does not indicate clearly whether this emerging conceptualization will result in upgrading specialists or downgrading some managers, given the anachronistic tendency to see specialists such as engineers as sharing the same craft culture as manual workers (Lee and Smith, 1992) and a situation in which technologists find themselves pushed down into the mass labour force of manual workers (Roberts *et al.*, 1972). In relation to Mintzberg's (1979) model of a manufacturing firm, the 'technostructure' may, or may not, have moved from its peripheral location to the core structure of the organization. However, once there, where will it belong? Will it be pushed down to the large, flat 'operating core'?

In conclusion, in the firms I have investigated corporate provision for management careers is being shaped by a combination of factors which include the following: fewer ranks in the hierarchy; intra-organizational alternatives in a divisionalized context; and different conceptualizations of job movement. There may be a 'strong' culture (Peters and Waterman, 1982) promoting the idea of lateral job moves but this may have reached the deeper levels of internalization (Schein, 1984) only in some members of the firm, whilst

others still operate within the upward career concept. Corporate conditions may to some extent nurture both orientations, inasmuch as career paths and opportunities for managers in the organizations researched are set in a corporate scenario of apparently antagonistic forces of the kind Storey (1989) identified in his discussion of a 'soft' and a 'hard' version of HRM and Watson (1994) found acted out through two different 'scripts'. We may indeed be witnessing a contextual situation for the management career in which there may be a place for both an optimistic and a pessimistic view (Edwards, 2000) of prospects available to managers and their careers.

These findings will be examined further in the discussion chapter, in PART III. In the debate they will be considered in combination with the findings reported in the other results chapters in PART II of this work.

6 - Chances & Choices

The previous two chapters have examined careers in terms of the structures provided by companies. We now turn to the ways in which individual managers view their own career development. In approaching this topic, it is useful to contrast Dopson and Stewart's (1990) optimistic ray of hope for management in the downsized organization with Scase and Goffee's (1989) pessimistic picture of what has become of the 'organization men'. At one time easily seen as being 'one-with-the employer', managers were successful 'white collars' who enjoyed employment security and status, but the events of the 1980s, such as downsizing, have left them as vulnerable to job loss as 'blue-collars'. As a result, they have become 'reluctant' managers in a low trust work setting: the 'psychological contract' (Schein, 1970) had been broken with this corporate withdrawal of security and status (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). Managers are therefore fully justified in accordingly withdrawing the commitment and loyalty to the organization which used to be expected from them.

Authors who suspect a corporate infringement of the implicit contract are likely to be supportive of Kanter's (1989) recommendation for a shift in the locus of managerial loyalty and commitment – loyalty should be 'to self' and commitment 'to task' (1989: 332-3) – whereas more sceptical people see individual self-reliance as the only route. A pessimistic picture is thus converted into an optimistic view where a solution can be found

for the manager who breaks away from traditional employment relationships and values (e.g., Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995).

The managers in my case-study organizations are equally experiencing an insecure work environment. Their responses to the questionnaires and interviews have yielded a wealth of data in which, however, there is no substantial evidence that in general they are reluctant managers or are seeking a way out of their problems by breaking away from traditional loyalty and commitment. Certainly there is no evidence that will support Heckscher's (1995) forecast of a joint demise of loyalty and management. Instead, the managers in my study are trying to make sense of, and define their careers in relation to, changing corporate conditions in which some managerial positions are lost and others created. In the present chapter I shall be examining findings that will reveal how secure managers feel in their post and how optimistic, or pessimistic, they are as to the results of the efforts they have invested, and are investing, to consolidate their position and further their career.

The first part, entitled 'How managers see their career prospects', presents evidence on the career opportunities managers can see for themselves in their current employing company. It lays out findings on each one of the four case-study organizations and extracts a picture of the situation in general. It also reports on evidence that corporate grade, professional area and the individual's time of life play a role in the chances managers may be able to seize.

The second part, entitled 'Driving one's own management career or being driven', concentrates on the following two points concerning managers in their employing company: their ability not only to retain their job but to shape their own career proactively; and what they perceive as being the major factor, or factors, that may help

them achieve promotion. Throughout, evidence is presented on choices managers have to make and the limitations they are confronted with, sometimes in a compromise between driving their own management career and having their working life driven by forces external to their control.

I - HOW MANAGERS SEE THEIR CAREER PROSPECTS

This section analyses the respondents' opinions on their prospects, and limitations, in respect of furthering their career in their current employment. It also gives special attention to some issues – such as vertical or lateral moves, personal background, education, technical specialism, and age – which occur in their responses when they discuss the opportunities they think they have, or they feel excluded from, concerning their careers.

1 - Main Views

Respondents were invited to express their opinion on whether career opportunities for people of their grade are increasing, decreasing or showing no noticeable change in their current employing company. When sifting through the replies, I found that a fourth category had to be considered, that of an undefined situation. In fact, as shown in Table 6.1, for nearly half the respondents there was no clear-cut picture that would enable them

to provide a decisive reply within the initial three categories – increasing, decreasing or no change.

INCREASING	23%
DECREASING	19%
NO CHANGE	12%
UNDEFINED	46%

Table 6.1 - General prospects in management careers

INCREASING received twenty three per cent of the total score. The increase appears to be associated with a development towards greater mobility. A GKN respondent explains how it came about in his company: 'Mainly because of UK Operations, whereas before your career was limited by the line company that you worked for, whether it was Hardy Spicer or Driveshafts or Birfield' [GK:M]. A LucasVarity respondent shares a similar view in the different context of his own company: 'I think the business in the last two years is being far more flexible, in moving people around' [LV:S]. Mobility, though within one section, is equally a key factor in the opinion of a Rover respondent. He sees the setting up of Group Design and Engineering as a favourable initiative for it 'made Engineering into an enormous lump' which makes it easier 'to move into different areas within Engineering' [RG:M].

DECREASING received the next score down, with nineteen per cent. Downsizing exercises and a resulting flatter hierarchy appear to be seen as the main cause of a perceived decrease in career opportunities. There are fewer chances, as a GKN respondent explains, 'because of them taking out a lot of the middle management' [GK:M]. Another respondent from this company explains: 'Because there has been a move to "continental" in the organization, UK Operations, Italian Operations, etc.

so now one board covers all the UK sites, hence there is a reduction in number of senior positions'[GK:S]. Concerning the career effects of a reduced number of higher ranks, a Rover respondent comments: 'There are lots of people at my grade and very few opportunities to develop past my grade' [RG:S].

With the bottom score of twelve per cent, there were some positive, but usually brief, NO CHANGE replies such as 'There is no noticeable change'[RG:M] and 'No noticeable change'[LV:S], respectively, from a Rover and from a LucasVarity respondent. At the opposite end of the scale, there were the UNDEFINED situation replies, with the highest score of forty six. Some interviewees gave a noncommittal answer, as they felt they were not in a position to provide their own opinion. Others talked through the answer taking into account several aspects, often with an ambivalent result. Others still started by picking one of the three suggested options – increasing, decreasing or no change – but as they elaborated on their answer other points were taken which acted as provisos to their first statement.

The large incidence of UNDEFINED situation responses shows how complex an issue is under discussion. Two respondents from Valeo didn't regard themselves in possession of a clear enough view of what may be happening that would enable them to give a well-informed reply. They said, respectively, 'I have no idea at all'[VL:M] and 'I don't fully understand the grading structure, so I can't comment'[VL:M]. A respondent from Rover had seen signs of a favourable change that, after all, may not materialize: 'It felt like we had a fairly dynamic changing organization' but afterwards 'things began to start to settle down. I think it has become stable rather than decreasing'[RG:M]. The opinion you can express often depends on the standpoint you take, as the same circumstances may mean increasing opportunities for some individuals whilst decreasing for others, particularly if

the external market is involved, as can be seen in the following reply: 'Increasing, because especially with the latest situation, that is to say people coming from outside to fill in. I know in GKN they like to see people come all the way through and they like to prepare from within but I have noticed more recently some of the major recruitments have been external'[GK:S].

Various other circumstances may be associated with an inconclusive reply. All the following cases come from LucasVarity. An empty post to be filled can be, ambiguously, a new chance to be seized and an omen of possible future job loss. Recent redundancy cases appear to elicit comments such as the following, in which there may be more than a touch of irony: 'I feel that they are increasing, because the amount of change is quite high, high turnover gives a greater opportunity to move around'[LV:S]. These are mixed answers that do not fit into a well defined category. Also, empowerment at a lower grade may be a mixed blessing – 'I think that they are increasing, because the levels of management that have been taken out has meant that responsibility has had to be cascaded down further down the chain to the lower levels of management'[LV:M]. Finally, communication failure may obscure existing openings – 'I don't think that there is a noticeable change. I always say that they (opportunities) are decreasing but... they tell me that my perception is because I don't think that the communication lines in LucasVarity have settled down post the reorganization.[...]. We don't get to hear of all the opportunities at various sites'[LV:M].

The most striking evidence in the data is that, in line with the results on career planning reported in the previous chapter, not far from half the respondents are unable to give their opinion on the direction in which career opportunities may be moving if changing at all. Equally interesting are the perceived factors for this undefined situation: a multiplicity of

ever-changing circumstances; the general fluidity of the current working environment; and the ambiguity of some developments.

2 - Across and through the Companies

COMPANY ⇒ PROSPECTS ⇓	Rover	Lucas Varity	GKN	Valeo
INCREASING	18%	29%	31%	14%
DECREASING	23%	8%	46%	0%
NO CHANGE	27%	12%	8%	0%
UNDEFINED	32%	51%	15%	86%

Table 6.2 - Company prospects in management careers

The different replies to the question on change of career opportunities for people of the respondent's grade – INCREASING, DECREASING, NO CHANGE, UNDEFINED – were also analysed across the four companies (Table 6.2). Firm specific circumstances may have emphasized, in different degrees, aspects which are nevertheless present throughout – e.g., restructuring, fewer ranks, international factor, mobility and performance requirements. They are common ingredients in the four companies researched although combining differently in each one of them.

(References in the present relate to the period of time when field work was carried out, 1997-1998)

Looking across the companies, UNDEFINED stands out as the top score in three out of the four study-cases. It managed to exceed half of the LucasVarity replies, with fifty one

percent, and to peak to eighty six percent in Valeo. Also, where the score is low, namely in GKN with fifteen percent, the added score for the opposites INCREASING and DECREASING is high, seventy seven percent. This means that not only there is a top incidence of UNDEFINED responses in the majority of cases but also in no company is there any agreed shared view.

Specific circumstances in LucasVarity are conducive to a strong UNDEFINED response. The company is still under the impact of the delayering and reorganization exercises that followed the merger of British Lucas Industries Plc and the American Varity Corporation in 1996. Although the resulting Anglo-American Group LucasVarity is based in England, its corporate management committee consists mainly of Varity executives and has been put under the leadership of the former chief operating officer of Varity who was given the task of integrating the two companies. The Aerospace Division is represented on the strategic planning committee which includes the divisional directors and involves most of the former Lucas executives. Aerospace may thus be adjusting to its place in the context of the LucasVarity Group and be unsure of what the new situation entails as to career opportunities.

Moreover, although in the past Aerospace was a successful area of Lucas and now is a new one to Varity, it has been submitted to a structural delayering and an organizational shake-up like the rest of the Group. Increased intra-divisional mobility has brought new people into Aerospace, which, as a deemed core business, may be expanded through bolt-on acquisitions. Bearing in mind the above deep changes, it is understandable that just over half of the interviewed LucasVarity managers regarded themselves in an UNDEFINED situation in respect of career prospects.

The extremely high UNDEFINED score in Valeo can probably also find a partial explanation in company-specific circumstances. Valeo Wiper Systems is implementing a development plan which includes increased globalization, and this will entail both new demands and opportunities. In respect of organizational structure, Valeo (UK) Wiper Systems Ltd is an autonomous profit centre, but is under the central control of Valeo (UK) Ltd and subject to the overall Valeo coordination system. This includes a formalized functional network. UK procedures are translated from the French originals. There is, therefore, on the one hand, a decentralized profit-unit type of structure, but, on the other, intra-organizational uniformity appears to have a double effect – it enables central office to tighten its grip and it facilitates mobility as the same procedures will be familiar to employees across the Group. The above circumstances may be associated with the visible difficulty in forming a clear picture of career prospects that was experienced by the managers interviewed at Valeo (UK) Wiper Systems.

Under DECREASING, GKN stands out with the highest score of forty six percent. This perception may be associated with a few developments in the Group. In 1998 the three sites of the GKN ADD Division – Hardy Spicer Ltd, Driveshafts Ltd and Birfield Extrusions – were brought together as UK Operations. Shortly after, Birfield Extrusions was amalgamated into Hardy Spicer. Whilst formerly there was a board for each site, now one single board covers the whole UK. There have been delayering and restructuring exercises. The renaming on a national basis – UK Operations, etc. – highlights intra-organizational mobility at an international scale, which is encouraged particularly for candidates to senior posts, although reintegration of expatriates remains a problem. Also, in the past, the more traditional GKN route to senior posts used to be working one's way up as a qualified engineer, but a new trend has been developing, that of external

recruitment of graduates. Finally, senior management appraisals have been recently introduced and are being implemented from the top grade downwards. The various aspects described above can be expected to bear some weight on the general negative view found amongst managers at GKN ADD UK Operations in respect of career prospects.

Ironically, the highest overall score for INCREASING comes also from GKN ADD UK Operations, with thirty one percent. Reduced ranks, increased mobility, graduate intake and appraisals may mean bleak career prospects for many. However, the new graduates and some of the older managers may have greater, though riskier, opportunities in high level performance and intra-Group moves. The top score is closely followed by LucasVarity, with twenty nine percent. This is also remarkable, bearing in mind that just over fifty percent of this company's interviewees could not provide a conclusive picture of their perceived career prospects. LucasVarity and GKN are, to some extent, comparable cases, inasmuch as there appears to be a main split between a pessimistic outlook – of undefined chances in the former and decreasing chances in the latter – and an optimistic outlook of increased career opportunities.

Looking at each case-study individually, the greatest polarization of results was found in Valeo, where the eighty six percent UNDEFINED responses stand against fourteen percent INCREASING responses, leaving nil in the other two groups. In contrast, the most even results were found in Rover. Next to its top thirty two percent for UNDEFINED, comes twenty seven percent NO CHANGE, twenty three percent DECREASING and eighteen percent INCREASING.

As already pointed out, particular features in these findings can be related to the specificity of the respective case. I have also looked for a possible correlation with the

respondents' personal and professional profile which is depicted in Table 6.3. This is based on information extracted primarily from the questionnaires.

The high incidence of UNDEFINED replies from LucasVarity and, above all, from Valeo, may have a link with the nil percentage of respondents in the oldest age bracket, in LucasVarity, and in the two oldest age brackets, in Valeo. In the former, this is likely to be associated with the recent drastic delayering and reorganization, in which case UNDEFINED may be a covert synonym for DECREASING. In the latter, all managers are relatively new, the oldest with the firm having joined the Group in 1992.

On the other hand, when examining the results in the four case-study organizations against the respondents' age, in general, there were no significant variations, as each category – INCREASING, DECREASING, NO CHANGE, UNDEFINED – included individuals from the whole age range. There were, however, two exceptions. From Rover NO CHANGE replies were received mainly from interviewees on the higher age bands, namely forty five year olds to fifty five and over. Just over half of GKN fifty five year olds and over chose the INCREASING option in their reply. We have, therefore, a mixed picture amongst the oldest managers.

In GKN, where evasive UNDEFINED may have given place to open DECREASING, some of the fifty four respondents who do not hold a degree may have reasons for concern when faced with senior management appraisals and an intake of graduates. The emphasis on academic qualifications is particularly evident in Valeo's seventy one percent respondents who have done post-graduate studies. It is, however, worth noticing that the lowest percentage of post-graduates – thirteen percent – comes from Rover but this organization shows by far the highest – ninety seven percent – of long-staying employees and no recent new recruits. This is also the firm with more even results in the reply to the

question on career opportunities, as seen earlier in this chapter. Therefore, there may be a mixed relation between academic qualifications and a long stay at the same company.

COMPANY ⇒						
RESPONDENTS' PROFILE						
↓						
		Rover	Lucas Varity	GKN	Valeo	Total
AGE	25-34	20%	34%	38%	86%	44.5%
	35-44	47%	46%	39%	14%	36.5%
	45-54	28%	20%	15%	0%	16%
	55 and over	5%	0%	8%	0%	3%
QUALIFICATIONS	no degree	42%	15%	54%	0%	28%
	first degree	45%	44%	23%	29%	35%
	post-graduate	13%	41%	23%	71%	37%
JOINED IN	1993 or later	0%	22%	31%	86%	35%
	bet. 1988-1992	3%	5%	15%	14%	9%
	in 1987 or earlier	97%	73%	54%	0%	56%
POSITION	very senior	5%	5%	15%	14%	10%
	other	95%	95%	85%	86%	90%
INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP	no	50%	34%	38%	57%	45%
	yes	50%	66%	62%	43%	55%
INCOME	sole/main earner	97%	86%	92%	71%	86.5%
	equal earner with spouse/partner	3%	12%	8%	29%	13%
	spouse/partner main earner	0%	2%	0%	0%	0.5%
FAMILY	single	12%	10%	15%	14%	13%
	spouse/partner	85%	85%	85%	57%	78%
	separated etc.	3%	5%	0%	29%	9%
	no dependants children and/or	22%	37%	42%	29%	32.5%
	other dependants	78%	63%	58%	71%	67.5%

Table 6.3 - Respondents' personal and professional profile

As reported in CHAPTER 3, II, 1.2.1, out of the one hundred and fourteen managers in my research sample, only one individual is female. In fact, throughout the companies, the

main picture is that of the male individual who is the sole or main earner – eighty six and a half percent; who is married or has a partner – seventy eight percent – but is still the main earner even when his wife or partner is in employment; and who, in addition to his totally or partially dependent wife / partner, may also have children and / or other dependants such as elderly parents – sixty seven and a half percent. Currently, it takes respondents between a quarter of an hour and an hour to travel to work, by car. As we saw earlier in this chapter, chances of increased career opportunity may entail greater mobility, between roles and geographically, and international experience may be a prerequisite for senior posts. This is likely to mean that many families will have to move; and the number of such cases will be increased when some of the thirteen percent single respondents find their wife or partner. Furthermore, some of the nine percent individuals who have lost their wife (separated, divorced, widowed) are amongst those who have dependants that may limit their mobility.

Some respondents are relatively young – over forty percent in the twenty five to thirty four age bracket. In their large majority, these plus the thirty six and a half percent in the thirty five to forty four age bracket will not have made it to the top. They will be mostly in the ninety percent who are not in very senior positions, i.e., in a fluid situation along the managerial band with no clear incremental steps. Comparing these figures with the high score for UNDEFINED (Table 6.2), from nearly half the total respondents, we have a rather depressed scenario of managers, some relatively young, who cannot see clear career paths ahead of them.

Finally, there is no evident link between age group and institutional membership. Just over half the respondents – fifty five percent – are members of a professional body, typically the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and the Institution of Electrical

Engineers, which may reflect the fact that over fifty percent of the managers started their careers from an engineering background, as reported in CHAPTER 3, II, 1.2.1. There are also some members of other professional bodies including the British Institute of Management. This takes us to the complex issue of specialists and generalists. Some individuals may feel that their background and experience are not valued and the future belongs to newcomers with management, not technical, qualifications. Below we can see how different groups of people feel affected, positively and negatively, by the predictions presented above as to management career prospects.

3 - Different Issues

Some concerns were evident in the responses received in respect of the question of career opportunities. It became clear that some issues play a central role. Whether career opportunities are increasing, decreasing or neither appears to be a matter closely related to grade, educational background, technical specialism, and age, as explained by the respondents. The purpose of this section is thus to explore more deeply the foregoing.

3.1. Upwards, sideways and dead end

Where optimism is found in respect of career prospects, this may come from some junior or middle managers whilst, some senior managers may have a more sombre view of their future. In GKN, the introduction of UK Operations is generally regarded by the former group as a landmark of new enhanced opportunity and by some in the latter group as a turning point towards reduced opportunity (although just over half of the fifty five year olds, some in senior posts, see increasing career prospects). As we saw earlier in this chapter, a GKN respondent opined that chances for people of his grade were increasing

‘mainly because of UK Operations, whereas before your career was limited by the line company that you worked for, whether it was Hardy Spicer or Driveshafts or Birfield’[GK:M]. A colleague of his holds the same opinion – ‘Increasing. That is because within GKN UK Operations we have a fairly organized structure now.[...]. There will always be something that may well crop up’[GK:M]. Still along the same track of thought, a third respondent mentions the development of overseas joint ventures – ‘There is also more and more best practice shared between companies and hence more inter-company transfers, these create quite a few additional opportunities’[GK:M]. However, in contrast, those further up the ladder tend to see the same situation in quite a different way. Also as mentioned earlier in this chapter, a GKN respondent on a senior grade expresses his opinion as follows: ‘Decreasing. Because there has been a move to “continental” in the organization, UK Operations, Italian Operations, etc., so now one board covers all the UK sites, hence there is a reduction in the number of senior positions’[GK:S]. Another respondent at the same level seems to have the same worries: ‘Decreasing, because if you take UK Operations now’ it has only one board, ‘and as you change the organization and flatten it, the job opportunities for my grade are diminishing’[GK:S].

Not only at GKN is this divergent optimistic-pessimistic outlook to be found. Some LucasVarity managers see a bright future ahead of them. In relation to developments after the recent merger, a respondent in a middle position explains: ‘There is opportunity, there is a lot of change at the moment.[...].When the business is moving to make a different structure there is always a shakedown, a bit of the dead wood cut out, you know, some new shoots’[LV:M]. Two of his colleagues comment, respectively, that ‘there is more opportunity’[LV:M] and that ‘it is the opposite of dead man’s shoes’[LV:M]. Some LucasVarity respondents on higher grades, however, appear to think otherwise: ‘We are

certainly in an environment where if you don't perform then you are out, this gives more opportunities (for those who are left). In the Aerospace business, there are potentials for acquisitions, so if things come off and we are successful, then there will be far more opportunities'[LV:S]. In other words, as things stand at the moment, as an individual one's only chance of winning may be by default, taking someone's lost position. Although, on its face value, this reply points to new opportunities, it reflects a rather depressed perception of the current situation.

The correlation that is found in GKN and LucasVarity between grade level and an optimistic or a pessimistic outlook as to career prospects is equally found in the other companies. At Rover there seems to be a general consensus that it varies with grade. A respondent from this company explains: 'Decreasing, because of the organizational changes that are happening, at the higher grades. At the lower grades, there are more opportunities'[RG:M]. A colleague of his expresses a similar view: 'There is no noticeable change. I think that at the lower grades there has been some escalation of grades but at my grade I would think that it is about the same as it has been for the last ten to fifteen years'[RG:M].

No one appears to find it easy at the top. There are two main aspects to this difficulty: finding where to go if you want to move, and defending your position in face of competition and corporate demands. As a LucasVarity manager clearly puts it as to career opportunities at his grade:

'Well, there is only one of me anyway, so I don't know whether they are increasing or not. These are very difficult jobs to hold, because at the end of the day it is where the buck stops. I suppose that it may be increasing as it is a very fragile job and the chances of you losing your job are very high.

That is a difficult question for me to answer'[LV:S].

Focusing on the shortage of alternatives to move to, a Rover respondent contributes the following:

'I think that they are decreasing, partly because of rationalization of management structures'. This has evolved 'along with the organization, perhaps it was too top heavy in the past and I am certain that we have reduced the executive population by at least one third, may be by fifty percent in the last ten to fifteen years'. This means that if you want to move, 'finding a role which carries the grade that you have as an individual becomes increasingly difficult' [RG:S].

Another respondent from Rover gives a numerically precise idea of how scarce an alternative would be at his grade:

'Because I am a Senior Director.[...] So out of a company of about forty thousand we are talking forty people like myself. So progression from my point of view is very limited'[RG:S].

Although it is not easy at the top, keeping pace with corporate needs seems to be the way not only to secure one's position but to enhance it, as a Valeo respondent explains when commenting on opportunities on an executive grade like his:

'I have been fortunate from a personal point of view that I have been trained in methodologies and methodologies are very much the thing in demand at the moment – how to approach productivity, how to improve quality.' There is also to be taken into account 'the precise allocation of

resources, something which Valeo has invested in since 1991. So, as a result, all those people who have been very much part of the new industrial approach, I think, are in increasing demand'. [VL:S]

In contrast, some respondents decide to consider a less traditional approach to opportunity seeking, as can be seen in the answer from an interviewee from LucasVarity:

'The further you get to the top the less moves there are in any case. I think that with the flatter structures that we have got now in industry, not just this company, there are more sideways moves than upwards moves. It all depends on what you mean by an upward move – is it a title, is it pay or is it a jump that you may do? There are more flexible roles, so it isn't seen as a move as such. I have run various jobs with different titles but at the same grade and pay' [LV:M].

There is, therefore, lateral movement as an option for growth. However, this may not be acceptable to everyone, as explained by another LucasVarity respondent:

'There is more potential for growth but when you get to a certain level like this grade, I am Chief Engineer of one of the biggest sites in Lucas Aerospace, if I am looking for something that is bigger then there is the Technical Director that all us Chief Engineers report to, so there is one place to go to. I could side-track may be into other roles but I am quite a way up the company anyway. I can't see myself moving sideways for instance into a role that I haven't had any previous experience with' [LV:S].

As seen in the different contributions above, there is an optimistic outlook of future career prospects coming from managers who see a source of new opportunities in lateral

job moves, some perhaps in the hope of spiralling up, despite a hierarchy with a limited number of ranks. However, the situation is different for those in senior management and top-of-the-line positions, with a high risk post to hold that requires high level performance if it is not going to be lost. For these people a lateral move comes as an alternative that some would find difficult to accept, in particular when, effectively, it may mean a downward move instead as in the last statement quoted above.

3.2. Background, area and age

Very much at the back of the mind of respondents in general appears to be the duality between a high status generalist input to the business and a lower status specialist input to the business. The people involved tend to be seen as two distinct groups with different career opportunities.

Respondents from LucasVaryity give their testimony. Today in the higher group, an executive explains how he might have fallen into the lower group and the measures he took not to: 'An exceptionally broad educational background which I did quite early in terms of not just being an engineer, I think that that gets you so far' and then he invested in 'performance, if you don't perform you don't get any further'[LV:S]. Indeed, some people in Engineering may have to move 'sideways without a salary or grade increase' as to have a chance of eventually move 'upwards'[LV:M]. Difficulties are equally expressed by the respondent who says the following: 'I wouldn't say that they are increasing, there certainly are no more opportunities within my specialist area (Engineering). I think that for somebody in other areas then they are increasing; for example, take a project manager, I think, and manufacturing management'[LV:M]. Concerns over inequality of chances may be intensified when the external market is given preference to fill in senior positions,

as expressed by a LucasVarity respondent when talking about career opportunities: 'There are plenty of them. It isn't easy to find people who are capable of taking on the very senior roles and so there are always opportunities and we have to do more external recruitment than I think is ideal to fill in some of those slots'[LV:S].

The generalist-specialist dichotomy was equally felt at GKN, where a respondent presented his own career prospects in the following terms: 'Probably decreasing. Because of flatter structures. I am a specialist and therefore the opportunities for advancement for me are virtually nil within the organization'[GK:M]. At Rover, however, there does not appear to be such a depressed outlook from specialists, particularly bearing in mind statements such as this one: 'Increasing. The setting up of Group Design and Engineering' has been a favourable change as it 'made Engineering into an enormous lump' which has made it easier 'to move into different areas within Engineering'[RG:M]. The emphasis, though, is on lateral movement, as pointed out earlier in this chapter. This means that, in reality, the situation may not be too different from the described above for LucasVarity where engineers were said to have to move 'sideways without a salary or grade increase' as to have a chance of eventually move 'upwards'.

There is also a group for whom age may be a handicap and who feel they have reached a plateau whereas in the olden days when there was a tall hierarchical format there might still be a chance for them. A Rover respondent explains about career opportunities at his grade: 'I think that they are increasing for those who are younger'[RG:M]. A colleague of his, partly resigned to his perceived limitations, says the following about career opportunities: 'On my grade, if you are young, they are increasing, if you are mature, they are decreasing'. Talking of top management decisions, he adds: 'I think they are looking after the youngsters and may be that that is better for the future, I don't know'. However,

with special reference to Engineering, he expresses some hopes of a reversed trend: 'I know that BMW, they respect experience far more than Rover do at the moment. I believe with the more influence BMW have, it will change' [RG:M].

The notion that there is a split of opportunities based on a generalist-specialist dichotomy runs across the case-study organizations, age groups and grade. Some on high grades may have reached their position coming from the shop-floor but that was some time ago. Some who have not made it to a high grade may feel frustrated, but there is hope of better days for Engineering, coming particularly from Rover.

Summing up, close to half the respondents were unable to give their opinion on what direction career opportunities may be moving or whether there is any movement at all. Some groups may feel particularly exposed to job loss or a stagnant career, due to their background, age or current position. Yet, their words do not leave a general picture of reluctant managers like those found by Scase and Goffee (1989). They may be unsure about the ambiguity of some developments but find an explanation for the general situation in a fluid work environment in a time of continuously changing circumstances. The general picture is not one of managers who break away from traditional loyalty and commitment to the firm (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995) but, instead, one of managers who are faced with unfavourable career prospects and haphazard career arrangements but are staying with their employer despite the odds (Storey *et al.*, 1997).

II - DRIVING ONE'S OWN MANAGEMENT CAREER, OR BEING DRIVEN

This section analyses the respondents' reports on the actions they took in the past and their views and hopes on the action they may take in the future with the aim of improving their career prospects. It includes statements on the kind of career they have in mind. The section concludes with an analysis of the aspects in which respondents feel they have to invest in order to create the best possible conditions for promotion and the extent to which their efforts can be expected to yield the desired fruits.

1 - Being Proactive

Respondents were invited to express their opinion on the extent to which they have been able to shape their career proactively so far at their present company. They were equally asked a parallel question in relation to the future. The results are shown in Table 6.4.

The two top mean percentages represent the respondents who felt that they had been able to shape their career proactively in the past and those who see ahead of them an uncertain future as to the extent to which they will be able to shape their career. The former group totalled seventy five percent, ranging from one hundred percent in Valeo to forty six percent in GKN. It ranges therefore from a unanimous 'yes' to approaching half those who feel that they were able to shape their career proactively in the past. This projects an image of a sombre future when contrasted with the latter group which accounts for fifty four percent, ranging from seventy two percent in Valeo to thirty three percent in Rover.

COMPANY⇒		Rover	Lucas Varity	GKN	Valeo	Total
ABILITY ↓						
PAST	YES	82%	71%	46%	100%	75%
	NO	8%	0%	23%	0%	8%
	LIMITED	10%	29%	31%	0%	17.5%
FUTURE	YES	32%	27%	27%	28%	28.5%
	NO	35%	22%	12%	0%	17%
	UNCERTAIN	33%	51%	61%	72%	54%

Table 6.4 - Managers' ability to be career proactive in their company

There is a relatively optimistic twenty eight and a half percent mean percentage of respondents – with fairly even results across the companies – who expect to be able to shape their career proactively in the future. The opposite belief – i.e. the inability to shape one's career proactively in the future – is held by seventeen percent, ranging from thirty five percent in Rover to nought percent in Valeo.

The result for anticipated inability to shape one's career proactively in the future is closely followed by the mean total for a perceived limited ability in the past, which is seventeen and a half percent, ranging from thirty one percent in GKN to no recorded instances in Valeo. The lowest mean total of eight percent was recorded for those who felt that they were not able to shape their career in the past. This situation was experienced by twenty three percent of the GKN respondents and eight percent of Rover's, whilst there were no such cases in Lucas (subsequently LucasVarity) and Valeo.

The understanding of these figures requires insight into what ‘shaping one’s career’ actually means to the different respondents. To some individuals, it seems to mean the use to one’s personal advantage of the career opportunities that they may be able to identify in the organization. In this case, the aim tends to be upward movement. However, there are also other viewpoints, expectations and hopes.

1.1. The career’s ‘shape’

In reply to the question on whether he has been able to shape his career with his company, a Valeo executive explains: ‘It’s the only way. You have to be a little bit pushy or otherwise you get absolutely trodden on, so you have to be a fighter’[VL:S]. Equally at the top of the managerial line, a GKN respondent comments that he hasn’t felt the need to shape his career proactively as in fact he has been ‘pulled’ to senior posts and eventually a directorship[GK:S]. This appears to be the situation in general at the highest levels – you are simply invited to take the position. A Rover director explains: ‘There is just a small group that actually manages the business and because of the way that we work we all know each other and therefore it is a case of “let’s ask him”’[RG:S]. Commenting on appointments at the very top, a LucasVarity respondent wonders who shapes what: ‘The organization is flexible, it always has been, positions are created sometimes to suit people, therefore the shape of the organization today is shaped by the people in this way. Personalities...’[LV:M].

There are some individuals at relatively low levels for whom shaping a career also means vertical upward movement. However, their current personal aspirations may take a different direction. Talking about his efforts in the past, a LucasVarity respondent explains: ‘I have got to the positions that I have wanted to be in but it hasn’t always been

the easiest route'[LV:M]. When contemplating whether he will be able to continue shaping his career in the future, however, he says: 'Probably to some extent, because I am not necessarily looking for a progression upwards, it may be sideways'[LV:M]. A Rover respondent clearly states that he has decided to stop attempting upward movement. On whether he was able to shape his career in the past, he says 'To a degree, yes'[RG:M], but about the future he says 'I don't think so, because I don't want to progress vertically any further'[RG:M]. There are also some individuals who do not appear to be interested in upward movement, like the Rover respondent who would like to move downwards instead: 'No. After this project, I would like to move to a less pressure job but I don't know if the organization will do this; give me the option of working in the same job until retirement or moving down', the alternative he would cherish the most [RG:J].

There is still a third group, in which not only is there no upward career aspirations but an upward movement seems to be equally absent from the concept itself. It is worth noting that these individuals are apparently satisfied that they are shaping their career proactively. The goal seems to be moving around and experiencing new horizons so as to find a confidence booster and, thus, get a sense a personal enrichment. This is the case of the GKN respondent who replies the following about whether he has been able to shape his career in the organization:

'Within the local organization (site), yes, perhaps I have been able to shape it and say "this is the way I want to go", which I have done. But within GKN I hadn't probably seriously looked outside of the four walls of the local environment up until recently. Having spent such a long time on one site, one of my concerns was the fact that I had become more or less institutionalized. In 1996 I moved on to this site and tested if I was able to,

if you like, peddle my wares on a wider stage; it worked and it has given me the confidence that I could cope with it'[GK:M].

1.2. One's career 'shaping' ability

Whatever shape respondents wanted for their own career, they all seemed to strive to achieve a goal. Obstacles, when encountered, were mostly external to the individual. In the past, for quite a lot of people employment meant a bureaucratic routine with little chance of active choice. Nevertheless, some individuals feel that they could have had more initiative and drive in the past. Answering the question on whether he would be able to shape his career proactively in the future, a GKN respondent explains: 'Yes. I have become more and more aware that I need to speak for myself'[GK:M]. However, in the large majority of cases, obstacles, where they exist, lie outside the individual's will.

In general, technical specialists such as engineers find themselves in a position of disadvantage when it comes to shaping their career. For example, a Rover respondent sees no further chance, as he explains in the following words: 'I must be getting to the point now when I have topped out because as a technical specialist I have gone faster and higher than several other people within the company. The next grade is unimaginable, how I could get it through being a technical specialist'[RG:M]. On the other hand, however, as seen above, there appears to be new hope for engineers and other specialists.

There are difficulties at higher grades. Downsizing is generally felt as a problem for those who think in terms of an upward career. A LucasVarity respondent answers the following about his ability to shape his career proactively in the company 'Within Lucas, yes, I could definitely shape my career. But over the last two years it has been a bit difficult because of the way that they have delayed the business'[LV:S]. Even without

downsizing, the more senior your position the more limited you may feel. About the future shaping of his career, a LucasVarity respondent comments: 'It is more difficult to see how it will happen because I am now higher in the organization'[LV:M]. A colleague of his shares the same opinion: 'The more senior you become, I think, it becomes a little more difficult'[LV:M]. Still within LucasVarity, another respondent points out that increased visibility may work against your having a chance of shaping yourself a secure position at the top:

'In an organization there aren't any more many positions at all levels, it goes narrower at the top and therefore I think that it will become more difficult, and also because there is far more visibility, far more measurement of what goes on at this sort of level and far more visibility of success and failure, so I think that it is more volatile'[LV:M].

A Rover respondent talks about the same constraints in other words and with a special focus on increased visibility to the small but influential peer group:

'When you are a small fish in a big sea, there are lots of people who don't know you and they are less able to contribute to your career whereas you are able to do more about it because of there being a bigger group around you, but the higher up you go the smaller the group around you and the more they know you so they have a great influence on your career' [RG:M].

This influence does not have to be negative. The situation can work both for and against the individual. In fact, some respondents appear to think that seniority and visibility will enhance, instead of hindering, their career shaping ability. This is the case of a GKN respondent: 'I think that as you get to higher levels within the organization, you

get more opportunity to do that, to be proactive'. He further explains that it is so because you are then 'in a position to have the right contacts to be proactive' and also 'the further you progress, it gets much easier and you get much more motivation'[GK:M]. Here, visibility, as an asset, does not mean being dangerously scrutinized by others in judgement on your merit, but means, instead, being able to project an image that will convince them of that merit. This view seems to be confirmed by two contrasting replies to the question on whether you feel you will be able to shape your career proactively in the future. They both come from Valeo. A respondent on a middle management grade is doubtful and gives the reason why: 'I don't know enough people'[VL:M]. Another respondent in a higher position is much more optimistic: 'Yeah, by networking. I am lucky I have a visibility'[VL:S].

Age also plays an ambiguous role. Whilst in I, 2 of the present chapter we saw some optimism as to career prospects coming from GKN's fifty five year olds and over, this will not always be the case. The following examples have all been taken from respondents on the same age band who answered the question on their ability to shape their career proactively in the past and in the future. In relation to the past, a Rover interviewee replies 'To some extent' but, about the future, 'No. Age'[RG:M]. A colleague of his replies, as to the past, 'Yes', and, as to the future, 'I think that my opportunities will reduce with age, I think that that is inevitable'[RG:S]. A third interviewee from Rover gives an affirmative reply about the past but adds that a time came when his career had 'peaked'[RG:M]. Concerning the future, his reply is the following: 'No, because of my age. I'm getting too old'[RG:M]. The following respondent, in his fifties, declares: 'I think that the answer to that one is probably "No"'[GK:M] in respect of whether he had been able to shape his career in the past. As for the future, he comments: 'I am not being negative with

you, but I think that that question is now, looking at my age, then basically the answer to that has got to be “No”[GK:M]. Obviously, age has been an ever-present factor. However, in the downsized organization and revised organizational design, age may have become a more serious constraint than in the past – there is less space and older managers may be felt to lack new skills.

Summing up, progressing to, and staying on, senior positions may have become more difficult where the ladder has fewer rungs, and some older managers may be felt to be dispensable whereas in the past a place might have been found for them in a hierarchy with more positions available. However, not everyone appears to be affected. A more generalized handicap, however, may be found in an engineering background, perhaps particularly for those who worked their way up from the shopfloor.

2 - Working for Promotion, not Frustration

COMPANY⇒ FACTOR ⇓	Rover	Lucas Varity	GKN	Valeo	Total
PERFORMANCE	75%	85%	65%	86%	78%
AVAILABILITY	34%	44%	57%	59%	49%
CONTACTS	46%	45%	50%	55%	49%
EDUCATION	34%	29%	38%	39%	35%
OPPORTUNITY	29%	34%	40%	38%	35%
DRIVE	31%	28%	27%	33%	30%
CULTURE	18%	16%	15%	10%	15%

Table 6.5 - Managers' perceived major factors of promotion in their company

At their interview, respondents were invited to express their opinion on what might be the main factor of promotion in their company. Most gave more than one major factor. The replies were sorted into seven categories according to their contents. The results are shown in Table 6.5.

Managers did see promotion as resting primarily and fundamentally on objective performance, not on luck or favouritism. In fact, PERFORMANCE produced the highest mean total percentage with seventy eight percent. It was the most popular response in all the four companies.

The second highest mean total percentage – forty nine percent – went to both AVAILABILITY – e.g. to work longer hours or abroad – and CONTACTS – e.g., knowing people informally who may be interested in one's work. However, the former – which can to some extent be seen as an extension to PERFORMANCE –, and the latter – which can be seen as being associated with making the quality of your PERFORMANCE visible to others – showed a relative uniformity of level of response between the different companies.

The third highest mean percentage, thirty five percent, was reached both by EDUCATION and OPPORTUNITY, again with no great variation between the different companies. DRIVE, with a mean total percentage of thirty percent, and CULTURE, with a mean total percentage of fifteen percent, also showed relatively similar results across the companies. The combined percentages for EDUCATION, OPPORTUNITY, DRIVE and CULTURE add up to one hundred and fifteen percent which is considerably below the combined percentages for the top three factors, PERFORMANCE, AVAILABILITY and CONTACTS, which add up to one hundred and seventy six percent. This shows the relative weighting of these two sets of factors identified by the respondents.

No extreme differences were encountered between companies. There was, however, a significant range of mean total results. The following paragraphs deal with each one of the identified categories, in decreasing order of their significance to respondents as taken by their numerical representation.

PERFORMANCE included sub-issues such as recognized business awareness and people management skills. There was a considerable uniformity of opinion across the companies. As the first major factor of promotion, a GKN respondent mentions 'Performance in previous roles'[GK:S], another 'Ability to do current job'[GK:M] and another 'Excel at current role'[GK:M]. From LucasVarity come statements such as 'I think that it is performance primarily'[LV:M]; 'What's for promotion? Your track record, skills and tools and ability to do the new realm'[LV:S]; and 'It is the ability to achieve targets, achieve objectives'[LV:S]. Another colleague comments: 'Success, success at what you do. If you are doing a good job in the area that you are in, then it is a pretty good indicator that you should be successful at your now taking a step up'[LV:J]. Statements from Rover include 'I do think that for most people it is performance'[RG:S]; 'Your demonstrated experience and ability'[RG:M]; and 'The single biggest factor is probably delivering things successfully'[RG:M]. As a GKN respondent points out, this will entail 'awareness to the needs of the business'[GK:M]. This is also the opinion of the Valeo respondent who said the following: 'Success. And that success has to be a measurable one so it has to be generally dramatic improvements in productivity, in quality or in terms of actually winning new business, so commercial success'[VL:S]. On the other hand, too much emphasis on performance may have a negative side to it, as stressed earlier in this chapter by the LucasVarity respondent who points out that if you do not perform as demanded then career opportunities will go to those left behind when you lose your job.

Specific mention to people management skills also occurred frequently. A GKN respondent makes the following distinction: 'Man management skills tend to give greatest prospect of career progression into management, technical skills not rewarded'[GK:M]. A LucasVarity respondent expresses the same view: 'When you have moved to a more managerial level, you are out there looking more at the man management skills and less of the technical aspects'[LV:M]. A colleague of his takes the matter a step further:

'The higher up the tree you go, basic technical knowledge is important but personally I feel it is less so as you move up, the ability to manage people becomes more important. I think that probably that may be one of the key things that separates a lot of people out between the managers and the workers, if you like'[LV:M].

AVAILABILITY encompasses different concepts which tend to overlap in respondents' statements. Mobility and flexibility are used as synonyms referring to movement between roles or functions; and there is also geographical mobility. A GKN respondent mentions 'availability'[GK:M], another 'flexibility'[GK:S]. LucasVarity respondents make contributions which include 'your mobility'[LV:S], to 'be able to be multi-task'[LV:M] and 'I think flexibility of approach and open-mindedness is a key one'[LV:M]. A respondent from Rover stresses the importance of mobility and explains that 'mobility equals international experience'[RG:S]. A GKN respondent mentions 'multinational experience'[GK:S]; and international placements are on the mind of the Valeo respondent for whom 'mobility' is a major factor second to successful performance[VL:S]. In fact, these may be required at the higher levels. 'For certain groups it is expected that you work

abroad'[GK:M] comments a GKN respondent, whilst a LucasVarity respondent notes that 'you cannot become a senior manager unless you have international experience'[LV:M].

CONTACTS refers to influential recommendation and informal sponsorship and the related concepts of visibility and networking are equally covered. The following are amongst the contributions received from GKN respondents: 'Contacts'[GK:S]; 'Being noticed'[GK:S]; 'Friends in the right places, high places'[GK:M]; and 'Visibility to other board members'[GK:M]. Contributions received from GKN respondents include 'You have to find the right people to talk to'[RG:M]; 'You need to be known'[RG:M]; 'Networking'[RG:S]. From LucasVarity, a respondent points out: 'You have to make yourself visible'[LV:M]. A colleague suggests the following: 'Probably profile is more important than what you actually do, it is what they think that you do, if you understand me, it is a perception thing'[LV:M]. The benefits of projecting the right image appear to become particularly relevant as a factor of promotion to senior positions, as highlighted in the following words from another LucasVarity respondent:

'Depends on the level you are at. At lower levels in the organization, for Engineering graduates in their first few years, it is all governed in appraisal results and views of their supervisors, it is a mechanistic approach. At higher levels you are more dependent on personalities, who you know and what they know you have done'[LV:M].

Under EDUCATION contributions were received such as 'Educational achievements'[VL:S] from Valeo; 'The right qualifications'[RG:M]; and 'A business qualification'[GK:S] from GKN; and also from this company, 'Currently, possession of a degree with possible company entrance via the GKN graduate scheme'[GK:J]. As to

OPPORTUNITY, this refers to chances found in the organization and is usually expressed, across the companies, with the phrase 'in the right place at the right time'([GK:S]; [LV:M]; [RG:S]). A GKN respondent rates 'Opportunity'[GK:M] as the first major factor of promotion, and a LucasVarity respondent places it in second place after performance: 'Opportunity secondary'[LV:M].

DRIVE is isolated by some as a factor in itself as one's own motivation. A GKN respondent places 'Drive' at the top of his list of major factors of promotion[GK:S]. A Rover respondent points out the importance of having 'Enthusiasm'[RG:M]. Also from Rover, another respondent highlights the importance of self-driven promotion if you are aiming high: 'I would say self-determination to do or achieve and that will then lead to behaviour in a particular way'[RG:S] that will enable you to be perceived by those at the top as having the right CULTURE. This category also incorporates contributions expressed as 'the right attitude' and 'fitting in'. A GKN respondent mentions the importance of one's 'attitude'[GK:S]; and a LucasVarity respondent remarks that 'the higher up you go, political ability'[LV:S] is a must. A respondent from Rover explains: 'In a way your face has to fit the idea of what the senior management expect, and depending on who is higher up and how they work, they are going to like different types of people as part of their management team'[RG:M]. This view appears to be shared by the LucasVarity respondent who made the following comment: 'If your face doesn't fit, you don't stand much of a chance'[LV:S]. See also CHAPTER 7, II, 3.

Similarly to the managers in Watson's (1994) study, managers in my study-case organizations want a level of control over their roles which may enable them to give their contribution to their firm in a way that will also help them define their own identity and

will leave them satisfied of the 'sort of person' they are. Current corporate conditions are not conducive to their achieving this goal. Considerably more than half these managers feel that there is a drop as to their ability to shape their career proactively. Yet, this is not the end of loyalty and management proclaimed by Heckscher (1995). Instead, managers place performance at the top of the list of major factors of promotion in the firm. Curiously, education comes fourth – after availability and contacts – despite the growing profile of graduate schemes in the different organizations. Perhaps to some extent this reflects the deep-seated preconceived notion pointed out by Storey (1994) that people either 'have what it takes' or they do not when it comes to be a successful manager.

CONCLUSIONS

In the past, the 'organization men' could easily be seen as being 'one-with-the-employer', and little distinction was made between 'management' and 'employer', to the point that on occasions the terms have been used interchangeably (Scase and Goffee, 1989; Sisson and Marginson, 1995). Today, management can no longer be seen as synonym with 'employer' but there is, nevertheless, a scarcity of research material on management from an industrial relations approach (Edwards, 1995), i.e., looking at the manager as an employee. The void of empirical evidence is particularly significant in respect of senior, and top, management, for, so far, lower ranks, notably middle managers, have been the main focus of attention (e.g., Dopson and Stewart, 1990; Hallier and Lyon, 1996; Redman *et al.*, 1997; Thomas and Dunkerley, 1999). My findings gathered in the present chapter

are to some extent similar to those of other researchers on the middle manager, but they also add research evidence on senior, and top, management.

My investigation has revealed a depressed scenario of managers who feel threatened with employment insecurity and poor career prospects. Figures can throw some light on the overall levels of dissatisfaction and uncertainty. In total, well over half the respondents feel that they were able to shape their career proactively better in the past than they are likely to do in the future. Also in total, nearly half the respondents could not give a decisive reply on whether career opportunities for people of their grade are increasing, decreasing or showing no noticeable change in their current company. This inability seems to be associated with the multiplicity of ever-changing circumstances; the general fluidity of the current working environment; and the ambiguity of some developments. These features may also account for the fact that not only approaching half the respondents could not give a decisive reply on career prospects but also there was no agreed shared view on the matter in any of the case-study groups. In comparison with the bureaucratic life of the previous hierarchical system, managers today may appear to have a wider choice open to them. However, in practice, this may prove not to be so. Yet, in the large majority of cases (86.5%) they are still the sole or main earner from whom their family may depend financially – 67.5% have children and / or other dependants.

In the different case-study organizations, some responses from the participant managers may have been influenced by firm specific circumstances. GKN has the highest score of 46% of negative views as to company prospects in management careers. This may be related to a number of factors including the recruitment of graduates from the external market and the recent introduction of management appraisals for senior staff. Valeo's extremely high percentage of 86% undefined views on future career prospects may in part

reflect a combination of two different factors: the implementation of a new development plan of intensified globalization which entails new demands and opportunities, coupled with the tight grip of control from headquarters. LucasVarity was still under the impact of its recent merger and subsequent restructuring, which can easily account for over 50% of the interviewed managers seeing an undefined future ahead of them in respect of job security and career prospects. Rover presents the most evenly distributed scale of responses. Nevertheless the compound results for decreasing and undefined prospects add up to 55%. However, the differences between the four case-study organizations are relatively slight, and the same fundamental situation is present across the different companies.

Job insecurity and limited promotion potential are aspects experienced by middle managers in my case-study organizations and also reported for their counterparts in different organizations in some recent studies (e.g., McGovern *et al.*, 1998; Redman *et al.*, 1997). There is an increased emphasis on lateral career moves and fewer chances of upward promotion (also in Thomas and Dunkerley, 1999). Other aspects encountered in my case-study organizations have equally received attention in earlier and recent studies. Advancing in age can become a handicap for the middle-level manager (see also Hallier and Lyon, 1996; McGovern *et al.*, 1998), although I obtained a mixed picture of some older managers being optimistic about their career prospects, mainly in GKN. Of course, ageing is not a new aspect, but the emphasis on flexibility and side-ways widening of one's skills may pose difficulties for older individuals. There are also some individuals who attribute their career progression problems to having started employment on the shopfloor and/or in junior specialist posts. This is the kind of situation behind for example Lee and Smith's (1992) view that engineers provide specialist support to line managers but they

are not generally recognized when it comes to decision-making. In some cases, it may also confirm that technicians without a university degree may be held back in their careers by a 'graduate barrier' (Roberts *et al.*, 1972). This said, Rover shows the lowest percentage of post-graduates (13%) and by far the highest (97%) of long-staying employees and these are not necessarily on a low grade. Finally, like McGovern *et al.* (1998), I have found managers who are faced with eroded opportunities for promotion and a further decline of the internally promoted manager in the downsized organization. This decline is increased by some employers' tendency to recruit employees with particular forms of expertise into senior management positions, which leads to an intensified blockage of internal promotion.

My investigation also provides evidence that in some respects there may not be a striking difference in the situation experienced by middle managers and that experienced by senior managers. Fewer ranks in the hierarchy affects not only those in middle-level positions but also those further up, closer to the apex of the former pyramid where, in any case, the number of positions can be expected to decrease. Furthermore, filling senior posts with people brought in from the external market may represent a blockage for middle managers but may also represent a direct threat to senior management. Some respondents feel that the more senior the post the tougher it is and peer competition may be fierce. The higher the position the greater the visibility under which its holder works. This can have two divergent consequences. Optimists feel that they are given the opportunity to shine and show their competence which earns them the right to the post; but pessimists feel that they are a more vulnerable target for competitors. There are also those who may suspect that strict monitoring of performance and skills may be harsh and not always justifiable at senior levels and that it may result in increased career prospects

not for the current post holders but for some who may be left in the firm, or brought in from outside, when they are dismissed on the grounds that they have not performed up to standard.

Pessimistic and optimistic outlooks coexist throughout the managerial band. This is the case in relation to lateral moves as opposed to upward career moves. Some managers are satisfied to simply move across. Some will do so trying to spiral upwards. Indeed, managers in my case-study organizations look towards hierarchical career progression as the main reward for their loyalty and commitment, a matter on which further evidence will be discussed in the final empirical chapter. This is a finding concurrent with what Thomas and Dunkerley (1999) have recently found in their study of a wide range of organizations – from insurance to brewing and from local authorities to retail and distribution – in a 50:50 split between public and private settings.

Some pessimistic responses may be directly associated with frustrated attempts to progress upwards, but there is also another aspect which was equally identified by Watson (1994). Managers want to have control over their own circumstances in a way that will enable them to meet their own requirements for self-satisfaction and personal identity whilst at the same time they contribute to shape the organization where they are employed. The fluidity of their current work environment makes this very difficult. However, in general, they battle on, and, when fighting to keep a senior post or when fighting for promotion, 'performance' is what they rate as the main key to possible success.

The results recorded in this chapter reveal a picture which is much more complex than the end-of-management and the portfolio views (e.g. Heckscher, 1995). Managers have to make sense of conflicting signals. There is a place for both optimistic and pessimistic

views, as they stress different aspects of the manager's situation. Some aspects, though, are particularly associated with certain groups, which in some cases can overlap. Optimism based on a situation of empowerment may not be justifiable in the case of some engineers, and specialists in general; or some middle-aged managers; or some managers in middle-level posts. Pessimism based on a situation of pressure may be to some extent justifiable in general, including the case of individuals in senior posts, and those in middle posts who aspire to climb a hierarchy with reduced ranks. However, in general, management jobs are being re-created rather than just lost. Managers seem to be aware, albeit implicitly, of this process. What lies ahead of them, however, may not always be clear, whilst the immediate future may present apparently unjustifiable hurdles. For some, dissatisfaction, frustration and tension may be on the increase.

These findings will be examined further in the discussion chapter, in PART III. In the debate they will be considered in combination with the findings reported in the other results chapters in PART II of this work.

7 - Pulls & Pushes

The previous chapter looked at management career paths from the manager's angle, and we saw individuals who experience insecurity and frustration in their employment and career. The present chapter continues to look at management career paths from the manager's angle and focuses on the struggle of those who fight for promotion to a higher grade or who fight to retain the higher grade they have achieved in an organizational ladder with a reduced number of rungs to climb.

Collinson and Collinson (1997) have found managers who survived downsizing exercises but who now are expected to be highly committed, to be heroic managers, and to demonstrate commitment through working long hours. These managers can be seen to be subjected to a 'time-space surveillance' reminiscent of the control over labour time and space characteristic of bureaucratic and industrial organizational forms. With events such as downsizing, managers may no longer be successful 'white-collars' but, instead, may have been reduced to the employment insecurity previously associated with 'blue-collars' (Scase and Goffee, 1989). Furthermore, managers may also have grounds to feel proletarianized with practices reminiscent of Taylor's (1911) 'scientific management' and Taylorist-Fordist techniques such as tight supervision for maximization of profitable use of time and space. To some extent, this may be the case in the organizations in my study. Yet, in general, these managers are not 'reluctant' like those found by Scase and Goffee

(1989). The managers in my investigation may be put through levels of pressure that test their loyalty to the limit. Yet, there is little evidence towards proving the end of loyalty proclaimed by Heckscher (1995), as shown in the present chapter.

The first part of the present chapter, entitled 'Managers stretched to the limit', examines how these individuals feel trapped in the increased emphasis on performance monitoring and the increased demands on availability and mobility. The second part, entitled 'Managers' reactions... and outcomes', examines the managers' endurance and allegiance to the firm in face of a difficult employment and career situation.

I - MANAGERS STRETCHED TO THE LIMIT

The managers of today may appear to have a wider choice open to them as compared with the bureaucratic system and its organizational structure and ranking. However, they may encounter insurmountable hurdles when they try to make their way up a ladder with a limited number of rungs. The box below contains an extract from a quote which will be examined further later in this chapter. It deals with fluidity and constraints, the two poles of a tension generating duality that faces managers. These are words that highlight how the apparent enhanced opportunities may turn out to be an illusion.

now it seems to be more fluid, fluid in that you can develop, the structures aren't as rigid, so there are probably more opportunities to create a position, but there seems to be more constraints centrally and more control over who gets promoted (Rover)

This section examines respondents' testimonies on some extreme demands they are experiencing. These are felt in three main aspects: excessive expectations as to their capacity to deliver; the need to work unremunerated extra hours; and the need to make oneself available on a flexible basis which involves long distance travel and work abroad. Also under consideration are the dilemmas these managers experience – such as home-work tensions – when confronted with heavy demands, as well as options that have to be taken but do not lead to a satisfactory solution.

1 - Stretched to Deliver

Opinions vary, but the general view is that managers are being put under great pressure to deliver. The box below contains extracts from respondents' quotes which will be further analysed in this sub-section.

- * a lot of pressure to make a profit (Rover)*
- * very clear targets to double profits (GKN)*
- * direct responsibility to the profit and loss (Valeo)*
- * measured more and more against performance (GKN)*
- * more rigorous tests, psychometric tests (LucasVarity)*
- * somebody to punish, somebody to get rid of (LucasVarity)*

Interviewees were invited to express their opinion on the extent and nature of career barriers that they encounter in their company. In their responses there appears to be a split of outlooks according to how high they set their goals, which coincides with other

findings recorded in the previous chapter in connection with lateral and vertical career movement.

At a certain level of aspiration, a positive outlook can be found. A LucasVarity respondent says that there are 'less barriers because they have widened our organization right out'[LV:M]. This may become a challenge and an incentive to enhance one's performance. Another LucasVarity respondent remarks that now there are 'different barriers' and explains as follows: 'If you want to make a career change then it is probably much more of a change. I would probably have to look into moving into Automotive or into another division of the Aerospace sector in order to change rather than progressing through within this particular business. That's not a bad thing'[LV:M].

However, the same situation is seen quite differently by others. A LucasVarity respondent comments that 'with the flatter structure jobs are more stretched across. It is difficult to see what you want to do next because job titles change, job specifications are virtually non-existent, okay, you have sort of bullet points for your job but you are expected to do a lot'[LV:M]. A few-rank structure is definitely seen as a negative factor contributing to extra barriers in the following opinion from a GKN respondent: 'More (barriers), I would say, because of the fact that there are less positions'[GK:M].

Managers are stretched to deliver so as to meet the budget, or to do even better. A respondent from Rover explains the current situation in his company: 'There is a lot of pressure on Rover Group to make a profit and especially with the take-over of BMW and the effect that has had on the company. There is a huge pressure on the business to make money and this pressure is cascaded down the organization and the pressure is put on individuals'[RG:M]. That pressure on the individual is related to pressure on the business is also the view of the GKN respondent who says the following, interpreting the situation

within his firm's circumstances: 'I think that at the pace that we work at the moment and the pressures that are now put on the business as a whole, bearing in mind the fewer people that we have now got in DSL (Driveshafts Ltd) and the fewer managers that we have got, today there are far more demands on people in terms of delivering'[GK:S].

With his subordinates in mind, a GKN respondent says the following: 'I now drive my people quite hard because they all have targets that they have to achieve, they all have plans and we review the plans monthly and the review is quite strong. [...]. We have been given some very clear targets to double profits and stuff by the year 2001'[GK:S]. This seems to be the situation across the companies studied. Managers at the receiving end may find it hard to cope. A respondent from LucasVarity comments as follows: 'I think that pressure is certainly considerably higher (since the merger of Lucas and Varity) than it has ever been. More pressure about performing in the role and making sure that you meet the expectations of everyone else and what they want me to deliver and that isn't just about doing things by certain times, it is more strategic and more making things happen'[LV:M]. A Valeo respondent comments that pressure is high 'because you have a direct responsibility to the profit and loss, your performance as well as others. You have to pay special attention to the daily production, daily profit, daily loss, and you also have to deal with the factories directly, so it is more and more business conflict' and as a result it is difficult 'to secure your position'[VL:M].

Appraisals and performance monitoring in general is perceived by some interviewees as a dominant feature of today's barriers and a practice in which consideration for people may be relegated to second place. A LucasVarity respondent says the following:

'I think the barriers are probably different. In the past you would only get promoted if there was a vacancy, and that is probably still true. [...].

I think also the methods by which people assess individuals' capabilities have certainly changed, meaning the more rigorous tests, psychometric tests used for placing managers in appropriate positions.[...]. Business pressures have changed as well, so it is considered that a certain type of management characteristic which is very much these days, get the job done, tighter time scales, less emphasis on the people'[LV:M].

The same situation is seen somewhat more negatively by the GKN respondent who comments as follows:

'I think that there are probably more barriers because you are measured more and more against performance, against delivery of targets, and I think that it isn't just the case of "well, he does a good job" anymore. And now I think that they are using the right tools really, where in the past it may have been the case of "well, yeah, he is a good guy", and I do still believe that in some cases there is still an element of "he is going to go all the way" but...'[GK:M].

There are also other aspects under which managers can be classed as incapable of delivering up to standard. A specialist may be promoted to a grade on the managerial line to be told afterwards that his performance is unsatisfactory. However, that might not have been this individual's aspiration in the first place. A respondent from Rover explains his career aspirations as follows: 'My career objective was to find a specialism (in Engineering) which would provide me with interest and job satisfaction and to progress within that specialism, becoming an expert, an authority'[RG:M]. A GKN respondent also reports a similar situation in which, in his attempt to progress his career, he ended up having his performance assessed on what may be his second best skills. He explains as

follows: 'For the earlier part of my career, technical expertise, then there comes a break point, there is a switch over and then the way we are judged as a manager is obviously quite different' [GK:M].

An individual may also be deemed to perform below standard on the grounds of lesser competence due to not having an academic degree. This is particularly hard on those who entered the company when a university education was not seen as necessary. A GKN respondent expresses his point of view: 'I think that we have tended to go over the top on graduates and that isn't because I am not a graduate. But just taking a more objective view on it, there is, if you like, the graduates and the non-graduates and it seems to be an inequality' [GK:M]. If this is a barrier for those on a lower grade, for those on a higher grade, it is a threat. Another GKN respondent remarks the following: 'I am only HND, people they are recruiting to my position have degree status' [GK:S].

An element of doubt as to the fairness of some procedures can easily be detected in the words of some of the respondents above. Others just do not mince their words, as is the case with the following respondent from LucasVarity who says the following: 'The culture that is coming through the very top is that if something goes wrong I want somebody to blame, somebody to punish, somebody to get rid of, it is like that' [LV:M].

The belief that the existing institutional barriers may be a stumbling block for some but not for others becomes evident in the responses from interviewees from all the companies studied. There may appear to be fewer barriers, but this is not so, as pointed out by the Rover respondent who says the following:

'Before, the barriers were basically the structure, you needed to identify a position within the structure in order to get that grade or that position, but now that seems to be more fluid, fluid in that you can develop, the structures

aren't as rigid, so there are probably more opportunities to create a position, but there seems to be more constraints centrally and more control over who gets promoted'[RG:S].

In a seemingly flexible working environment, institutional barriers can stretch managers to the limit, particularly those who aim for a higher post. These barriers function as standards against which people can be judged and condemned on the grounds that they have failed to perform to the required level. Then, those who are fortunate not to lose their job may be left with lateral movement as a career alternative.

The apparent increased number of opportunities provided in lateral moves is not taken seriously by some, which also coincides with results reported in the previous chapter. A GKN respondent remarks that 'again we are back to the word career which carries some progressive movements on an individual's part to move around the business'[GK:M]. The irony that may be contained in this statement, in moving around seeking a career, pales at the jocosity of the words from a LucasVarity respondent who starts by saying that barriers are now the same as before and then elaborates on the situation which he presents as follows:

'You have to make sure that you build up enough skill, that you have got one way forward, two ways sideways and three ways back, so that you are protected as an individual (laughs) from a career point of view. You have to understand the way the organization works'[LV:M].

Across the case-study companies, managers feel that they are being put under great pressure to deliver. They may also be faced with apparently unjustifiable barriers and hurdles, be it a university degree or in-house assessment involving appraisals and

psychometric tests, to which senior managers may also be submitted. The emphasis on employee assessment may have a sombre side to it. Taking a Foucauldian perspective, Grey (1994) discusses the possible manipulation of individuals through surveillance techniques destined to shape their behaviour into what they are led to believe will benefit their employment and career prospects. This almost violation of the self can be easily induced through appraisal exercises, particularly where self-assessment is involved. In turn, these appraisal exercises tend to be presented as a somewhat benevolent means of helping the individual realize his/her aspirations, which can be seen as an extra refinement in employee manipulation. An even gloomier picture arises if one considers this discussion in conjunction with Gallie *et al.*'s (1998) finding that there is a correlation between rapid dismissal procedures and the use of 'technical' systems of management-performance control, in which some psychometric tests can perhaps be included. These authors have also identified a cumulative failure to resume employment other than temporary, low-quality, insecure jobs. This applies mainly to non-managerial situations. However, it might extend to managers, where they have been reduced to 'blue collars', as seen by some (Scase and Goffee, 1989). This situation is by no means confirmed by the evidence recorded in this chapter, but the danger of such a development may be present.

2 - Stretched in Time

** as for core hours, there hasn't been any change (LucasVarity)*

** people are expected to work longer hours now (GKN)*

** greater responsibilities, overloading of work (Rover)*

** the hours of work are too long for a lot of people (Valeo)*

At their interview, respondents were invited to express their opinion on whether for them there has been a change in the number of hours of work since they joined the company. The results are shown on Table 7.1.

COMPANY⇒ HOURS ⇓	Rover	Lucas Varity	GKN	Valeo	Total
INCREASE	88%	89%	78%	84%	85%
NO CHANGE	12%	11%	22%	16%	15%

Table 7.1 - Managers' working hours for their company

The mean total percentage reported for INCREASE was eighty five percent, with no dramatic differences between the companies. No one could report a decrease in working hours. The reported increase does not correspond to an alteration of the contractual number of working hours; this is extra time put in by the individuals who feel that this is necessary to keep their required level of performance in response to corporate demands.

Downsizing is believed not to ease the workload of the remaining managers. A GKN respondent explains: 'I think that people are expected to work longer hours now because we don't have enough people to do the work that is necessary'[GK:M]. A LucasVarity respondent voices the same opinion: 'Because we don't have enough people a heavy burden is carried by a few'[LV:M].

The effects of corporate downsizing may combine, at the individual's level, with an increased workload due to promotion. A LucasVarity respondent puts forward his point of view: 'It is related to changes of job, changes of seniority, less people to delegate to, flattening of structures which is related to having less people to delegate to, constant

headcount reductions'[LV:S]. A GKN respondent sums up the situation in the following words: 'Well, I think that there are two things to it. One is your move in your career, you, it is an individual thing. And also, I think, due to the ever-decreasing and right-sizing of companies the workload is getting bigger'[GK:S].

The move to a more senior post may be in some cases the major factor in the increase of working hours. This is the opinion of the GKN respondent who said that it 'is down to my role change rather than to the company's changes'[GK:S]. A Valeo respondent simply accepts the increase of working hours as an element inherent to the position he has moved to: 'I have come up further on the career ladder, so it is inevitable'[VL:S]. The same opinion was implicit in the words of the Rover respondent who commented: 'Greater responsibilities, overloading of work'[RG:S].

The extended time is not formally established, it is not a contractual obligation, as a LucasVarity respondent explains: 'As for core hours, there hasn't really been any change. On a personal basis, yes, I do more work hours now. Primarily it is the role that I am in now, when you get into a management role the job is there and you have to do it and it sometimes takes those extra hours'[LV:M]. A GKN respondent explains: 'Just because the level of responsibility increases, it is sometimes easier to do certain aspects of your work, especially paper work and other items that need your undivided attention, outside of working hours.[...] You tend to be interrupted constantly throughout the day, you have to address the day-to-day problems as they arise'[GK:S].

To some extent, it may be the individual's own perception that an extension of working hours is required. A GKN respondent talks about his own particular case: 'If I wanted to, I could do the hours that I am contracted to do, but I don't get my satisfaction from that because I wouldn't perform very well'[GK:M]. A Lucas respondent stresses both the

personal side and the corporate side of this matter when he distinguishes between two different reasons: 'One, self-induced extra work, as I have gone through the management grades I have felt it necessary to work harder and longer to achieve my goals and objectives, but there has been a level of expectation which has been created externally and above that'[LV:S]. A GKN respondent takes a detached look at the situation when he comments as follows: 'Some people seem to think that they have to put in sixty hours a week, other people think that they should leave bang on time and if they are working over there is something wrong. And I really think that it depends on the individual manager that you talk to, which view they hold on that subject'[GK:M].

Be it self-induced extra work, the need to meet corporate expectations, or a combination of both, some individuals may have reached the limit beyond which they cannot give more hours to the firm. A Valeo respondent remarks: 'I think that the hours of work are too long for a lot of people here'[VL:M]. Others report domestic problems, as is the case with the LucasVarity respondent who says the following: 'Some have conflicts at home because they spend too much time here'[LV:M]. Some have made a stand. A respondent from Rover explains: 'I tend to departmentalize my life, I have work, I have home, I have other activities, and I try not to cross the boundaries too often.[...]. If I have a family commitment, that comes first'[RG:M]. A colleague used to work long extra hours, but something happened that made this change: 'Well, the level that I am at now, I have been in for a couple of years, coincided with the birth of our first child, who is now two and three quarters, and your priorities do change, you have to prioritize'[RG:M]. A respondent from GKN, father with a young family, is in a similar situation: 'I have got three kids, so I normally make a point of making it home for dinner at night so we can have our dinner together. I like to have quality time with the kids'[GK:M]. However, the

respondent above who revised his priorities when his first child was born also mentions that he has 'remained for a couple of years in the same position'[RG:M]; he may be concerned that opting for the family may be prejudicing his career.

Overworked managers suspect that they may be suffering partly the effects of a trend in corporate culture with which they have to go along. A GKN respondent comments as follows: 'I would say through workload and through expectation your hours get slightly longer'[GK:M]. And the cultural element is highlighted by the LucasVarity respondent who says the following: 'I don't think that we are unique in the industry, in most industries that I am aware of it is the same story [...], so I think that it is the working ethos of the nineties'[LV:M].

Similarly to the managers in Collinson and Collinson's (1997) study, the managers in my case-study organizations are under great pressure to increase the time they spend at work. For some of these individuals, the need to stay longer hours may result from self-induced extra work based on a subjective perception that this effort is required. This can perhaps be seen to support Grey's (1994) view that employees are being manipulated so as to internalize certain behaviour patterns. On a different but related point, evidence from my investigation may also support Simpson's (1998) findings of competitive presenteeism amongst managers, which may extend to a territorial rivalry over project ownership, in an individualist culture which is not conducive to employee cooperation and is therefore detrimental to the efficient running of the business.

3 - Stretched ... in Space

- * I wouldn't be in the position that I am in now (GKN)*
- * it is something that they look for (Valeo)*
- * senior managers are expected to be mobile (LucasVarity)*
- * we don't hold jobs open for people (GKN)*
- * there are domestic issues that constrain my mobility (Rover)*

In response to the interview question on whether their company places great emphasis on mobility, respondents across the different case-studies were unanimous in that international and inter-continental mobility is required at senior levels. Those from GKN and LucasVarity, however, elaborated the most on the matter, perhaps because they felt particularly threatened by demands in this respect. Talking about his own case and with his time working abroad in mind, a director remarked: 'I would imagine, knowing the way GKN is structured,[...], I wouldn't be in the position that I am in now'[GK:S]. Referring to the number of people who have been in Europe and the US, another respondent from GKN comments: 'I suppose if you put into a percentage the management grades, it must be quite high'[GK:M]. A LucasVarity respondent says very much the same: 'I think that the view is that senior managers are expected to be mobile, there is emphasis on it, country-wide and to a degree world-wide'[LV:M]. International experience is the corporate explanation for the need to work abroad, and a GKN respondent stresses the relative freedom the individual may have in the matter: 'Whether or not that is a mutual decision is another question. If you want to work abroad and that is both required in terms of having international experience and international understanding of your next job and so long as that is a mutual decision and not just the company's one...'[GK:S].

Moreover, there are some pitfalls. GKN respondents mentioned that there are problems, including reintegration, in respect of placements abroad. One interviewee explains: 'We are operating with greatly reduced manning levels, we don't hold jobs open for people, and so when people come back it is very much the case of what jobs are available rather than "well, here is a job that is ideally suited for you"' [GK:M]. Another interviewee provided the following overall picture: 'A survey was done recently on seventy odd people that had been on foreign secondments, asking for their opinions, and the vast majority have said that GKN are very poor at organizing these things, support at the actual company you go to, support from the company you are going from, and the career plan of what is going to happen when you come back is very uncertain. But I have had some good stories where some people have had a very good experience' [GK:S].

The possible implications of declining an invitation to work abroad were discussed. A respondent from Rover feels that having refused to work abroad in the past held back his 'career progression' [RG:M]. A GKN respondent comments: 'I think that there is always a suspicion that if it is offered and you say "not really", then it strikes you off other opportunities' [GK:M]. This opinion appears to be endorsed by the LucasVarity respondent who says the following: 'I don't think that it would have a negative effect inasmuch as that person then has to be got rid of but it does have to have a narrowing of the opportunities' [LV:S]. A similar view is expressed by the Valeo respondent who comments as follows: 'I am not saying that they (the company) would chuck them out of the door, but I think that it is something that they look for' [VL:S].

International and global mobility, taken as an extension of corporate demands on performance particularly in order to qualify for senior posts, is a source of dilemmas. The tensions brought about by the office-home time dilemma may be aggravated with

travelling, secondments and placements abroad. The following testimonies give the overall picture.

Moving abroad is an important decision and there are other people who have to be taken into account, as expressed by the GKN respondent who says: 'It isn't just you that moves, it is your family as well, in fact it would be a big decision to move'[GK:M] or the LucasVarity respondent who expresses his thoughts as follows: 'It would depend on the country they would be talking about me moving to. It would be a big decision to change country. The decision would also depend on my family'[LV:M].

Many different individuals must be considered in these decisions. A respondent from GKN explains his own circumstances: 'My wife works and has a profession in her own right, she actually supported me, was the breadwinner; I would be reluctant to disturb her opportunity'[GK:M]. A respondent from LucasVarity is also concerned with someone else's employment: 'I have a partner, so I would have to take into consideration her career'[LV:M]. You may have both younger and older dependants, as is the case with the respondent from Rover who explains: 'I think if someone came over and said "we have this fantastic job for you and it is in Germany, do you want it?", suddenly I would have to think about children, schools, parents. There is no way my parents are going to move from the area, let alone to Germany and just leaving them here, I would feel guilty. So there are domestic issues that constrain my mobility'[RG:M].

The children's education is felt as a major point of concern when it comes to moving abroad. A LucasVarity respondent explains: 'My children are at school age and so it is difficult to consider long term placements'[LV:M]. The following words come from a GKN respondent who has the same problem: 'Initially I would say "no" but again I would say, I suppose, being realistic you would have to look at what the reason was for it and

the benefits were for it [...]. I will say in the next ten to twelve years that the potential for moving is low. I have to consider what the kids and my family are doing'[GK:M]. Others are adamant that they would decline such an invitation, as is the case with the GKN respondent who says the following: 'There is no way that at the moment I would consider upping and offing because my two children are going through GCSEs and A-Levels and the disruption that it would cause to them is probably more significant than the benefits that I would get out of it'[GK:M].

It may be believed that it will not be so difficult to move abroad for managers who are out of the period of their life during which they are bringing up children. This is the opinion of the GKN respondent who comments: 'It is easier when you are younger and easier when you are older but when you have young children then it is very difficult'[GK:M]. The problem persists and may intensify as the children grow up, as the following LucasVarity respondent explains: 'And then there is another level when they start secondary school, then you don't really want to have to move. It is a sliding scale of mobility and unfortunately it is completely the opposite direction to what the company would wish'[LV:M]. Older people also don't always look forward to moving abroad. A colleague of his would not even consider moving within the UK: 'I think that the answer to that is definitely "no". I just look at my age and how much longer I have to work and with home commitments I would not wish to relocate'[GK:M]. Being placed abroad does not look any more attractive to the respondent from Rover who remarks as follows: 'I wouldn't at my age now be prepared to go and work in Germany for two or three years'[RG:M]. Some individuals feel quite indignant, as the LucasVarity respondent who remarks the following: 'I think that it is totally unreasonable that companies should think

that everybody should jump up and down and run with them.[...]. I don't think that they should try and make people move and I don't think that they can anyway'[LV:M].

Some of those who decide to stay for family reasons, do so in the conviction that they are, or may be, holding back their careers, although some may recover. The following respondent from Rover talks from experience: 'Family circumstances, I mean, I have declined one very specific opportunity within Rover which was to move to Japan for a period of time, I think that without doubt actually slowed down my career progression at a point in time'[RG:S]. A respondent from LucasVarity is faced with a similar situation: 'As a matter of fact it was clearly stated that if I wanted to go higher I would have to, but I won't, go abroad for them, I think that they live with this thing that it is very easy to move. It actually destroys families'[LV:M]. A respondent from GKN has resigned to the thought that it will be difficult for him to 'go higher', the reason being 'because I want to stay where I live and because of my son and the school in which I have chosen to keep him'[GK:M].

Working away during the week and being home for the weekend is a less drastic change, easily accepted by some, like the LucasVarity respondent who makes the following comment: 'The thing is that you can be geographically mobile without moving, so one week you are in France, the next in the States, the next week you are in India, etc.. I don't mind doing that but what I wouldn't do is move'[LV:M]. A colleague of his shares the same feelings: 'I might commute to Paris, when you are in Paris for five days per week and come back at weekends'[LV:M]. But keeping up this style of life may get too much after a while, as a Valeo respondent explains: 'I am happy to stay put for a while, I have been in a position of getting on an aeroplane every Monday morning for two years and so, now I am happy to keep my feet on the ground for a few years'[VL:S]. Anyway, if moves

abroad ruin families, commuting may have the same effect, as another Valeo respondent points out: 'Even when I had just married, with one wee nipper, I was prepared to spend three or four days a week away from my family and really only see them at weekends, but I don't really think that it did my marriage much good'[VL:M].

The findings recorded above are a new contribution to the existing pool of evidence on corporate demands for employee mobility, travelling and working abroad. They are concurrent with the work of previous authors in that working away from home is demanded from managers, particularly at higher levels (Fletcher and Williams, 1986); and that international management careers are becoming more common features (Forster, 1992) and are indeed a stepping-stone to senior management and executive posts. My findings are equally concurrent with the work of other authors, in that for the individual, the opportunity to work abroad can be a mixed blessing (Merrick, 1996); and that some managers are just not 'global animals' (Edwards *et al.*, 1993). This last work also stresses that managers are not just passively doing as their firms demand, but new demands are internalized, with a certain degree of personal control, rather than directly imposed.

A manager may feel satisfied with lateral moves and no change to a higher grade. However, those who aspire to climb the short ladder in the downsized organization may have to deliver according to demanding business targets. Corporate demands are also felt to extend to an absorbing commitment to the firm that trespasses on to other aspects of an individual's life. As a LucasVarity puts it, the company 'is looking for capable people who are willing to make significant sacrifice to achieve a lot in their careers' and reach 'the most senior levels'[LV:S].

II - MANAGERS' REACTIONS... AND OUTCOMES

This second part of the chapter concentrates on the effects of the demands reported in the first part. It starts by analysing the correlation between pressure and stress felt by individual managers. Then it examines employee-employer dynamics in the relation between managers and the firm in the face of the difficulties the former may experience when trying to secure and improve their career prospects.

1 - Pressure and Stress

COMPANY ⇒ PRESSURE ⇓	Rover	Lucas Varity	GKN	Valeo	Total
INCREASE	75%	90%	85%	86%	84%
NO CHANGE	25%	10%	15%	14%	16%

Table 7.2 - Managers' experienced work pressure, per company

At their interview, respondents were invited to express their opinion on whether for them there has been a change concerning pressure and stress since they joined the company. The results are shown on Table 7.2. The mean total percentage reported for INCREASE was eighty four percent, with reasonably even contributions throughout. There were no reports of a decrease in pressure. Details on the issue of stress can be found below.

In parallel with results presented earlier in this chapter, downsizing and delayering can probably be held responsible for an increased pressure of work and associated stress. A

LucasVarity respondent comments that 'everyone is under so much pressure because we have downscaled in terms of numbers of people'[LV:M]. This opinion is shared by the Rover respondent who explained: 'There are fewer people doing the same jobs, therefore there has to be more pressure on the individuals'[RG:M]. A colleague of his comments: 'You are expected to do more, you are expected to do it quicker and you are expected to do it more efficiently and to a higher standard and with less people'[RG:M]. This may not be a company specific situation but, instead, may be happening across the whole sector, as a LucasVarity respondent points out: 'There is a lot more pressure on every individual to achieve and that is just general business pressures, it is the whole industry'[LV:S]. Also, this is not necessarily a negative aspect. A GKN respondent explains: 'Generally, I think that the level of stress has grown over the years because of the delayering but I think that a certain amount of stress is needed too, you must have some to give you some drive'[GK:M]. A similar view is expressed by a colleague of his who says the following: 'There is less of a hierarchy, [...], and so therefore you are taking on more responsibility. I mean, most managers take a fairly high degree of ownership for what they do as the empowerment that has been given to them, which I think is a good motivator for people but I think that stress comes with it'[GK:S]. The situation becomes even worse when delayering is followed by a reorganization, as after the merger of Lucas and Varity. A respondent from the merged company comments as follows: 'When you had fixed roles and responsibilities, you not only knew what you were doing but your manager knew what you were doing as well and he knew where you could go. We are in a kind of situation now where not even some of your bosses know what is going on'[LV:M].

Seniority is also associated with increased pressure and stress. A GKN respondent explains: 'Just because the higher you move up the ladder the more responsibility you take

on. With increased responsibility comes increased stress levels'[GK:S]. Sharing this view, another GKN respondent gives insight into why it can be so, when he explains that 'when you manage a great big group of people' you are relying on them 'to get things done as a generator, and that is a lot of stress if you don't manage to achieve'[GK:S]. A LucasVarity respondent gives a detailed description of the same problem:

'I find that as you get to more senior roles you have less direct control over the work that is being done. It is the sort of remoteness from the work itself which can be frustrating and a lot more stressful. You have to influence some people who have to influence the people who work for them who have to influence the people who work for them. And that is the position that I am in now'[LV:S].

However, we must avoid a deterministic view. Pressure at senior posts may not necessarily lead to stress. The individual may be able to have some control. A GKN respondent comments: 'I think that basically is the person themselves, if you as a person are under stress. I think that generally ninety percent of the people in our position are either used to it or they wouldn't be there'[GK:S]. Along this line of argument, a Rover director points out that he has 'an enormous responsibility'. But he further remarks: 'However, hopefully I am able to cope with that'[RG:S]. Moreover, some individuals may enjoy the extra pressure that comes with seniority. This is the case of the LucasVarity respondent who makes the following statement:

'I feel less stressed. I mean, despite the additional demands, I actually prefer it. By and large I am happier being challenged, providing I make my own assessment as to whether that challenge is reasonable. But I don't want soft challenges or soft targets. There is no real satisfaction and no sense of achievement with them. So if it is something that is worthwhile, that I can

get to believe in, then I would say that I would commit a lot to that and I don't rate it as stress, I don't lose any sleep'[LV:S].

One step further can be taken in which, in addition to pressure being cherished as a motivator, stress is seen as a separate negative element to be avoided. A Valeo respondent defends 'an increase in pressure and a reduction in stress' and puts forward the following point of view:

'I have no problem with pressure, I think pressure is something positive, I think there should be pressure to achieve results. But the way in which that pressure is exerted means that it can either translate into stress or not. [...]. I think some pressure is positive, people work to deadlines, people work to targets, but what they don't respond to is being given unbelievable impossible targets and being psychologically stressed. You see what I mean, that is how you make the distinction between the two, pressure is good and stress is negative'[VL:S].

While, at top level, pressure and stress appear to be under control, in the middle management range there may be a more dramatic picture. Some individuals appear to have found a way of living with these difficulties, but it is not easy. A respondent from Rover explains: 'I personally don't feel under any more stress but that is really because I make vivid attempts to manage that but there are a number of people who do suffer from stress related issues and I am sure that if it wasn't for the fact that there is a lot more knowledge and recognition of stress related issues we would probably have a lot more people being ill'[RG:M].

Some are ill, but cannot afford to allow their problem be known for fear of missing opportunities or losing their job. A LucasVarity respondent reports as follows: 'I have colleagues who are suffering from stress at the moment, but they wouldn't admit it openly because it would be seen negatively. I know that there are people who don't sleep at night very well, that sort of situation'[LV:M]. Any sign of weakness may be fatal concerning one's employment. A GKN respondent remarks as follows: 'Touch wood, I have a good reputation, but your reputation is only as good as your last mistake'[GK:M].

A remarkable increase in pressure is reported by respondents in all my case-study organizations. Middle managers may feel overloaded as a result of the reduced number of positions. However, in general, there is no substantive evidence that these managers' relationship with the organization has become cool and calculative (Handy, 1994) or that these managers want to replace the traditional implicit contract with a 'new deal' (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). Curiously, great increase in pressure is also felt by senior managers. Some may also find that the higher the post the more difficult it becomes to reach the bottom line in the chain of roles for which one is ultimately responsible. Despite their frustration, these individuals appear to see their problems simply as a necessary evil in higher posts, and in some cases as a stimulating personal challenge.

2 - Moving out? Where to?

Some managers may have had enough. A LucasVarity respondent in middle management complains as follows:

'Pressure certainly isn't going to go down. I am not going to get visits from senior management coming in to see me to say "hey, we are sorry for being

a complete rat bag to you for the last year and asking you to do all these unreasonable things and cancelling your holiday etc. and doing nine things at once and putting pressure on your family and all that sort of stuff, we had got it all wrong and now we are going to give you training and you are going to be a happy bunny for the next five years". It is intense, and a lot of senior managers will actually enjoy that intensity, but there is limits and I don't know where it is going. Most of my colleagues and peers both in this company and in other divisions when they are communing outside of business they will talk about opportunities for early retirement [...]. I am not sitting here as a bitter and twisted and cynical person who is about to hang myself because at the moment I can cope with it and to a certain extent thrive with the pressure and the rewards both financial and practical that it brings, what I am worried about is the increasing ramp'[LV:M].

Nonetheless, when invited to consider the thought of leaving the company, this respondent says 'If I was motivated to do so' but he is 'not bothered'[LV:M]. An emotional outburst may confirm a high level of stress, but it may not mean that any drastic action will be taken.

A gap between expressed dissatisfaction and action taken can also be found amongst older managers in middle positions. A GKN respondent says of himself: 'I am now getting to the age bracket where people are younger than me, so obviously there are only a certain number of posts I could go to' and adds that perhaps he could 'look outside'[GK:M]. However, there may be an element of fantasizing in his words. He will stay. In fact, he is in the same situation as his colleague who says the following: 'Having been here a long time, it is one of those catch twenty two situations, they have my pension

rights which as you get older it is one of those things that you think about more and more. I am not looking to leave the organization'[GK:M].

In general, managers confronted with pressure and stress seek solutions within the firm, as the Valeo respondent who hopes that the problem can be solved from above and suggests that the problem be 'addressed from a resource point of view, not from flogging the people harder'[VL:M]. Moreover, moving out does not appear to be a cherished alternative. A LucasVarity respondent explains the reason why in his case: 'I think that going outside is a higher risk option because I know a lot more about this organization'[LV:M]. The following respondent from Rover also thinks that it is safer to stay: 'There are no economic benefits in being outside Rover and doing the same job. And there is the hassle of looking somewhere else'[RG:M]. Another LucasVarity respondent equally thinks that a move outside would not give him anything different: 'I would probably be better off here, [...]. If I moved to another big organization, I would probably have the same issues that I have here'[LV:M]. The view that there may be no advantage in moving out is shared by the respondent from Rover who says: 'I think that there are lots of opportunities outside and that there are lots of opportunities inside; and it is just a case of deciding one way or the other'[RG:M].

Of course, leaving will always appeal to some. However, the reason would not be avoiding corporate demands, pressure and stress. If they left, it would be through the ambition to progress further, to find something even better. 'If someone was to come to me with something really substantial, then I would'[GK:M], says a GKN respondent. However, allowances must be made for, on the one hand, some degree of daydreaming and, on the other hand, some cautious statements in spite of the fact that respondents had

been assured anonymity. Nevertheless, responses in general seem to reflect a belief that it does not matter where you go, the situation would be roughly the same, and it is better the devil you know. This is concurrent with Storey *et al.*'s (1997) finding that many managers spend their career with the same company despite unfavourable circumstances.

3 - The Right Place at the Right Time and other 'Rights'

In the struggle to clear hurdles and get into a good position, being in the right place at the right time seems to be a dominant concern, intimately associated with pressure and tension, issues that are central in this chapter. This aspect was identified mainly when sifting through the interviewees' responses to the question on their perceived major factor of promotion in their company. The main results for this interview question can be found in the previous chapter, where we saw that the factors mentioned by the respondents are, in decreasing numerical order of incidence, performance, availability, contacts, education, opportunities, drive and culture.

However, respondents across the different companies studied also included in their replies, almost obsessively, the expression 'to be in the right place at the right time' or variants in which the notion of getting it 'right' was present. The common denominator in all the variations on striking it 'right' seems to point to the belief that one may meet all the major factors of promotion in the company and still fail to achieve one's career goals. This seemed to play such an important role that I decided to isolate the respective sentences and analyse them separately as a contribution in its own right on the issue of pressure and tension. The examples below illustrate the different facets encountered in this respect.

A respondent from Rover opines that the individual's performance may not, on its own, result in promotion: 'The single biggest factor is probably delivering things successfully,

but you need to be in the right place at the right time in order to be able to take advantage of the organization in terms of career advancement'[RG:M]. Another respondent from this company considers the same two aspects but may be putting more weight on the latter than his colleague did: 'I do think that for most people it is performance, but that is only part of the story. I think that there is a lot of being in the right place at the right time'[RG:S]. An element of elitism may be involved. Making the most of one's visibility appears to be valued highly by the GKN respondent who says: 'Performance of an individual and being noticed or being in the right place at the right time'[GK:S].

Whilst in some statements performance can be given priority and be mentioned first, being in the right place at the right time receives the main emphasis in other statements. A LucasVarity respondent sees the matter as follows: 'It is difficult because there are various things. You could be in the right place at the right time'[LV:M]. Thinking along the same line, a respondent from Rover comments: 'It may be it is luck but on the other hand sometimes it is a case of being in the right place at the right time'[RG:M].

What do they really mean? Do they all mean the same? Some statements give clues as to an element that appears to be encapsulated in the set phrase and may be present in different degrees of consciousness in the mind of its users, a cultural element. This is the case with the respondent from Rover who holds the following view: 'I would say self-determination to do or achieve and that will then lead to behaviour in a particular way' and 'probably being in the right place at the right time'[RG:S]. Fitting in with top management values appears to be rated as more important than the conventional tools of selection in the opinion of some of the interviewees. A respondent from GKN presents the following list of priorities: 'Good managers; friends in the right places, that is, high places; more recently, management development programmes' [GK:M]. Similarly, a respondent

from Rover explains as follows: '[You] have to be of the right culture and that is because there is no point promoting somebody who doesn't have the right attitude for the job. And I think they look a bit at the psychological assessment'[RG:S]. In these two examples, some 'rights' – friends in the right places, the right culture, the right attitude – come before the formal management development programmes and psychological assessment or personal assessment.

Tipping over the balance in the struggle to get it 'right', culture and attitude are given even more weight by other interviewees. A respondent from Valeo exclaims: 'Yeah! By networking'[VL:S], and a LucasVarity respondent sees in this a key factor: 'There is one key factor, wouldn't call it the old boys network but it is along those lines'[LV:M]. A respondent from Rover takes the matter a bit further and expresses the following opinion: 'Mainly through networking. If I am cynical, it doesn't matter how well you do your job, you can be an absolute disaster and still get on if you are in the right place at the right time and you say the right things to the right people'[RG:M].

In short, respondents see promotion resting mainly on objective performance and, in second place, on availability, and the latter can be taken as an extension of performance. They also consider further factors of promotion. However, in a fluid and uncertain working environment, these factors may not suffice. Taking the expected steps may not guarantee the desired effect. Anxiety persists. You may not be able to strike it 'right'! However, the notion of striking it 'right' may also mean that something is 'wrong' as Jackall (1988) found out in his work on management life and politics. It may indeed entail the idea that career is often driven by luck rather than competence. The 'careerism' and 'impression management' associated with this outlook have also been discussed by

authors such as Feldman and Weitz (1991) and Feldman and Klich (1992). These authors may be seen to imply that impression management and management politics are all that is important, but the managers in my study also value skills and experience, on top of which politics may play some role.

CONCLUSIONS

Rover, LucasVarity, GKN and Valeo managers were notably consistent in their view that there has been a very high increase both in working hours and work pressure. Between 78% and 89% reported an increase in the number of hours they work and between 75% and 90% an increase in the pressure they experience. It may be true that middle managers have a more important role to play in the organization with fewer ranks, as optimistically suspected by Dopson and Stewart (1990), but this appears to be felt by the individual more as an overload of work and pressure rather than enhanced empowerment. Senior managers equally feel an increase in work load and, in a decentralized work context, some report difficulty in keeping control over the work for which they are ultimately responsible.

On the other hand, as pointed out by Edwards *et al.* (1993), managers retain some control – as in the case of choosing to work long hours or not to do so – in which corporate demands are not directly imposed but action results from a perceived need and internalized decision. However, perhaps there are significant differences between individuals. Both retaining an independent judgement and handling pressure without stress may be achievements that define suitability for higher posts.

The story emerging is, therefore, one which may show different kinds of managers. First, managers take different views on the extent of pressure and how to cope – some have a problem, others do not. Second, each individual manager balances costs and benefits of the new way of working. Some may see in it a source of opportunities, some may even enjoy the pressure, although with some degree of concern over ‘the increasing ramp’. However, others experience stress and frustration.

Furthermore, a bleak scenario of heavy work, unmanageable pressure and frustration may be compounded with doubtful career opportunities. In the interplay between operational decentralization and strategic centralization (Sisson and Marginson, 1995), there is a mixture of simultaneously more fluidity and more constraints. Predictable institutional steps have been removed, but new hurdles can be raised unexpectedly. These may take the form of explicit, or simply perceived, demands for longer hours at the work place or for mobility which can be required between divisions, internationally or globally. External and geographical mobility is an increasing demand and feature of managerial life and a route to seniority, as discussed by previous authors (Fletcher and Williams, 1986; Forster, 1992), but may not suit everyone (Edwards *et al.*, 1993); indeed, it offers a mixture of advantages and disadvantages for the individual (Merrick, 1996). These hurdles can also come in combination with the barrier of a university qualification and the unsolved problem of technical and professional careers (Roberts *et al.*, 1972; Gunz, 1980; Lee and Smith, 1992). Managers who aspire to more senior grades may find themselves caught between pressing demands to deliver and shapeless routes for career progression. In their race to achieve, they may feel compelled to spend extra time at work and accept posts abroad, regardless of their other personal needs and their family commitments. Furthermore, on their return to this country, they may find that their company could not

hold a job open for them, and they may have to take what other options may be available, if any.

Thus, fluidity, on the one side, and constraints, on the other side, form a duality which is conducive to generating tension. Tension is likely to intensify where pressure reaches unbearable levels. This can be the case with tight monitoring of the individual's presence in the work place (see also Collinson and Collinson, 1997); or when the individual feels manipulated (see Grey, 1994); or when there are doubts over the fairness of some appraisal and selection techniques (see Gallie *et al.*, 1998). However, in general, no clear evidence was encountered that the managers in my investigation saw a definite link between the difficulties they experience and a possible corporate infringement of the implicit contract. Gratton *et al.* (1999) found employees who experienced a 'profound disquiet' about the nature of the psychological contract between them and the organization (1999: 208). I have also found concerns, e.g., in respect of pressure to deliver, long hours, work abroad, and some appraisals and tests. In general, however, the managers in my study organizations were making an effort to live with their concerns and find ways to tolerate the situation, which may perhaps to some extent tend to be seen as, at least in part, the result of difficult business circumstances in manufacture and the automotive industry.

Despite a bleak scenario of heavy work demands and unclear career prospects, no evidence could be found in my case-study organizations of Heckscher's (1995) announced end of loyalty and post-corporate model! Instead, the managers in my investigation tend to opt for trying to achieve the best they can in the internal market, a finding which coincides with previous evidence (Storey *et al.*, 1997). Fluidity and constraints are both

present. Faced with this scenario, managers are trying to make sense of often contradictory messages and establish a constructive relationship with their firm.

On the other hand, seeking solutions within the firm may be conducive to developments associated with the preoccupation with striking it 'right' but which may not benefit the business, as discussed in earlier studies (Jackall, 1988; Feldman and Weitz, 1991; Feldman and Klich, 1992), such as 'careerism' and 'impression management'. A tendency to presenteeism may be pointing in this direction (see also Simpson, 1998). However, the preoccupation with striking it 'right' in my study organizations appears to signify mainly an active search for solutions in a difficult situation. The following chapter will bring further evidence on how efforts to find solutions are likely to continue in the future.

These findings will be examined further in the discussion chapter, in PART III. In the debate they will be considered in combination with the findings reported in the other results chapters in PART II of this work.

8 - Ahead & Away

This is the last chapter of the five that look in detail at the findings in my research. The first two of these examined the management career in terms of the structures provided by companies. The subsequent two looked at career development from the standpoint of the individual manager. The current chapter addresses developments in the case-study companies that may provide more direct pointers to possible future trends.

Despite a reduced number of ranks in the hierarchy, many managers in my case-study organizations, indeed more than half of the respondents, still look to higher grades as the normal reward for their loyalty and commitment to the firm. This is a finding in my automotive research settings which has a recent parallel in Thomas and Dunkerley's (1999) findings in other sectors of the economy. On the other hand, in the organizations in my investigation there is also a corporate emphasis on lateral job moves. This is equally a finding of my automotive research which is similar to evidence recently encountered in other sectors of the economy (McGovern *et al.*, 1998).

Therefore, we have both employee career aspirations in terms of upward movement and, in contrast to this, an employer-led push for sideways movement instead. These may appear to be antagonistic forces that will easily set the scene for managers' perception of an infringement of the implicit contract and managers' reactive action as portrayed by some authors (Scase and Goffee, 1989; Handy, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995). However, this is not the picture which emerges in my research. On the

contrary, my case-study organizations show managers who are trying to cooperate with their employer and find a solution within the organization, although this may not mean the same to everyone and may be expected to materialize in different ways, as we shall see in this chapter.

The first part, entitled 'Predictions and trends', concentrates on career structure. It includes the respondents' predictions of what a career will be like in their company in five years' time. It reports on aspects such as career paths; academic qualifications and technical expertise; performance demands; intra-organizational and geographical mobility; some implications of international and global involvement; as well as on the employer-employee relationship as far as career is concerned.

The second and final part, entitled 'Culture-bound pointers', concentrates on managers' own priorities and associated cultural issues. It includes notions and values that may be indicators of trends pointing to new directions in future views on career. It presents a record of the respondents' own definition of career; as well as ideology and identity in the individual's search for a meaningful and rewarding place in the corporate scene.

I - PREDICTIONS AND TRENDS

Table 8.1 on predictions about career in the future shows some developments in relation to the career changes recorded in Table 5.4 in CHAPTER 5. The emerging increase in emphasis on formal qualifications and performance analysis plus the emerging increase in the focus given to technical knowledge, which are experienced as current changes (Table

5.4) are predicted to become institutionalized as part of generally more structured paths (Table 8.1). Fewer ranks to climb and a broader base to cover (Table 5.4) will correspond in the future to multiple short ladders in the wider organizational context where mobility between roles and geographically (Table 5.4) will entail an intensified international dimension.

TOMORROW'S CORPORATE CAREER PATHS	Rover	Lucas Varity	GKN	Valeo
<p>MORE STRUCTURED PATHS entailing</p> <p>* TIGHT REQUIREMENTS IN QUALIFICATIONS * TIGHT REQUIREMENTS IN DELIVERY * STATUS FOR THE TECHNICAL EXPERT</p>	√ √ √	√ √ √	√ √ √	√ √ √
<p>MORE INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL MOVEMENT entailing</p> <p>* FEW-RANK MAIN LADDERS * MULTIPLE SECONDARY LADDERS * HEAVY DEMANDS FOR INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY</p>	√ √ √	√ √ √	√ √ √	√ √ √

Table 8.1 - Predicted corporate career features in five years' time

The results summarized in Table 8.1 are the managers' responses to the interview question on their prediction of what a career will be like in their present company in five years' time. There were some vague and noncommittal replies such as that from the LucasVarity respondent who said 'I don't think that it will be significantly different'[LV:M]. Others found the prediction too difficult to make, as is the case of the respondent from Rover who commented as follows: 'Well, yeah, particularly for a fairly abstract concept like career. It is hard enough trying to define it, let alone work out what

changes there might be to it in five years' time'[RG:S]. However, there were also very well defined views which showed that this is a matter to which managers had been giving some careful thought.

To some extent, the various contributions received in response to this question reflect a number of concerns and hopes related to the specific circumstances of each company. They build up on respondents' contributions, recorded in previous chapters, on issues such as downsizing and restructuring. However, in each case, a particular aspect appears to stand out.

Associated with BMW's take-over, there is in Rover a certain measure of enthusiasm over the prospect of a better chance for technical and professional careers. A respondent expressed his optimism in the following words: 'I think that if we continue to develop the facilities and the skills to make it, new technology is going to be encouraged. If people want to pursue a particular specialism, those opportunities are going to continue to grow'[RG:S]. LucasVarity had to adjust to the changes that came with the merger of Lucas and Varity including recent dismissals of several senior managers. A respondent explained that, in the past, 'a lot of people have stayed within the organization' where they 'developed their career onwards and up' and he hopes that it will continue to be so [LV:S]. At GKN, the intensified external recruitment of graduates, together with the recent attention given to management appraisal exercises, may be cause for apprehension for some. A respondent who does not hold a degree made the following comment: 'Things are changing. If it continues the way it is then it almost becomes a two-tiered society, I think, because there is a greater emphasis on the recruitment of graduates for senior jobs. Below that there are those who are stuck because they don't have a degree, they are restricted because they will never get over the next rung. I can see it going that way. I don't think this is necessarily a good thing'[GK:M]. Very much present in the mind of

Valeo respondents appears to be the uniformity of corporate procedures on the grounds of facilitating Group-wide circulation of employees. A respondent expressed the following opinion: 'I think we will keep on going in the same direction which is to go for more and more international mobility'[VL:M].

These company specific aspects, however, pale into insignificance compared to deeper issues that emerge from the interviewees' responses. There is, in fact, a common picture across the different companies, as shown in Table 8.1.

1 - Pathways and Moves

1.1. Structured paths

Anticipating what a career will be like in his company in five years' time, a GKN respondent mentions 'generally a lot more structured'[GK:M]. This prediction is endorsed by a colleague of his who comments further as follows: 'It will be fairly structured, I think, the way that things are moving forward now, the interest that GKN is taking with respect to what their careers are like'[GK:S]. A Rover respondent remarks: 'I think that in five years' time careers will be managed more closely'[RG:M].

In this issue of more structured career paths, being well qualified for the job is seen as a major aspect. A GKN respondent anticipates 'better trained managers'[GK:M]. A LucasVarity respondent says: 'I think that we will be getting more graduates'[LV:M]. At Valeo, a respondent points out that the current policy will most likely continue, that of preferring entrants with a second degree, for 'we don't take Bachelor degree people on very easily unless it is a very good university'[VL:S]. On this same aspect, a Rover respondent expects a 'much greater emphasis on academic coupled with specific skills required for the job'[RG:J]. Another respondent from this company points out that

‘people at senior levels would at least have a degree’[RG:S]. A LucasVarity respondent highlights that academic qualifications should not be just a requirement for entry but further degrees should also be sponsored by the employer: ‘It (the company) needs to continue to fund things like Masters courses, by doing this it shows that the company is giving some commitment towards your career development by enhancing your skills but not by saying “if you do a good job then you will be on this grade in two years’ time”, because that doesn’t mean anything really and it just wouldn’t work’[LV:M]; in other words, none of the old bureaucratic format but progression earned through one’s merit – you must deliver. This may mean a different way of going up, as pointed out by the LucasVarity respondent who remarks that people have to be ‘prepared to accept quantum leaps in a career because the incremental steps are not there any more’[LV:M]. An evolution, or revolution, is felt to be in the air concerning technical and professional careers. A LucasVarity respondent remarks: ‘Engineering-wise, there has been a big improvement’[LV:M]. (For further statements from respondents on the issue of qualifications, see Sections I, 2 and I, 3 below.)

Another facet to corporate investment of this kind is the follow-up with a position where the individual can stay long enough to pay back in terms of services rendered to the company. In this respect a Valeo respondent expresses the following opinion: ‘There will probably be more stability. We have recently introduced a new rule that you have to at least spend three years minimal in a job before you can apply for another within the company’[VL:S]. On the negative side, however, there is a concern over the possibility of intensified corporate expectations on the individual, as expressed by the LucasVarity respondent who says that ‘time scales will be shorter, there is going to be even less of this chance to stand back and look and sense-check’[LV:M]. In fact, there is a general

apprehension as to the level of pressure that may come with tighter requirements in delivery, particularly if there is a discrepancy between corporate expectations, empowerment and reward to the individual. (Further respondents' statements can be found in Section I; 4 below.)

1.2. Intra-organizational movement

Expressing his view on what a career will be like in his company in five years' time, a LucasVarity respondent says the following:

'By the way and the nature that the business is going, that is flatter within a kind of matrix management which keeps on the cross-functional aspect thing, there isn't the opportunity to go, you know, from shop-floor to leader, to foreman, to general foreman, to whatever kind of thing, the structure just isn't there any more to do it and it wouldn't be applicable in today's world anyway because it is a narrow view. I think that there is going to be a lot more sideways type progressions, if you want to put it that way, rather than necessarily being seen as hierarchical'[LV:M].

Whilst vertical progression on the one line of command appears to be dismissed by some as narrow and surpassed, lateral career movement appears to be coming to the fore. The latter is seen as positive for both the individual and the company. From the manager's point of view, it provides more ladders, even if short ones, and, hence, more career chances. As a LucasVarity puts it: 'They used to be vertical and now they also have sideways moves. I think that that will be the case, in fact, there will be more lateral movement and so there will be more opportunities in terms of other businesses'[LV:M]. A

GKN respondent equally sees his company going in this same direction and sees it as a general trend: 'Greater intra-organizational working, perhaps greater closer working with sister companies.[...]. And that is occurring in other companies as well'[GK:M]. Finally, intra-organizational movement is seen as the right match to the structured paths reported above. A GKN respondent expresses his prediction as follows: 'It will be much more planned, much more, rather than being linear it will look at interaction with the whole of the business rather than "this is the route and go on"'[GK:M].

However, there are two sides to this situation. Intra-organizational movement may provide a greater variety of opportunities in a wider organizational context, but these will be short ladders. A post at the top of a short ladder in a separate business entity may correspond to a relatively low position in the company-wide grading structure. This is the point made by the Valeo respondent who weighs up the relative seniority of the post he holds in the following words: 'Although it is hierarchically high up, this is a small business. So the position in the hierarchy is probably higher than the level that I have got'[VL:S], i.e., the level at which he is in the grading structure of the wider organization.

There are dissident voices. They acknowledge lateral movement as being here to stay and evolve but they do not see it as part of a corporate structured career path. Some consider this to be negative for the individual. A LucasVarity respondent explains: 'I think it (career) will be more variable, people will be moving around more. I think less predictable as well. In previous times, I think that people were probably more able to plan out where they were going, now you tend to get just lots of off-the-wall opportunities coming from all directions'[LV:M]. For others, the variety of opportunities provided in lateral movement point to a new form of employer-employee relation which is viewed optimistically as innovative. The following LucasVarity respondent expresses his views on the matter as follows:

'Career, I guess, will bounce around a lot. They won't be targeted careers, they will be short term packages, shorter term working packages. In the past, managers have tended to manage an area or a department or whatever for a long period of time. This is changing now, managers are moving around and changing quite rapidly to suit the market demands so that we can be competitive, be innovative and so on [...]. And fresh thinking does not come from a manager who has been in a role for a long period.[...]. So in the future there will be a lot of shorter term managers'[LV:S].

Indeed, it may suit the company that some employees are kept in this type of situation.

A LucasVarity respondent explains the following concerning a specialist in Engineering:

'People have still been leaving, and so you have got this obscured scenario where we get a guy who leaves us on Friday and then comes back in on Monday as a subcontractor on double the money, but he has dropped the head count and he knows the job, we may have to pay more for the hour but there is no pension, we can let him go on two weeks' notice; and he knows the job and so the guy comes back in and thinks that this is a piece of cake, I am doing the same job for double the money and if I want to go on holiday I go on holiday, who cares, I am self-employed'[LV:M].

Clues were sought that might explain this different opinion. Dissident respondents were scrutinized for any elements in common between them and in contrast with respondents who may appear to be satisfied with side moves and possibly short-time contracts. They were checked for age, qualifications and grade, but no significant findings were evident.

Another dimension to intra-organizational movement, and inter-organizational cooperation, is that of international mobility. From all the four case-studies came

predictions of an intensified practice in this respect. A LucasVarity respondent mentions the increased opportunities to 'work abroad'[LV:M]. A Valeo respondent anticipates that his company will 'place high importance on international mobility'[VL:M]. A GKN respondent predicts more opportunities 'globally'[GK:S]. And a Rover respondent says the following: 'I think careers will be much more international in the future'[RG:M]. On this topic of geographical mobility, there is, however, general apprehension in respect of the resulting level of pressure on the individual. For further respondents' statements on international movement and related issues, please refer to Sections I, 2 and I, 4 below.)

2 - The Foreign Influence

When asked to predict what a career will be like in their company in five years' time, respondents rated international mobility as a main feature. In their responses a related issue that occurs frequently, and spontaneously, is that of the effect that different cultures and ways of doing business may have on British companies. This is mostly seen as a two-way process benefiting both parties, as expressed by the GKN respondent who refers to this development as 'cross-fertilization of ideas and solutions'[GK:M].

Foreign influence is, however, expected to have a special impact on British organizations as to the nature and level of qualifications required for a managerial post. This view comes mainly from Rover and Valeo. A respondent from the latter company makes the following prediction: 'I think that technicians will be more like in the French system, where you have graduates, so the sort of technical supervisory level will be more recognized'[VL:S].

At Rover, a German influence is equally expected, and is welcomed, as to the role played by academic qualifications and technical expertise. One of its respondents says: 'I

think it will be much more heavily influenced by BMW in the way that they perceive careers of engineers'[RG:M]. This view is endorsed and expanded by a colleague of his who elaborates on the issue as follows:

'I think that the BMW influence will be coming through.[...]. For example, there is a professor who happens to be a plant director, academically very switched on, and that is the opinion I have met within BMW. Now, I would like to think that that would brush off on us'[RG:J].

Others, however, may not see their company as a follower but, instead, as a leader: 'We are leading the way, slightly ahead of BMW in electronic product definition. So I feel that we have the technology, we are moving ahead and we have the culture'[RG:S].

On a wider issue – that of the limitations of what a company can offer in terms of a career – overseas practices may also have something to offer, according to some. There appears to be a certain amount of admiration for what is believed to be happening on the other side of the Atlantic concerning the management of one's career through a number of organizations. A LucasVarity respondent explained as follows:

'I mean, this whole thing of a career being associated with one company, I am not sure about. So I would think that the concept of a career within one company will decline and I don't think that LucasVarity will be an exception.[...]. I think that one of the things that used to really tie people to companies was the salary service pension fund and a whole host of other remuneration things, but bonuses could perhaps be geared off to a single year's performance, the whole thing can be geared up to encourage people to come, do a job and move on.[...]. In America, they have mid-career changes, I can see that coming more into our own culture'[LV:S].

3 - The Technical Expert

The need for high levels of technical competence is an aspect which was generally mentioned by respondents when they tried to anticipate what a career will be like in their company in five years' time. This requirement is predicted in association with the new conditions derived from downsized organizational structures and rapid technological innovation. A GKN respondent points out: 'If you have a lower headcount then you will have more focused systems and you tend to rely very much more on technology'[GK:M]. To this a colleague of his adds the following: 'You have fewer people but those people are of a high calibre, so, therefore, they will have more expertise in certain areas and there will be more emphasis on careers in the future because you are going to have a better calibre of person'[GK:M]. To some extent, this is already happening, as highlighted by a LucasVarity respondent as follows: 'Within Engineering, we have slimmed down the structure and rationalized some of the positions'[LV:S].

The general trend, as a Valeo respondent sees it, is 'the technical level having more focus'[VL:S]. A respondent from Rover explains how, in his company, technological innovation is encouraging this trend. He explains the situation in the following words:

'There would be a need to change people's careers from a technology point of view because certainly there is some new technology coming out over the next five years, like the electronic product which is, if you like, the virtual reality of a design of a vehicle, so you can look at it in true virtual reality before we actually build the first vehicle, so that process is going to reduce the number of people that we will need for metal work and making cars but will increase the number of people with the type of skills and the level of experience in understanding Engineering'[RG:S].

The more important role the technical expert is expected to play in the company of tomorrow means a push for change in established career patterns; and some recently developed career patterns will also prove to be inadequate. Comments of this nature come mainly from Rover and refer, respectively, to the generalist-specialist duality and to the notion of the rounded engineer.

A respondent from this company explains that the inadequacy of the generalist versus the specialist career has been identified, but the measures taken so far have not solved the problem; and the need for a solution will become more pressing in the very near future.

He presents the situation as follows:

'I think we will see a very strong Engineering career path in its own right and a recognition of Engineering as a specialist discipline of high value. So again I think that the attitudes will encourage people to go into, and stay within, Engineering in its own right, whereas today and previous years it has been "well, you can go only so far with pure Engineering and then if you want to continue in terms of financial reward and grade etc. and of responsibility you need to then move into management in general rather than engineering specifically." So I think it is something we have identified ourselves that we should have this parallel career path and we have it at the moment quite successfully up to a level and then it really falls away from that point'[RG:S].

A colleague of this respondent predicts very much the same needs and suggests a solution, as follows:

'I think that Rover's success is based on its technical understanding of the product and the requirement to understand the technology that you deliver

is increasing, it has to be increased, but at the moment there is a perception, and a reality, that someone can have a better career if he goes down the management leg. So you have the technical understanding which will take you to a ceiling at the moment and to go beyond that you have to go into management. What I would like to see in the near future is that someone can have a career going down the technical. And I am management, I sort of regard myself as semi-technical, I have people today working for me who are at the same grade as me, who are technical. I guess a real measure in what I say is that if someone working for me is on a higher grade because they have gone down the technical leg, I think that I am mature enough to understand that the company can say "well, that man, because of his technical expertise, he is of more value to the company than you as a manager, therefore we are going to give him a higher grade". That's what I would like to see'[RG:M].

Finally, the successive change of jobs in the pursuit of the rounded engineer is dismissed by some as being inadequate. The hope of a change in the near future is expressed by the respondent from Rover who says: 'I would like to think that not a lot will change from where it is now from a point of view of opportunities and the amount of training that is available to people, but may be they would allow some people to particularly focus on a particular area of Engineering or whatever their expertise rather than expecting people to change jobs to the needs of the company at the time'[RG:J]. This comment, from the employee's point of view, is complemented by the comment of the colleague who explains why the idea of the rounded engineer is counterproductive also from the corporate point of view:

'I would like to think that it (career) will be a bit more disciplined. I think that within the Engineering area we are at a point where I think that we have

to recognize that in order to become world class we have to become world class in some of our skills.[...]. The policy for developing rounded engineers, engineers with a range of skills at their disposal, wasn't necessarily the right thing to do because of the very nature of that process in that we can water down some of the unique skills that you need to develop and harness and encourage, so less of this rounded engineer and more of a specific engineer'[RG:M].

4 - Worries – The Anticipated Pressure

Respondents' predictions of what a career will be like in their present company in five years' time reveal a general concern that current pressures may increase. This would mean even greater expectations on what managers should be able to deliver and on their flexibility. The latter might entail managers having to be even more versatile to move across functions and processes as well as being promptly available to move and relocate geographically which could be at a national, international or inter-continental scale. Managers may be asked to give more and more whilst their career prospects remain unclear and their future employment uncertain. Though with different shifts in emphasis, these issues are mentioned by respondents from all the case-studies and often become entwined as they elaborate on their views.

Analysing the circumstances behind a possible increase in pressure, a GKN respondent lists the following as main factors: 'I think we will be fewer people, I think that there will be more globalization of the business'[GK:M]. A colleague seeks a rationale behind the suspected increase in pressure in the corporate policy of encouraging people to move around: 'I think that as organizations get flatter and as experience becomes more and more important across a range of different things, as the people become fewer, then they have

to become more multi-skilled and therefore you need to move around more people [...]. You will be moving between processes, not just through different functions'[GK:S].

Whilst some respondents try to rationalize on, and come to terms with, a possible increase in pressure, others simply state their predictions. Based on his current experience of his company, the following respondent sees the future as follows: 'I think Valeo like people to move in certain instances and so in that respect a career is quite dynamic as compared with other places where you could be in the same place for say five years. In five years' time..., I think Valeo at the moment is being quite aggressive'[VL:M] in its corporate goals and expectation of its employees' ability to deliver. At Rover there may be some uncertainty as to what the future holds concerning placements abroad. A respondent mentions that there will probably be an increase in the 'expectation that the people that are going to be getting on in their careers will go and work outside the UK'[RG:S]. This view is shared by the colleague who anticipates the development of a 'trade in people to Munich and to other satellite factories around the world' to which he adds the following: 'I think that it says officially or unofficially within BMW that unless you have been abroad and spent some time abroad working, well, one of the major stepping stones to getting on with BMW is that you have spent some time abroad'[RG:M].

However, as a GKN respondent points out, 'the danger is that people may get pushed into doing international secondments when they are extremely unhappy with it'[GK:M]. In fact, some respondents see this as an unreasonable corporate demand. A LucasVarity respondent comments as follows: 'International experience by virtue of working in another country for a long period of time, now, that isn't necessary.[...]. It is important to understand national traits but you can gather that without having to go and work in a

foreign country'[LV:M]. A colleague of his opines along the same lines when he remarks that, in today's world of telephones, faxes and e-mail, 'you can understand the way they operate and they can understand the way you operate and so you don't have to live there'[LV:M]. Some take the criticism further like the LucasVarity respondent who says: 'I have seen in other organizations people who have had no international experience in very senior positions and who are working very well'[LV:M]. Furthermore, a colleague points out that this unreasonable demand on managers is also counterproductive to the firm: 'On a large scale, if you start moving people around it is going to bring about a training problem and it can't become cost effective'[LV:M].

Perhaps the greatest generator of tension is having to invest more and more effort without any guarantees in return. A destabilizing factor is the frequent reorganizations, large or small. A respondent from Rover explains that, as a result, 'beyond two years the organization is a bit foggy, it is quite difficult to have anything other than a short term step view of what an individual might be doing'[RG:S]. Finally, a further increase in pressure may just happen to be too much. A respondent from LucasVarity expresses the following prediction: 'I think that unless there are some very fundamental changes in philosophy, that for the majority of people it (career in five years' time) is going to be extremely stressful'[LV:M]. A colleague has a similar opinion and explains why: 'It is going to be a lot harder, not because the job is harder, but expectations sometimes may be unrealistic'[LV:M]. Existing concerns are summed up by the LucasVarity respondent who says the following: 'The expectation about managers is growing all the time. Some will survive, some will go on and by natural selection some will fall away by the way-side.[...]. I will worry that there is a pressure cooker building up, where the elastic limit of the company will be exceeded and it will all decline'[LV:S].

5 - Employer-Employee Dynamics – Stressful or Harmonious?

Across the different companies, respondents emphasize the need for a fair and rewarding balance of interests between the employer and the employee. This is a current view which may influence future plans. It was expressed in a variety of contexts: when respondents defined their own concept of career; explained what they understand by a successful career; interpreted the corporate view of career in their company; and considered the extent to which their company tries to find out what their employees want concerning their career.

A balance of corporate and individual interests is considered. A respondent from Rover gives the following definition: 'A career is the gradual realization of one's abilities and opportunity to match them to an organization's objectives'[RG:M]. Both sides are considered also by the GKN respondent for whom career is to 'achieve your personal job and life ambitions and meet the organization's goals'[GK:M], as well as by his colleague who provides the following definition: 'Career to me means the chance to develop and better myself to the benefit of both the company and myself'[GK:M]. Talking about their company's view of career, a LucasVarity respondent says: 'I think that they would understand it as an approach to develop people within the business needs and also within their own personal development needs'[LV:M]. A colleague expresses a similar opinion: 'I think that they would understand it as progressing people to meet their needs, and people to meet the needs of the business'[LV:M].

A respondent from Valeo stresses that in order for career planning to be successful 'the aspirations of both parties must match'[VL:S]. A give and take process between the individual and the company is equally present in the words of the respondent from Rover

who mentions fulfilling 'a role within the company which contributes to the profitability of the company'[RG:M]. Defending the same point of view, a LucasVarity respondent says the following: 'A career should include a variety of posts and challenges which enable an individual to feel valued and to contribute to the success of a company'[LV:S].

A continuous employer-employee dialogue in the interest of both parties is a defended principle. This can be seen in the following words by a Valeo interviewee in response to the question on whether he feels his company tries to find out what its employees want concerning their careers:

'Yes. They recruit a certain type of person, I think that they want people who want to succeed and they are not prepared to offer people jobs where people want to stay in the same position because it is their culture of continual improvement, and if an individual doesn't want to continually improve then they don't want the individual, they want someone who wants to carry on learning and moving so that the whole business benefits in the end'[VL:M].

The company appears, therefore, to be selective - 'a certain type of person', in the words of the above Valeo respondent - when it comes to a two-way commitment and joint effort. This appears to be the opinion also amongst respondents from the other companies studied. A Rover employee explains that his company selects those who 'have got the ability to progress, think on their own feet and have a high academic achievement'[RG:M]. Where a selection is involved a distinction is made. This is clearly expressed by the following respondent from Rover:

'I think that Rover recognizes that there are two levels of career aspiration. There are people who are sometimes termed high flyers who will progress very rapidly through the structures and become the senior managers of the

company. Equally, some people are best occupied doing low level work, and I think that generally the company is moderately successful in finding the right level for the people to work at and help to keep them satisfied working within those boundaries'[RG:S].

This respondent is talking from the standpoint of a senior post. Those on lower grades are aware of the situation too. Still in Rover one such respondent comments that the company will develop individuals to their 'maximum potential', but this is only for 'high flyers' not for 'the majority of us'[RG:M]. This opinion is shared by the colleague who remarks as follows:'They (those at the top) look after one or two fast track people'[RG:J].

The notion that there are two different levels of dialogue appears to be present also in the two remaining case-study companies. A respondent explains about his company, as follows:'I think that LucasVarity is quite good at trying to develop its people and therefore plan activities to try and progress those people through the company, but more at higher levels than at lower levels, to be honest'[LV:M]. A colleague opines along the same lines:'I think that for people who stick out as high flyers, they (top management) will identify them early and put a monitored development process in place'[LV:M]. This same view appears to be supported by the GKN respondent who says the following:'They make sure that you get your development training applied to enable you to continue in your career and to progress through to better positions, but they do really focus on the shining stars'[GK:M].

Another distinction must be made, though, that between individuals who seem to prefer to pursue their career with one same company, if possible, and individuals who seem to regard this as being a negative practice in respect of career prospects. This means that, for

some individuals, the notion that they own their own career appears to correspond to an effort to make the most of that ownership in a dialogue with their company; for others, it appears to correspond to a passport to freedom to move out and around. The former is the case with the Valeo respondent who says: 'I can't see myself moving for quite a while unless they get rid of me' [VL:S]. An example of the latter can be found in the words of the GKN respondent who made the following statement:

'I am very marketable.[...]. So I am always very conscious on keeping my eye on what the external market is like and what the internal market is like inside and as soon as one appears better than the other, or I am not satisfied despite my best attempts internally, then I would say that my next move is to look outside. I won't mean to sound insensitive but I think that you have got to be that way' [GK:M].

This concept of a career open to the external market may be encouraged by external factors such as those mentioned by the LucasVarity who says the following: 'People in my sort of position get head hunters calling them on a regular basis' [LV:S]. Another respondent from this company explains what this means as to the frequency of different opportunities: 'It is common getting head-hunted, you can get two to three jobs per year if you are good. I just decided to stay' [LV:S]. In fact, both decided to stay. So did the other LucasVarity respondent, this one in a middle position, who says the following: 'The thing is that there are more opportunities outside because you have a bigger range of things to look at' [LV:M].

On the other hand, some respondents may perhaps feel tempted by the external market, as in the following words from a LucasVarity interviewee: 'Once you are with a company for too long then I think that your career prospects diminish or dwindle, so those people

who move on from company to company generally progress their career more rapidly because they are gaining from the experience of a new environment'[LV:S]. Rationalizing on the issue may lead to finding some advantages also for the companies the individual goes through, as expressed by the following respondent from Rover: 'Moving from one company to another has beneficial effects, you can take the skills and experiences that you have into another organization and use them to actually improve those companies'[RG:M].

Some feel their career aspirations are not receiving the corporate response they deserve, are resentful and may be rebellious. Talking about the future, a respondent from Rover says that he will achieve what he wants 'within the company or by other means'[RG:S]. A LucasVarity respondent states the following: 'I am not interested in pursuing a career in a company that treats people purely as a resource, you are a collection of man-hours to be allocated to a job.[...]. I am actively pursuing it (alternative employment)'[LV:M]. Threatening to leave may become a weapon dissatisfied managers use to improve their position without actually leaving. A LucasVarity respondent expresses the following intention: 'If they (top management) say "No" then I will go and work for someone else until they say "Yes"'[LV:M]. A respondent from Rover appears to have similar plans; he hopes to promote his career as follows: 'By asking for what I want really and I suppose threatening to leave if I don't get it'[RG:S].

In some cases, threatening to leave may be a bluff, as the manager will have little bargaining power. Those with bargaining power will be those who get head-hunted as we saw above. Also with bargaining power will be those in whom the company has invested in and wishes to retain, as explained by the following GKN respondent talking about the graduate development programme: 'I think that that is to make sure that you meet the

additional needs of the people at that level to make sure that you don't lose them'[GK:S].

The two levels of bargaining power seem to reinforce the two levels of career provision, with a more comfortable ride for some and a potentially stressful struggle for others.

II - CULTURE-BOUND POINTERS

1 - Career – Notions and Values

Career is necessarily a progression. Any push for change in the future will be thought out and initiated within the current frames of mind. Therefore, here we look at how current definitions relate to future plans.

UPWARD MOVEMENT ON THE LINE OF COMMAND	viewed as the norm	52%
UPWARD MOVEMENT ON THE LINE OF COMMAND	viewed as the way for the expert specialist	2%
UPWARD MOVEMENT BASED ON SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE	viewed as the way for the expert specialist	2%
NO UPWARD MOVEMENT	viewed as just a job	11%
UNCLEAR AS TO ROUTE OR DIRECTION	mixed or ambiguous view	33%

Table 8.2 - Trends in respondents' own concept of career

Respondents were invited to provide their own definition of career. This was initially done as a questionnaire item so as to give them ample time to think over their replies, if required. The method used was that of open question, so as not to influence the reply.

What a career means to the different individuals in the different case-study companies was subsequently analysed for pointers that will indicate changes that may be in progress towards new conceptualizations on this issue. Please refer to Table 8.2 for the general pattern of results, which do not present significant variations across the companies unless otherwise explained below.

UPWARD MOVEMENT ON THE LINE OF COMMAND - For just over half the respondents, fifty two per cent, a career is intrinsically associated with an increase in remuneration and status corresponding to an increase in responsibility and influence which finds meaningful corporate expression through reaching gradually higher ranks on the line of command. In some responses a vertical movement appears to be implicit, as is the case with the two respondents from Rover who mentioned, respectively, 'a continuous growth of responsibilities in line'[RG:M] and 'progress through organization structure'[RG:M]. The same could perhaps be said of the GKN respondent who mentioned 'timely position progression in line'[GK:M]; the LucasVarity respondent to whom career is 'the ability of a person to progress within a company based on performance and is linked with financial reward'[LV:M]; and the Valeo respondent who added an explanation to his definition as follows: 'The progressive ability to contribute more and more to an organization or set of organizations through increased knowledge, experience and know-how. It is also the ability to retrain; people very often don't retrain and their careers go sideways or backwards'[VL:S]. On the other hand, in some of the above examples a spiral form of upward movement might also have been meant. The distinction was not explicitly made by respondents and, therefore, one single category was established, that of going up the line of command.

Although, in general, there was no strong difference in the replies across the companies, the following two categories were found mainly in Rover. Both focus on

technical competence. They also have in common having scored two percent each. UPWARD MOVEMENT ON THE LINE OF COMMAND is viewed as the way, or as a way, for the expert specialist by the respondent who defines career as 'to progress within a specialism becoming an expert. Looking for promotion within this or related areas'[RG:M] and the respondent who defines careers as 'international reputation within your field of expertise [...] that will eventually provide rewards of influence and control'[RG:J]. In UPWARD MOVEMENT BASED ON SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE a route is suggested away from the line of command, as in the words of the following respondent when providing his own definition of career as 'a method of progressively improving my knowledge and specialism[...], technical advancement rather than the accumulation of power and influence by nature of position'[RG:J]. There is an explicit rejection of the opportunity to exert power and influence on the line of command.

NO UPWARD MOVEMENT contains eleven per cent of the definitions. In contrast with the general comparability across the different case studies, the responses that fall into this category come from all the companies studied except Valeo. Respondents in this category appear to view a career as synonymous with a job. The notion of movement doesn't always seem to be present as in the following definition by a respondent from Rover: 'The function or role that best suits my natural aptitude that can be used to earn a living'[RG:J]. Where movement is included, no upward ambition is expressed as in the following definition from another respondent from Rover who may be giving as his own the corporate view: 'A personal, work-related journey through a job or series of jobs that provides personal satisfaction and that suits the capabilities and interests of the individual'[RG:S].

UNCLEAR AS TO ROUTE OR DIRECTION is the category where I placed the thirty three percent responses which presented a mixed or ambiguous view in relation to the up-the-

ladder traditional pattern. In this group is the LucasVarity respondent who may also be giving as his what is in fact the corporate view and defines career as 'Job satisfaction, personal needs in terms of salary, ability; that's the lot'[LV:S] and the Valeo respondent who gives the following definition: 'Career means achieving personal goals within the business; this means moving to a position which remains interesting, achievable and enjoyable'[VL:M]. Another example is the respondent from Rover who says the following: 'I consider my view of career to be a challenging, fulfilling and rewarding way of spending the majority of my working hours from Monday to Friday which in turn provides me with the means to feel materially secure'[RG:M]. In these definitions it is not apparent whether or not the aspiration of upward movement is involved.

The respondents' definitions were checked against their age, grade and qualifications. The only significant findings are both that career means upward movement for individuals in more senior positions and that there is a higher incidence of about three quarters of junior and middle grade respondents in the NO UPWARD MOVEMENT category. However, this may include some egocentric statements from plateaued managers who, in their disappointment, generalize the lack of vertical progression.

2 - Career, for Whom?

Table 5.1 in CHAPTER 5 records the interviewees' responses when they were asked to give their view of what their company understands by career. Fifty nine percent were unable to provide a conclusive answer. This is in striking contrast with the replies obtained for the questionnaire request on the respondents' own definition, which can be found in Table 8.2 earlier in the present chapter. First, no one seemed to have an insurmountable problem in defining what a career is. Secondly, fifty six percent appear to see career as

upward movement, whilst, when reporting their company's apparent view, only fifteen percent appear to consider upward movement.

As we saw in that earlier chapter, in preference to the traditional notion of career as upward movement, there is a corporate discourse of 'development' which speaks of lateral job moves instead. However, the word *career* seems to circulate to some extent. A respondent from Rover explains the following: "Career" is a term used in the company, but it tends to be used in quite a loose way just to describe the progression from job to job by an individual' [RG:S]. A similar explanation comes from the GKN respondent who also makes a further comment, as follows: 'Certainly the actual understanding of the word (career) is fairly common as the progression from one job to another basically to try to fulfil our abilities, to keep us happy' [GK:M]. On the issue of keeping the employee happy, or not, a LucasVarity respondent expresses the following opinion: 'I suppose you could say that the company has lost sight of what it ought to be offering in terms of a career, what it means by "career". I think that they have lost sight of the fact that people are individuals and that part of a career path is to do with status' [LV:M]. In short, the term *career* circulates as synonymous with *development*, but some members of the organization have not forgotten its traditional meaning.

It is also worth noting that some respondents seem to equate career with high positions. 'A career is when you have attained an advancement in your job above the average' [RG:M], explains a respondent from Rover. The same frame of thought appears to be present in the Valeo respondent who says the following: 'If you want a career and are good, there is something in it for both parties (you and the company)' [VL:M]. In this last contribution, career, at a senior level, appears associated with the idea of employee-employer mutual interest. This evidence appears to be congruent with the possibility that

the traditional career may remain just for the few, and lateral ‘development’ will be for the majority of the workforce.

3 - Breadth and Depth as Ideology

Fewer ranks to climb to and a broader base to cover were identified by the managers in my investigation as fundamental changes that have impacted on career – Table 5.4 in CHAPTER 5. Fewer ranks and a broader base also seem to be present, in a way or another, in the more structured paths and more intra-organizational movement anticipated by respondents in their prediction of tomorrow’s corporate career, as recorded in Table 8.1 in the present chapter. A broader base to cover is in harmony with the corporate emphasis on lateral job movement and the corporate discourse of ‘development’ which we saw in particular in CHAPTERS 4 to 6 and which is also present, explicitly or implicitly, in the predictions recorded in the present chapter. Furthermore, this tendency takes the form of an ideology of widening the scope of one’s professional experience, of excelling in breadth, which may be reminiscent of HRM discourse and management books such as Peters and Waterman’s (1982). Typical of this outlook is the following statement by a LucasVarity respondent when defining his own concept of career: ‘To progress from role to role in order to continue to challenge myself and learn, with the plan of part of that challenge being the undertaking of larger roles’[LV:M]. The following definition of career given by a colleague of his, however, may suggest a wider scene: ‘Advancement by a variety of experiences and qualifications resulting in a broader knowledge of the business world which can be applied to the benefit of myself and any organization I choose to support’[LV:M]. In other words, an extra dimension to the ideology of excelling in

breadth is a personal horizon on which one's current company may be just one of a number.

The ideology of breadth may, thus, suggest an evolution towards innovative alternatives to the traditional career such as Heckscher's (1995) 'professional' model of an independent manager in the open market. However, as seen throughout the previous empirical chapters and in earlier sections of the current chapter, there is no substantive evidence that will point in this direction in the organizations in my research. Firms may not be investing in providing their managers with a portfolio of competences easily transferable to the open market. Also, the managers in my investigation tend to seek within their current firm a solution for their career problems.

In fact, ironically, the central element in the ideology of breadth – i.e., a broader base to cover – appears to be acting against Heckscher's model. The need to cover a broader base – e.g., in roles or geographically – appears to be seen as a condition of progress, and survival, in a globalized business world, which also appears to justify to some extent the increased workload and pressure to deliver. Within this frame of mind, current hardship – such as job insecurity, unclear career prospects, and heavy corporate demands – can be seen as a 'necessary evil' and thus leave little ground for the interpretation of the *status quo* as a unilateral corporate infringement of the psychological contract, as seen by some (e.g., Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). In fact, cooperation with the employer is sought instead of a situation of end of loyalty and reactionary stance from the employee. See also CHAPTER 7.

Furthermore, as seen in CHAPTER 5, a 'strong' culture of 'development' and lateral job movement is absorbed in different degrees by different members of the organization. In Schein's (1984) scale, it will reach the deeper levels of internalization only in some individuals, whilst others will continue to look to upward career movement as the reward

for their efforts. As we have seen throughout the previous empirical chapters and the previous sections of the current chapter, corporate encouragement for employees to move around may be taken with a touch of reservation by some, as with the GKN respondent who mentions 'the progression from one job to another basically to try to fulfil our abilities, to keep us happy'[GK:M].

Indeed, the ideology of excelling in breadth has a response in an ideology of excelling in depth. This phenomenon at the level of the conceptual plays an important role in how different forces may be shaping future careers. First, it may support the traditional career model; and, second, it may help bring a change to technical and professional careers. The ideology of excelling in depth may appear expressed in terms that suggest a valued vertical movement in the opposite direction to the traditional upward movement, but the latter is probably what is really meant. This can be seen in the following words by a LucasVarity respondent when giving his own definition of career: 'Maintaining involvement in genuinely interesting activity, preferably with opportunity to impart directly key business outcomes. Opportunity to progressively deeper levels of responsibility taken'[LV:S]. Also, the discussion on engineering careers and specialist competence earlier in this chapter includes signs of a push for change in which the idea of the 'rounded' person is dismissed in favour of depth of knowledge and in which higher status is sought for professional and technical careers. This can be easily incorporated in the ideology of depth.

Therefore, we have a double ideology: to excel in breadth and to excel in depth. The managers from LucasVarity and Rover may have provided the most evident statements, the latter on the issue of professional and technical careers. Perhaps the two opposing ideologies were more visible in these two companies as a result of the matter having been thought through more thoroughly in face of drastic changes, namely a merger and a take-

over. However the two ideologies were present across the four case-study organizations. A greater clarity in LucasVarity and Rover simply helped to illuminate better a similar situation in the other firms. The relative weighting of these two forces will contribute to define the shape career paths for managers will take in tomorrow's company.

4 - Deep Inside...

The breadth and depth ideologies are really two sets of ideas through which sense is being sought for conflicting forces in a *status quo* which is simultaneously fluid and full of constraints. Conflicting signals also seem to reflect on the managers' stance towards remunerated work and career. In both the questionnaires and the responses to the interview I came across three levels of declared commitment. At one extreme, there appears to be a total involvement, as is the case with the GKN respondent who refers to his career as a 'vocation'[GK:S]. A colleague expresses himself metaphorically as follows: 'The further you go up the ladder, if you are male, it becomes your wife, if you are female, it becomes your husband. It becomes a way of life. Your career is your way of life within GKN'[GK:S]. Others present an instrumental outlook, as the respondent from Rover who provides the following definition: 'A career is the path an individual takes to achieve a respected social status with a monetary reward'[RG:M]. Finally, at the other extreme, there seems to be a considerable level of detachment, as in the words of the LucasVarity respondent who says: 'Cash can help you with some of the things outside work, which is what I mean by work to live'[LV:M]. There is no conclusive correlation between this range of attitudes and the respondents' age, grade and qualifications, or company, other than, no detachment is shown by people in senior positions.

A numerical input was felt to be inconsequential in this finding, for more than one reason. First, declared attitudes may reflect other aspects and not always be entirely genuine; for example, an expressed detachment may be a personal reaction to feelings of frustration and a covert way of expressing dissatisfaction. Second, the three different attitudes expressed – committed, instrumental and detached – often are not supported by a consistent stance from the respondent. The same individual often took different stances at different stages of the interview. This inconsistency itself imparts value to the finding. In other words, these three distinct attitudes have a wide enough acceptance amongst peers, or groups of peers, to be uninhibitedly expressed. Moreover, they can be used as a front behind which true feelings can be hidden, when this is felt to be convenient.

Instead, I found more illuminating the statements that contained reference to the more profound meaning of career and thus, by implication, placed the respondent in one of the above categories, this time, perhaps more genuinely so. Instances were found only for great involvement and instrumental outlook. Explaining his perception of a successful career, a respondent from Rover explains: 'What grade I have got, what recognition I have achieved along the way' [RG:S]. However, some seek more than recognition, they want to become influential, as the junior respondent from Rover who sees career as 'Advancement and growth in your professional life with increasing influence and earnings' [RG:J]. Another respondent from the same company explains what a successful career is in his view: 'It isn't just about more money, higher grade, although that is obviously the ultimate measure for most people. But thinking beyond that, particularly as they get older, it is all about influence' [RG:S].

And why do people seek recognition and influence? Perhaps finding the answer represents going one step deeper into the more profound meaning of career. Some interviewees were quite open on the matter and had obviously analysed what is behind

their own motivation in respect of career. A LucasVarity respondent provides the reply when he says that career 'helps to define one's identity'[LV:M]. A respondent from Rover further elaborates on this topic, as follows: 'One's career provides a mechanism of judging the value of contribution which feeds into the jigsaw of factors contributing to judgements of self-worth and esteem'[RG:S]. Similarly to the managers in Watson's (1994) study, the managers in my investigation are trying to define their own personal identity at the same time as they are trying to perform a job in their employing organization.

CONCLUSIONS

Perhaps not surprisingly, respondents' predictions of what a career in their present company will be like in the future are to some extent influenced by their current experience and major events in the recent past, in relation to the period during which field work for the present study was carried out, i.e., 1997-1998. In Rover, BMW's take-over was seen as a factor of change. At the time this was associated with some optimism about the possibility of improvement in the handling of technical and professional careers. In LucasVarity, reasons for pessimism were present in the dismissals of senior managers which had followed the merger of Lucas and Varity. Managers were concerned that there might be a further decline in internal promotions. In GKN, there were similar concerns and particularly those without a university degree saw rather poor career prospects ahead of them, bearing in mind the recent introduction of management appraisals coupled with an intensified external recruitment of graduates for senior posts. In Valeo, a main point was the tight standardization of procedures which was justified on the grounds that it

facilitated Group-wide circulation of employees. Managers anticipated an escalation of international mobility. However, each one of these aspects is little more than a firm specific bias in what is otherwise a similar picture across the companies.

In their predictions of what a career will be like in their present company in five years' time, respondents in general drew a picture of more structured career paths and increased intra-organizational movement. There will be tight requirements as to educational qualifications. At least a first degree will be a prerequisite. The individual's career will be managed more closely, and there will be tight requirements as to the individual's delivery of results. The firm with a tall hierarchical structure is said to be over. Instead, there will be flatter firms, relatively small businesses, with a short grading structure, who are affiliated to a group or parent company. In the downsized organization with fewer people, experience will be expected from the individual across functions and across sites.

Intra-organizational mobility will be expected, at different levels. Lateral movement will be promoted as a source of increased chances and will enjoy prestige amongst some people, but others are sceptical. Some technical specialists will be able to use lateral movement to accumulate skills with the aim of becoming a 'rounded engineer'. This possibility is liked by some but dismissed by others on two grounds: it will be frustrating for individuals who will be diverted from their preferred specialism and it will be counterproductive for the firm as it waters down these individuals' potential to perfect their specialism. Moving around for top levels acquires a different dimension. Secondments and placements abroad will be stepping stones to senior posts. According to some, this is essential for the individual to obtain a bird's eye view of business issues and it will benefit the different firms through cross-fertilization of ideas of which the individual will be the main vehicle. However, some people will not be happy in living abroad, and

critics point out that, with today's electronic means of communication, there is no need to move abroad to know how others work.

Still accordingly to the respondents' predictions, companies will probably have a well-defined two-tiered career system. Lateral movement may become the route for most people; and the traditional career for some. The former will be for 'the majority of us', the latter for the 'high flyers' some of whom will be 'shining stars'. There will be double standards in the employer-employee relationship. For those on the lower tier, with opportunities in lateral movement, there will be short term contracts. This is seen by some as innovative and perhaps liberating. Others think that it will promote instability and that this situation will be aggravated by continuous organizational reshuffles that make future career prospects 'a bit foggy'. For those on the higher tier, or selected to join it, the situation will be quite different. Individuals will be sponsored to study for further academic degrees. There will be more stability, reinforced with corporate contractual regulations, as the company who invests in the manager will ensure the manager will stay long enough to pay back. Although, ultimately, one is responsible for one's career, the principle defended is that this ownership will be used in an employee-employer dialogue in which the interest of both parties will be taken into account. A fair and mutually rewarding balance of interests will have to be maintained. Marketable individuals in high positions who are head-hunted will honour their commitment to the company if this is reciprocated.

Disseminated from the top, there may be a corporate discourse in which the notion of development will continue to replace that of career. However, over half the respondents have a clear idea that their own concept of career entails upward movement; and one third seem to have a mixed or ambiguous view in which lateral movement does not appear to play an identifiable role. Finally, only around one tenth may subscribe to lateral movement.

There is a striking contrast between what managers think a career is, or should be, and their company's evasiveness in defining the concept we saw in CHAPTER 5. When probed, doubting managers might have hidden behind a front of expressed commitment, instrumentalism or detachment. This only confirms how important an issue this is. Indeed, it involves a deeply felt sense of self-worth and esteem. One's own identity is at stake.

In an organizational structure where the ladder will have only a few rungs, there are concerns that some capable and willing individuals may be unjustly relegated to the lower tier. Critics suspect corporate obstacles will be put on the career path of some managers unfairly. Lack of an academic degree, harsh monitoring of delivery, excessive demands to work abroad, misuse of appraisals and other career management tools, as well as the demoralizing effect of an uncertain future, are suspected to be used in the future to hinder career progression and even justify dismissal. However, the notion that there will be an increasingly broader base to cover, in an increasingly more globalized business scene, may help to anticipate any possible animosity from the critics, in face of heavy corporate demands which may be viewed as condition of survival of the business.

The notion of a broader base to cover is also central to the current two ideologies of breadth and depth, in which managers' predictions are embedded. In the future there may continue to be an ideology of excellence through breadth which is disseminated from the top and shared by some down the grades. The ideology of excelling through breadth may be seen with suspicion by some. Perhaps in response to it, there will also be an ideology of excelling through depth and being an expert in one's specialism. This may contribute to a possible change away from the subordination of engineers and other specialists to the line of command who harnesses and uses the technical input.

In their predictions, some managers appeared to hold the view that a measure of foreign influence will impact on the management career in Britain. Mainly from Rover,

and also from Valeo, came the belief that, respectively, German and French influence would contribute to a higher status of technical and professional careers, associated with a higher level of academic qualifications. From LucasVarity came a certain measure of affiliation to American views of managing one's career through a variety of organizations which may be in line with Heckscher's (1995) model of the 'professional' manager. However, no substantive evidence could be found of a substantial effect in the firms being investigated. First, if that were the case, one could probably expect divergent results in the different case-study organizations, rather than the overall consistent picture that resulted from field work, for those influences would probably have impacted on one of the two conflicting breadth and depth ideologies: the German and French influence with a bias towards the vertical orientation, the American one with a bias towards the horizontal orientation. Second, the absence of substantial evidence of effective impact appears to confirm previous debates on cross-cultural influence in international firms, notably that national features tend to prevail as well as local institutional culture (Whitley, 1991; Edwards *et al.*, 1993; Ferner, 1993-4).

When trying to forecast what career will be like in their company in the future, the managers in my investigation are faced with a complex scenario in which they can only try to make sense of the conflicting signals they are receiving in a work environment which is at one time fluid and full of career disabling constraints, a struggle which finds expression through the ideologies of breadth and depth. Much in the contradictions facing managers can, however, be resolved from the theoretical perspective developed by Armstrong (1987, 1989) and recently further developed by Edwards (2000), which will be a lens through which the management career will be looked at in PART III of this dissertation.

We shall then discuss that there are grounds for both a pessimistic and an optimistic view of the management career and its foreseeable future.

In my investigation into the management career in the automotive sector, a number of issues ran through the past empirical chapters, which are equally present in this last empirical chapter with a focus on the future. They can be summed up as follows:

- * employment insecurity and unclear career paths
- * sideways moves as an alternative to upward career moves
- * career management: tools use (and misuse?); appraisals; employability
- * a first degree and further academic requirements as a new job prerequisite
- * inadequate provision for technical and professional careers
- * corporate expectations and pressure: demanding performance targets; longer hours; far-away geographical moves.
- * employer-employee dynamics and loyalty.

The findings that have emerged in these areas contribute different pieces of evidence to the following overall picture in the automotive organization with fewer ranks in the hierarchy and can be condensed in the following three main points:

- ◆ a two-tier system with career for some and 'development' for others;
- ◆ continued employment insecurity and unclear career paths in a corporate climate dominated by tensions between different forces: control and empowerment; constraints and fluidity;
- ◆ managers trying to secure their job and find a positive career solution within their organization.

At the beginning of my study I set out to investigate how the concept of management career is played out in the employing organization. The evidence reported in PART II, including the present chapter, gives some firm answers to this major research question and its sub-questions and addresses their respective research measures as laid out in CHAPTERS 2 and 3. The contents of the different empirical chapters will be examined further in PART III where they will be jointly discussed.

PART III

9 - Discussion and Analysis

At the beginning of my investigation, I developed a set of research questions, explained in PART I of this thesis, which arose from my reading of the existing literature and initially framed my methodology which, in turn, produced the findings reported in PART II. My research questions were formulated under the principal aim of investigating what is really happening in respect of how the management career is played out in the employing organization. This main query encompassed three sub-sets of concerns. Firstly, I was interested in the way in which, and the extent to which, organizational context in the era of downsizing is impacting on the management career, whether any innovative alternatives are developing and whether a change can be identified in the handling of technical and professional careers. Secondly, I wanted to look into the relationship between managers as employees and their employer, the nature and extent of possible changes to the psychological contract and loyalty, and possible changes to both corporate expectations and managers' expectations as to managerial employment and career. Finally, I wanted to understand the concept, or concepts, of career which may be influencing a push for change, coming from the employer or the managers. These themes have remained central to my endeavour and ran through the five empirical chapters. They will now be drawn together and analysed in relation to existing debates, in the present chapter. In addition,

my research has uncovered a further main theme which will also be brought into the debate.

The first half of the present chapter, entitled 'Key results', is sub-divided into three parts, each one of which discusses the results that correspond more directly to each one of the three research sub-questions. The second half, entitled 'The emerging scenario', gives special focus to the new main theme, and also concentrates on how to resolve the apparent contradictions of some of the results. The various aspects of the debate will come together for the final conclusions in CHAPTER 10, where wider issues will be covered and a new theoretical model will be proposed for the interpretation of the management career.

I - KEY RESULTS

1 - Career Chances in a Changing Organizational Context

With the downsizing and delayering of firms in the 1980s and 1990s, came the idea of a fundamental change in the Weberian bureaucratic career model of vertical, incremental progression up the hierarchy. Instead, a new 'integrative' organizational context would provide a 'horizontal dimension' where managers would be 'hopping from job to job' and would need 'portable skills' that would render them employable along this path (Kanter, 1983, 1989). The vision of employability and lateral movement took root (Handy, 1994; Godswen, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995) and has reached extremes such as Heckscher's (1995) 'professional' model of the manager in a post-corporate world.

Lateral movement – be it intra- or inter-organizational – is an idea which appears to have received, and continues to receive, considerable applause from different quarters. Moving around in the labour market is a recurrent notion in the British national press, both in articles (e.g., ‘Working Tomorrow’, *The Guardian*, 22 June 1996) and advertisements for management posts (e.g., ‘change is good @ revolver.com’, *The Times*, 10 June 2000). Practising managers and managers-to-be are targeted with a popular literature, coming mainly from the US, which promotes the idea of self-development and competitiveness in the open labour market, and this is often elevated as a philosophy of life which finds affiliation in Ancient Greek or Buddhist teachings (e.g., Korten, 1999; Boldt, 1999). Equally coming from the US, there a recent textbook for university students by Baron and Kreps (1999) which argues for short-term contracts and open-ended transaction as an alternative to career progression through the hierarchical ranks. There appears, thus, to be a strong, general trend away from the traditional management career. Yet, my case-study investigation shows a substantially different scenario.

As explained in CHAPTER 3, all the six organizations in my investigation declared to have few ranks in their hierarchy, but it was not possible to evaluate quantitatively the extent to which this situation reflected the impact of events such as a take-over, a merger or a restructuring exercise. Similarly to what had been experienced by previous researchers (e.g., Guest and Davey, 1996), I found that meaningful figures were not available for comparability, due to a combination of factors: spans of control had been revised, the firm had been reshaped, and the workforce had been regrouped under different job titles. It was, however, commonly agreed by the respondents in my study that important changes had occurred, as amply reported and analysed throughout the empirical chapters.

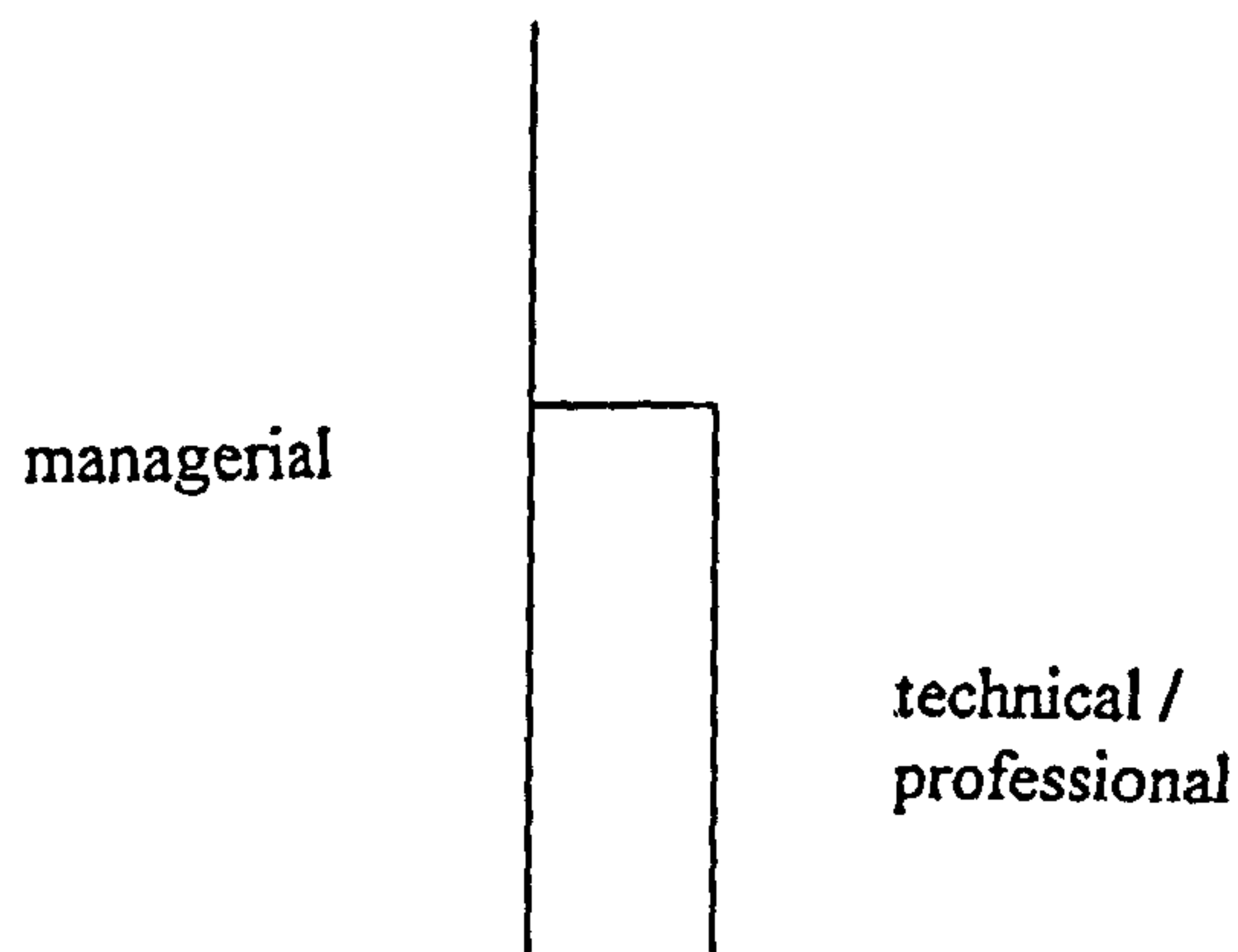


Figure 9.1 (A) - The dual ladder

As discussed in CHAPTER 4, the four case-study organizations had in place a technical / professional ladder in parallel with the traditional line of command when I visited them in 1997-1998. This means a duplicate number of ladders to climb. As equally discussed in the same chapter, both the four case-study organizations and the two extra firms – Mayflower and Peugeot – were operating as relatively autonomous business entities affiliated to a parent company or group with an international or intercontinental projection in a balance between operational decentralization and strategic centralization, a model discussed in previous literature (Sisson and Marginson, 1995). In general, job moves across the wider organization were encouraged and had become a prerequisite for senior positions, perhaps more pressingly so in GKN, LucasVarity and Peugeot. Both the dual ladder and the intra-organizational posts at home and abroad appear to provide a multiplicity of career opportunities, although, in relation to the latter, the reintegration of expatriates might be a problem.

However, beneath a surface appearance of enhanced opportunities, there may be a different reality. First, in the dual career ladder, the technical/professional leg tends to fall

short of the line of command. Therefore, the doubled opportunities that can be found at the bottom will revert to one single route at the top. The resulting picture is one of multiple ladders mainly at lower and intermediate levels – some are short ladders but there are more of them, as illustrated in Figure 9.1(A) and (B). Second, in all the six organizations in my study, the grouping of activities is function-led. Therefore, the working context is what Kanter (1983, 1989) would look upon negatively as bureaucratic ‘segmentalism’ as opposed to an integrative environment propitious to a horizontal dimension offering a multiplicity of opportunities. Also, a lateral route may mean moving both across functions and to geographically distant locations.

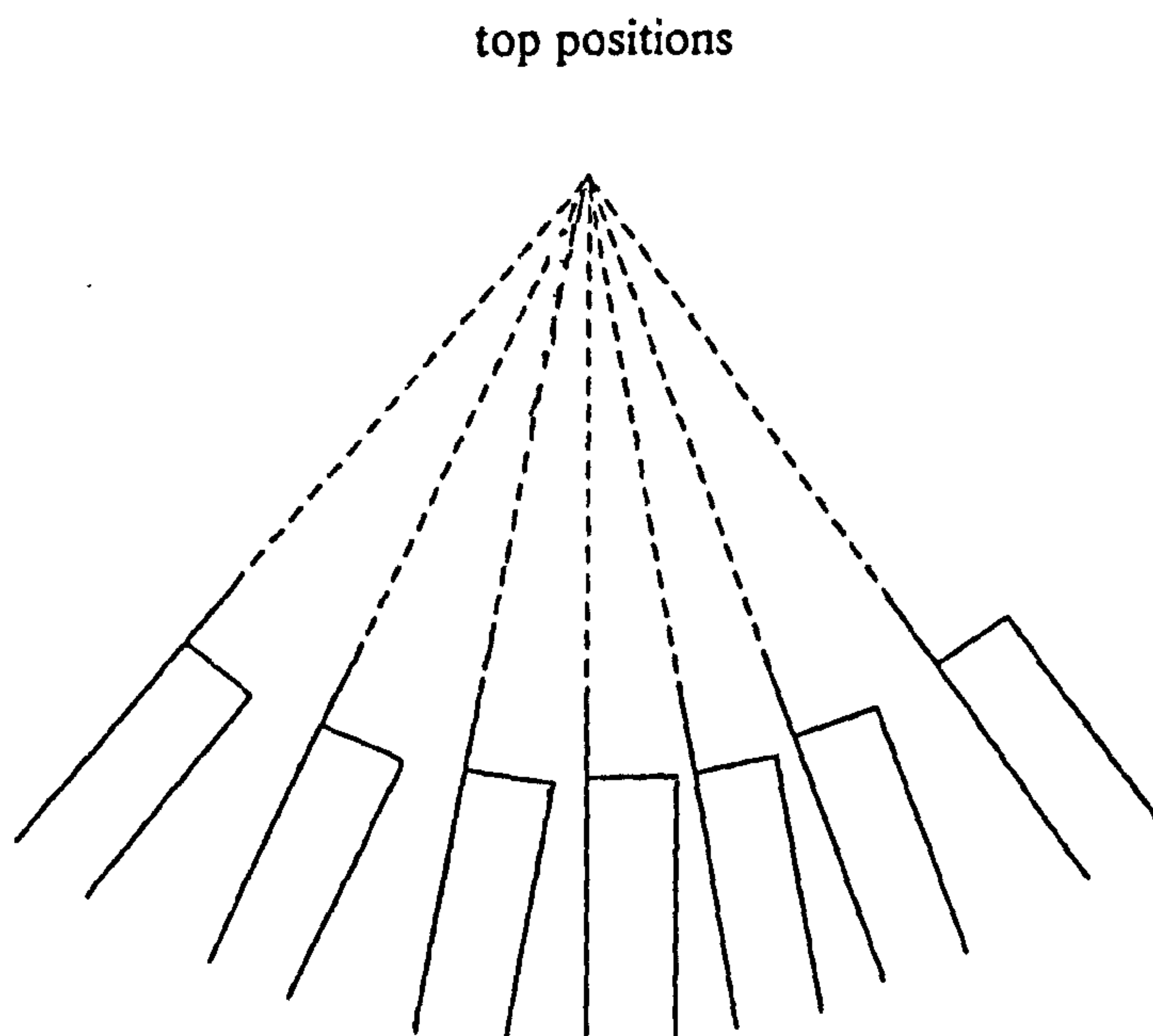


Figure 9.1 (B) - The multiple ladder

Skills may not always be easily transferable between functions, business units or divisions, at home or abroad. Furthermore, no evidence has been found in the companies researched that could support the 'employability' strand of thought (see CHAPTERS 4 and 5). Firms may be unlikely to have the motivation to invest resources in providing their employees with a portfolio of competences designed to be used in the external market. They may, however, wish to invest in intra-organizational employability. In fact, this concern may be particularly noticeable in Valeo, where in-house training is closely associated with international mobility across the group. Also, in all the case-study organizations there is a general emphasis on the employee's personal development, and training is provided either in-house or externally. However, the main purpose seems to be improving employee performance in addressing firm specific needs, which means that these competences may not be easily transferable outside the organization. This is concurrent with findings of recent research in other organizations in different sectors of the economy (e.g., McGovern *et al.*, 1998).

Although there is an emphasis on lateral moves, the idea of upward promotion is very much alive amongst the managers in my case-study organizations. Furthermore, in face of a reduced number of rungs on the ladder, some may be moving laterally in the hope of spiralling upwards (CHAPTERS 5 and 6). These are findings which have some similarities with those reported in other research work contemporaneous with mine. In their study of a wide range of organizations in a 50:50 split between public and private settings, Thomas and Dunkerley (1999) have found that many middle managers are still looking towards hierarchical career progression as the main form of reward for their efforts. In my case-study organizations, the managers who think in terms of career as upward movement outnumber those who may not necessarily do so, when trying to plan for the future

(CHAPTER 8). Over half have a clear idea that career entails going up the ladder, and only around one tenth may subscribe to side moves. Therefore, in the employing organizations in my investigation, the management career is played out within two main coordinates: horizontal and vertical. Furthermore, in association with the divergent horizontal and vertical orientations in job movement, a two-tiered system of employment can be found in these organizations. For a relatively small number of individuals, there will be career up the ranks; for most, though, there will be lateral moves in the name of 'development' (CHAPTER 5). This is likely to continue into the future, with a divide between 'high flyers' and 'the majority of us' (CHAPTER 8).

Employment insecurity is a feature common to both the lower and the higher tier. In the latter, the more senior the post the more fierce peer competition may become (CHAPTER 6). The dividing line between the two tiers is a joint product of different circumstances in which, in addition to performance, two factors may be particularly important: type of educational background and level of formal qualifications.

Although perhaps less so in Rover, my case-study organizations in general confirm Roberts *et al.*'s (1972) findings of thirty years ago that a 'graduate barrier' tends to prevent technicians from moving up and those whose degree is of a technical nature may experience identical problems (CHAPTERS 5 and 6). This situation does not appear to have been entirely overcome with the corporate solution for technical and professional careers provided by the 'dual ladder', an arrangement which in fact has since long been regarded as being inadequate (Gunz, 1980). Besides, in the dual ladder installed in my case-study organizations the managerial leg tends to outreach the other in what is no more than a protracted version of the specialist-generalist career sequence, which has also been object of criticism in the past (Shepard, 1958; Rosen *et al.*, 1976).

In fact, the dual ladder in my case-study organizations does not represent a fundamental move away from the traditional subordination of technical and professional employees to the line of command. This may mean that, in a two-tiered career context, those who started employment on the shopfloor, and even some with a technical degree, may encounter difficulties in ascending to the higher tier. In relation to Mintzberg's (1979) model of a manufacturing firm, the dual ladder may have brought the 'technostructure' from its peripheral location to the central structure of the organization only to be, at least in part, pushed down to the large, flat 'operating core'. What is more, the two-tiered system is being played out horizontally, not vertically. As a result, it operates as a primary and secondary labour market in a set-up which may resemble Atkinson's (1984) 'core-periphery' divide (CHAPTER 5). Hence, the position of the 'technostructure' has gone full circle: it has been brought in from the periphery to be pushed out back on to the periphery. Simply, this time, it may include more graduates on short-term contracts, low employment security and very poor career prospects. This may be what the future holds for the majority (CHAPTER 8).

Indeed, the 'non-standard' or 'atypical' forms of employment which have grown at the expense of full-time employment (Nolan and Walsh, 1995) may extend from the services and predominantly female labour market population to the previous occupiers of Mintzberg's 'technostructure' – predominantly, where not exclusively, male in the past, and an increasing number being now holders of university qualifications. Furthermore, a policy of short contract hiring may even penetrate some layers of the primary internal market, as appears to be advocated by Baron and Kreps (1999).

Academic qualifications have become a powerful tool of selection and exclusion throughout both tiers. Similarly to some of McGovern *et al.*'s (1998) findings in other

organizations, I have found managers faced with eroded opportunities for promotion in a downsized organization, a situation which was increased by employers' tendency to recruit employees with particular forms of expertise into senior management positions. In my case-study organizations I also found that, in addition to blocking promotion for middle managers, bringing in recruits from the external market also represents a direct threat to those who hold higher posts (CHAPTER 6). The matter was cause for serious concern amongst the managers, perhaps more acutely so in GKN where outside recruitment of graduates was combined with the recent introduction of appraisals for senior management.

There may indeed be a strong link between performance evaluation and the threat of job loss, at all levels. Bearing in mind the general consensus that career management tools are inefficiently implemented, it may come as a slight surprise that over half the managers in my organizations agree that career management, or people development, has a high profile in their company (CHAPTER 5). This may well reflect the visibility of management career tools as means of employee assessment. In general, appraisals are the main tools of performance evaluation and selection and are reasonably developed in Rover and Valeo, but there is a tougher 'fit in or get out' style in LucasVarity. Senior posts that in the past used to be beyond formal assessment are now being subjected to appraisal exercises in GKN and Peugeot. Mayflower is catching up with the general trend of appraisals in the other companies (CHAPTER 4).

There is the general understanding that career processes and tools are to be implemented in the interest of both the firm and the employee, but, for example in LucasVarity, the purpose of psychometric tests may be unclear (CHAPTER 4). It is worth noting the finding by Gallie *et al.* (1998) that a correlation can be identified between the

use of 'technical' systems of management-performance control and rapid dismissal of employees. Though the result relates to all employees, there is an interesting parallel with the present results, the suggestion being that 'hard' systems of performance control indeed lead to some managers being 'managed out'. Kessler and Bayliss (1992) argued that the Conservative Government of the 1980s had left management empowered, 'firmly in charge', capable of seeking greater cost effectiveness through means such as increased labour flexibility, both numerical and functional, and changed contracts of employment. This may hold true for some 'core' members of management who are in a position to influence the fate of 'periphery' members and, in some cases, also the fate of some of their 'core' peers.

In conclusion, the organizational context in the firms that I have researched impacts on the management career in a number of ways which are mostly associated with these firms' reduced number of ranks in relation to the traditional hierarchy and the resulting reduced opportunities for upward career movement. The main aspects can be summed up as follows: a corporate emphasis on lateral job movement, though an integrative work environment may be missing; tighter requirements as to formal qualifications; tighter performance control; a double standard career set-up in the form of a core-periphery system; poor technical and professional career provision; inefficient implementation and unclear use of career management tools; and general employment insecurity, at all levels of the managerial band. Also, despite an apparently horizontal orientation and an emphasis on lateral employment movement, no evidence has been found of a radical change from the traditional career and its replacement with the 'employability' model, such as proclaimed by Heckscher (1995).

2 - Managers: Reluctant or Loyal?

In their interviews, well over 80% of managers expressed their opinion that there has been an increase both in working hours and in work pressure (CHAPTER 7). This evidence is in line with Collinson and Collinson's (1997) finding of an intense monitoring of the individual's presence in the workplace. It may be true that in some cases, managers who work beyond contractual hours often do so of their own initiative. On the other hand, as Grey (1994) points out, the employing organization can induce subjectivity through the use of disciplinary techniques that are understood by its employees as aids to their career development and lead them to self-manage their behaviour accordingly.

The escalation in working hours corresponds to an escalation in pressure to deliver, to meet more demanding business targets. Pressure is also felt in respect of other corporate demands such as mobility between divisions, nationally, internationally or globally. External and geographical mobility has been for some time a growing feature of managerial life and a route to seniority, as discussed by previous authors (Fletcher and Williams, 1986; Forster, 1992), it can have advantages and disadvantages for the individual (Merrick, 1996), but it may not suit everyone (Edwards *et al.*, 1993) and be a source of pressure and tension. These hurdles can also come in conjunction with the barrier of a university degree or the problem of technical and professional careers discussed in Section I, 1 above.

Pressure to enhance one's performance appears to have increased for most individuals along the managerial band. For those in intermediate level positions, there may be visible signs of the more important role Dopson and Stewart (1990) suspected for the slimmer middle management in an organization with fewer ranks (CHAPTER 5). However, this

appears to be felt by the individual more as an overload of work and heavy pressure to deliver rather than empowerment (CHAPTER 7).

The issue of empowerment and span of control is closely related to the interplay between operational decentralization and strategic centralization in divisionalized organizations (see Sisson and Marginson, 1995) and the tendency for a close monitoring of performance in the operating units of decentralized organizations (see Marginson *et al.*, 1995). In all the research sites the relationship with the company group or parent company was considered to be decentralized. At research site level, however, LucasVarity saw themselves as semi-centralized, and Rover, GKN and Valeo as centralized. Particularly in this last firm, decentralization from headquarters was counteracted with a tight group-wide system of procedures (CHAPTER 4).

In association with the interplay between operational decentralization and strategic centralization, features can be found which are identifiable with aspects of Osterman's (1996) two contrasting models: cost cutting / centralization as opposed to decentralization / empowerment. The former, which entails the elimination of layers of managers and the concentration of power in headquarters, is, in fact, an effort to perfect the traditional hierarchical model. The latter corresponds to a different vision of the firm and a working context of diffuse organizational boundaries, in which managers are expected to manage relations between separate business entities and tend to be faced with more complex roles, fewer ranks in the hierarchy, slow career promotion and job insecurity. Different elements, from both models, can be seen to coexist in one same firm in the organizations I have researched. This situation corresponds to simultaneously more constraints and more fluidity, with resulting extreme levels of pressure on the manager due to demanding work, job insecurity and unclear career paths (CHAPTERS 4, 5 and 7).

Indeed, my investigation has revealed a depressed scenario of managers who face employment insecurity and poor career prospects. Well over half of those I interviewed feel that they were able to shape their career proactively better in the past than they are likely to do in the future (CHAPTER 6). In their predictions of what a career will be like in their present company in five years' time, the managers in general drew a picture which does not anticipate an easier future. Fluidity and constraints will continue to dominate the scene. They expect that experience across functions and sites will be increasingly demanded from the individual and that the trend of intra-organizational mobility will equally be intensified on an international and intercontinental scale. They also expect tight requirements as to educational qualifications, with a degree as a minimum prerequisite, as well as more structured career paths in which the individual's performance will be managed more closely and there will be very tight demands as to the individual's delivery output (CHAPTER 8). Furthermore, in their predictions, double standards are expected in the employer-employee relationship, in the two-tiered system (see Section I, 1). For those on the lower tier, with opportunities of lateral movement, there will be short-term contracts, job uncertainty and a very unlikely career. For those on the higher tier, the situation will be somewhat different. Much will be expected from these individuals, but the company will invest in them, with training and sponsorships for further academic degrees, and this will be a guarantee of greater employment stability to the extent that the company will want a return on its investment (CHAPTER 8). The gap between the two tiers may widen. In fact, this may be happening already in other organizations. Watson (1994) found that middle managers are often distant from corporate decision-making. Redman *et al.* (1997) found managers who did not feel empowered but, instead, felt increasingly more isolated from senior management.

In my case-study organizations different reactions can be found to the *status quo*. Some managers appear to be happy (some may be resigned, others perhaps frightened). There are also the doubters and the critics. Figures throughout the empirical chapters show that the two latter groups are the majority. At its worst, some of the critics may see themselves in a neo-Taylorist-Fordist context in which the divide between the decision-makers and the doers has changed from a vertical dimension to a horizontal core-periphery format. In this work environment 'time-space surveillance' techniques may be used, as encountered by Collinson and Collinson (1997), as well as 'technical' means of performance control which may be associated with rapid dismissal procedures, as identified by Gallie *et al.* (1998). Some may also suspect that the monitoring of skills and performance in some cases may be too harsh and not necessarily justifiable at senior levels (CHAPTERS 6, 7 and 8). In other words, similarly to Scase and Goffee (1989), cynical critics may think that managers have been proletarianized. Also, those at the top end of the managerial band may be affected too. Nevertheless, in general, managers are far from being the 'reluctant managers' these authors have found.

In general, the managers in my investigation are interested, cooperative employees who seek a positive relationship with their employer. In their predictions of what career will be like in their present company in five years' time, they weigh up employer expectations with their own expectations and willingness to contribute. The principle is accepted that, although one is ultimately responsible for one's career, this ownership should be used in an employee-employer dialogue in which a fair and mutually rewarding balance of interests will have to be observed. Marketable individuals in high positions are prepared to honour their commitment to their company, even when head-hunted, provided that their loyalty is reciprocated (CHAPTER 8).

Evidence from my research does not, therefore, confirm that the 'psychological contract' (Schein, 1970) has collapsed, nor that it has been replaced with a transactional, calculative relationship, as seen by some authors (e.g., Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Handy, 1994). Furthermore, no evidence could be found of the idea of employability and its wildest versions such as Heckscher's (1995) model of an empowered manager in an end-of-loyalty post-corporate world.

In my case-study organizations, managers are trying to secure their job and find a positive career solution within their firm (CHAPTERS 6, 7 and 8). They can be compared with those found by Storey *et al.* (1997) in that, despite haphazard career planning arrangements, they appear to prefer spending their careers with the same company. As with the overview by Edwards (2000), they are trying to move on with the times, and this does not mean the end of loyalty, but a redefinition of the employer-employee relationship, in a shift away from bureaucratic preoccupation with procedures and towards a greater involvement in the business.

Edwards illustrates his theoretical considerations with a number of studies, including Watson's (1994) ethnography of managers in a manufacturing firm. In fact, some managers in my investigation may have much in common with those found by this latter author. Similarly to Watson, I have found managers who seek empowerment in the sense that they want to have control over their own circumstances in a way that will enable them to meet their own requirements for self-satisfaction and personal identity whilst at the same time they contribute to shape their employing organization (CHAPTERS 6 and 8).

However, hurdles may look insurmountable for those who are trying to make sense of what kind of person they are and how they can contribute to their firm. This may be conducive to the belief that something extra may be required in order to achieve one's

goals (CHAPTER 7). The need to strike it 'right' may lead to developments since long identified, which may not benefit the business (Jackall, 1988; Feldman and Weitz, 1991; Feldman and Klich, 1992), such as 'careerism' and 'impression management'. These phenomena are not too remote from the competitive presenteeism recently identified by Simpson (1998) in different organizations amongst managers who are anxious to display an impressive performance. Their territorial rivalry over project ownership results in work often being duplicated, which may not benefit the business. Other forms of individualism can equally result in developments which may be detrimental to the firm or the individual, as may be the case with some appraisal techniques (Kessler and Purcell, 1995). Where corporate provision for the management career tends to be largely accidental (Ascher, 1983) and career planning arrangements may remain haphazard (Storey *et al.*, 1997), there may be occasions in which cynics may wonder why an individual has been picked to join the 'high flyers' and no longer is one amongst 'the majority of us'.

Summing up, demanding performance targets, longer hours, and far-way geographical moves are amongst the corporate expectations which may cause considerable pressure on managers. This may be compounded with doubtful career opportunities, not to mention employment insecurity. Nevertheless, in general, as employees, the managers in my research study accept that some of these difficulties may be inevitable in today's business world, and are trying to adapt to change. They seek to secure their jobs and make their career work for themselves and their firm, and they wish to be able to remain loyal and committed to their employing organization. However, management may also be holding on to some frames of mind and patterns of behaviour which may lead cynics to wonder whether some individuals are not being unfairly put at the receiving end of some practices

from the past which are now being recycled and presented in the guise of an innovative appearance.

3 - 'Developing': In What Direction?

Similarly to Watson (1994), I have found that two 'scripts' were being played out on the managerial stage. One expresses an ideology of breadth, the other an ideology of depth (CHAPTER 8).

The former is in harmony with the corporate emphasis on lateral job movement, be it across tasks, functions, operating units, divisions, or different geographical locations at home and abroad. It is also in harmony with the corporate discourse of 'development'; and it can apply to anyone regardless of grade. Some individuals can move around from task to task, building up skills so as to become a 'rounded engineer', a 'rounded person'. Others will be circumnavigating the world on executive assignments, so as to get a global bird's eye view of the business before reaching the very top. It is worth noting that other recent researchers have also found a rhetoric of personal development in other organizations (e.g. Gratton *et al.*, 1999).

This ideology corresponds to a 'strong' corporate culture of the kind recommended by Peters and Waterman (1982) for the 'excellent' company, which must be 'organic' and entrepreneurial as opposed to the 'mechanistic' bureaucratic model. It is disseminated by 'transformational' leaders in the company which is to excel, for people in this firm must be directed by shared values which will foster collective commitment to achieving organizational goals. In the companies in my study, the values to be shared are dominated by the notion of 'development' as a circular movement of job changes, possibly with no rising aspirations, i.e., replacing that of career. This must lie behind the fact that managers

were very uncertain about the meaning of 'career' as seen by their employing organizations. Nearly three quarters showed great difficulty in giving their firm's understanding of the term (CHAPTER 5).

In contrast, as discussed in Section I, 1 above, the idea of career up the ladder is very much alive amongst the managers in my case-study organizations (CHAPTERS 5 and 6) and is likely to guide their career efforts in the future (CHAPTER 8). Indeed, the 'transformational' values that promote horizontal job movement are being challenged by the long-standing vertical orientation. But there is a twist.

As discussed for Table 8.2, more than half the managers understand career as upward movement, and that notion is likely to steer their future career efforts. In contrast, about a mere one tenth subscribe to lateral movement. This may show that corporate 'transformational' culture has been absorbed by no more than a small fraction of individuals. Only amongst a limited number it has reached the deeper levels in Schein's (1984) scale, i.e., those at which that culture can influence views and result in adaptive behaviour. One third of the managers appear to have a mixed or ambiguous view. Perhaps promoters on both sides – lateral movement and upward movement – will be trying to win over the third group who do not have a well-defined view. The corporate side enjoys the use of the organization's official channels to promote lateral movement. The majority who believe in upward movement may have to find indirect means of promotion. Those fighting for an upward career may look for both open and covert ways of achieving their career goals.

In the managers' predictions of what career will be like in their organization in five years' time, the ideology of excellence through breadth appears to be expected to operate to a point. In fact, counter-arguments are ready, and they look at the matter from both the

individual's and the firm's angle (CHAPTER 8). It is argued that not everyone will be happy in living abroad, and cross-fertilization of ideas between firms or divisions can easily be done using today's electronic means of communication, without leaving the country. The idea of the 'rounded engineer' is also dismissed on two main grounds: individuals will suffer the frustration of being unable to follow their preferred specialism; and the firm will be deprived of these individuals' specialist potential, now 'watered down'.

This latter set of counter-arguments is reminiscent of some past literature which criticizes the specialist-generalist career sequence (see Section I, 1). Indeed, the issue of technical and professional careers is entwined with the cultural promotion of the circular job movement and the possible discouraging of aspirations of upward movement. Some individuals, probably the majority, may have problems in progressing up the career ladder, not only due to missing rungs, but also in association with a two-tiered / core-periphery organizational context (see Sections I, 1 and 2). In this set-up, those with a technical or professional background, notably engineers, may be at a considerable disadvantage. The reason can be considered to be, at least in part, of a cultural nature, as Lee and Smith (1992) point out: they are felt to belong in the lower strata of the organization, as engineers, technicians and manual workers appear to be anachronistically seen as sharing the same craft culture.

A push for change from this situation appears to be central to the ideology of excelling through depth, which talks of deepening one's own expertise. This promotes a shift away from the subordination of engineers, and other specialists, to the line of command who has traditionally harnessed and used the technical input. It does so to the extent that it

encourages recognition of the authority of knowledge as compared with the authority of rank.

In the two rival 'scripts', the corporate emphasis on a horizontal dimension is, thus, challenged by a vertical dimension, one of depth (see CHAPTER 8, II, 3). The vertical dimension of depth does not display the traditional upward direction – which the former may be interested in discouraging – but instead stresses the opposite direction – which may both find an easier acceptance and absorb the corporate discourse of 'development', i.e., developing in depth. Furthermore, given that the authority of knowledge may be challenging the authority of rank, then an upward direction is probably being promoted indirectly. Promoting the idea of development in depth may, therefore, lead to a covert way of promoting upward career movement.

As seen in CHAPTER 8, Section I, some managers may hold the view that a measure of foreign influence will be felt in the management career in Britain. From Rover came the apparent belief in a German contribution and from Valeo in a French contribution towards a higher status for professional and technical careers. From LucasVarity came some interest in American ideas of managing one's career in the external market. However, no evidence was found of a substantial impact, which appears to confirm that the national context tends to prevail in international firms (Whitley, 1991; Edwards *et al.*, 1993; Ferner, 1993-4).

Contradictory cultural influences may also be reaching managers via popular and prescriptive literature. On the one hand, some books promote, and elevate, short job contracts and lateral moves (Korten, 1999; Boldt, 1999), as mentioned at the beginning of the present chapter. On the other hand, some books talk of managerial empowerment within the employing organization, career up the ranks, and management development

programmes based on Second World War military exercises (e.g., Franzén and Hardaker, 1994; Krouwell and Goodwill, 1994). These are antagonistic forces on different sides of the two rival 'scripts': managerial employment in line with Heckscher's 'professional' model for a supposedly post-corporate world; and, in contrast with it, a military inspired, bureaucratic model.

The latter may also mean that war-time criteria are still being used in respect of employee appraisal and selection for managerial posts which are biased towards the social qualities of the people being assessed, as suggested by Randell (1994). This, in turn, may have a link with what Storey (1994) sees as the way British managers are 'made', i.e., within a sink-or-swim philosophy based on the preconceived notion that people either 'have what it takes' or they do not. Only some individuals may be perceived to have the right qualities to go up the ranks. Furthermore, this tendency may be supported by the individualism of post industrial society that may be embodied in HRM (Guest, 1990) and the individualism associated with personnel techniques such as direct communication with employees and individual performance rewards (Kessler and Purcell, 1995).

Indeed, on its surface appearance, it may look as if an innovative model on a horizontal dimension is emerging with widely articulated support from sources such as publishing and the media. However, evidence from my investigation shows that a vertical dimension is very much in place, and in some respects perhaps deeper and stronger. Despite a corporate emphasis on lateral job moves, most managers subscribe to upward movement, as discussed in Section I, 1, and an ideology of excellence through depth is challenging the ideology of excellence through breadth promoted by a corporate 'strong' culture. With a twist in that depth, not height, is being highlighted, both the vertical and the horizontal orientations of job movement coexist on the managerial stage where managers are trying

to 'anchor' (Schein, 1977) their careers, and manage both their personal identity and their contribution to their firm. The next step in the evolution of the management career will greatly depend on the interplay of these two forces.

II - THE EMERGING SCENARIO

1 - How Tall Is Flat?

Despite a reduced number of ranks in the hierarchy and a corporate emphasis on lateral movement, it is in terms of going up through the ranks that most managers in my case-study organizations think of career, as discussed in the first part of the present chapter. CHAPTER 8 focuses on findings that may point to the future. The statements quoted in it are rich in expressions, often of a metaphorical nature, which show a perception of their organization as having a sizeable hierarchy where some can hope to further their career. Putting together expressions which come from the four case-study organizations and were quoted in that, and other, empirical chapters, we have a picture where there is a divide between 'the majority of us' and 'high flyers', and some of the latter will be 'shining stars' who reach the top. Moving upwards may require the occasional 'jump' or, in some instances, 'quantum leap'. Also, people who do not keep up with the required standards may see 'their careers go sideways or backwards'.

The need to take jumps and bridge wide gaps appears to be experienced in other organizations. It has been reported in research work which is contemporaneous with mine.

Under the title 'Careers in the flatter organization', Thomas and Dunkerley (1999) comment that the removal of layers from the hierarchy has left wide gaps between levels with the resulting effect that 'the jump between one level and the next seems too great, with very few opportunities to bridge it' (1999: 165-166). This is rather ironic. Certainly, if the organization had really become flatter, the reduction in the total height would have eliminated the possibility of too great a jump between the remaining layers after some had been removed.

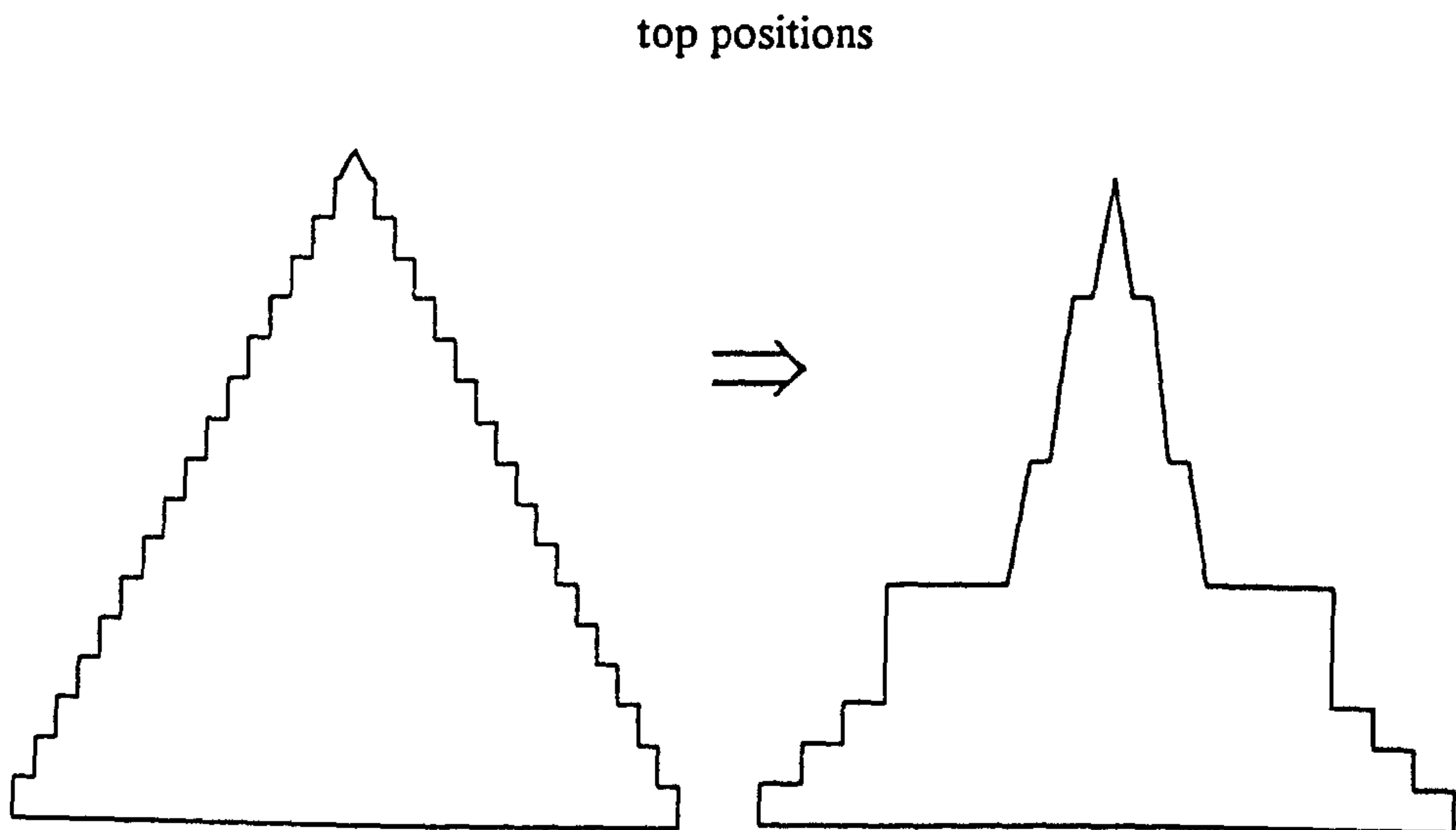


Figure 9.2 - Corporate career: from steps to jumps

The problem lies in what may be a generalized tendency to accept the classification of *downsized* – and *delayered* – rather too literally. A downsized, or delayered, organization is not necessarily a flatter organization. For example, Guest and Davey (1996) found a

reduction in grades but not necessarily a reduction in hierarchy. Positions may have been closed and intermediate levels removed, but the main original structure may have remained in place. This can probably explain the wide gaps to bridge and the resulting need for great jumps.

To a point, an organization can be both flat and tall. It depends on the standpoint from which the observer looks. The organization can be flat inasmuch as each of its operating units has a short grading structure. Managers moving across these separate business entities may remain in the bottom tier – or in the periphery – of the wider organization. The top tier – or the core – may start at the level of senior liaison and coordination of businesses within the group and / or in relation to the parent company. It is in this sector that large gaps are more likely to develop.

This kind of situation has been found in the organizations researched. This is a matter which was not evident at the beginning of my research study. It is both a new theme and a finding which throws light into a number of apparently conflicting results concerning the management career in these firms. It contributes to a clearer understanding of the fact that a mixture of features has been found, some identifiable with the traditional bureaucratic model of Weberian roots, and some evocative of innovative changes suggested in the past two decades.

Using, for purposes of a sharper contrast and comparison, the ‘mechanistic-organic’ duality outlined in Table 2.1, in CHAPTER 2, the current scenario can be summed up as follows: In respect of structural design and initiatives, much has been retained of the traditional hierarchy; there is a variable span of control, where managers at the top of the bottom tier in general feel overloaded rather than empowered and experience isolation from senior levels; and a function-led orientation may not facilitate lateral movement or

integrated initiative. Corporate regulations may have lost their traditional precision and customary practice may have lost meaning; but the alternative values to be held, sense of mission, entrepreneurship and innovation may be empty words where managers are operating in a state of constrained fluidity and can hardly control their work and their career. As for training and development, there is not a systematic implementation of career management tools; and learning tends to be firm specific, with no evidence of corporate provision of competences for employability in the wider market. The measure of employee success is caught between a corporate emphasis on lateral job movement and discourse of ‘development’, a notion of upward movement as an intrinsic constituent to a successful career, and the authority of technical and professional expertise as compared with the authority of leadership. These different elements are played out through two rival ideologies, one that elevates breadth and one that elevates depth in managerial competence.

In this organizational context, management career may assume particular features, as observed in my case-study organizations. In the next and final chapter of this work, a theoretical model is devised which condenses this phenomenon. I have termed it **the spiral career – flat or rising – in the cylinder-cone organization**, as explained in CHAPTER 1, Section III.

2 - Grounds for Pessimism or Optimism?

CHAPTER 2 reviewed both an optimistic and a pessimistic literature on managers and their careers. Evidence from my investigation on the automotive industry supports some aspects of both strands. The optimists receive support mainly in so far as in general managers in my case-study organizations tend to take a positive stance and seek to further

their careers proactively in a work environment where there are some, albeit limited, opportunities for progression. We have also seen how structural change in the shape of short but more numerous ladders facilitates such progression up to a point, but higher posts may be difficult to reach. The pessimists receive support mainly from the evidence of a lack of structured career planning and high levels of work effort.

Indeed, the organizations researched show a mixture of features, some of which are advocated and some rejected by both the optimistic and pessimistic models. Authors such as Kanter (1983, 1989), Handy (1994) and Heckscher (1995) see the downsizing of the 1980s and 1990s as making the Weberian ideal obsolete and bringing a radically new format, but in the firms I have investigated much has been retained from the bureaucratic model. For example, activities are grouped by function. Also, despite a corporate emphasis on lateral job movement, most of these managers think of career in terms of upward movement. It will not be the traditional steady rise through incremental steps, but they are prepared to attempt jumps past the missing rungs on the ladder. Cascio (1993) would probably see in these organizations a failure to break out of the traditional approach, apparently with the implicit assumption that all in the bureaucratic model is to be rejected. Pressure in this direction may pose problems to some firms who feel that they have to show an 'organic' appearance in order to be seen to move with the times, where a more conservative format may be better suited to their case.

In fact, Guest and Davey (1996) found organizations where the traditional hierarchy is in place and career remains for the key core managers. It is a situation similar to what I encountered in my case-study organizations. This does not mean, though, that all that remains from the past is still serving well. An example is the inadequate handling of

technical and professional careers, which continues trapped in the old specialist-generalist frame of thought.

Equally, my results do not support the pessimistic view of reluctant managers in face of a broken psychological contract and lack of trust (Scase and Goffee, 1989; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). In my case-study organizations the implicit contract may be under a process of updating but it stands and is valued. Managers seek a fair and mutually advantageous employer-employee relationship. Some enjoy rather limited empowerment in the constraints and fluidity of their working environment; but they are not reluctant managers. In general they remain loyal, and so will those who are head-hunted but will stay where their loyalty is reciprocated by the employer.

The optimistic literature on portable skills (Kanter, 1989; Handy, 1994; Godswen, 1994; Heckscher, 1995) receives no support from my research. No substantive evidence could be found of training that may provide employability in the external market, a finding similar to those of other recent researchers (McGovern *et al.*, 1998; Gratton *et al.*, 1999). In the automotive companies I researched, established anchors in terms of stable career paths continue to provide meaning to many managers. The employability model might apply where managers have easily transportable skills, which may be true in parts of the information technology and electronic commerce sectors but is unlikely to be the case in established core industries such as the automotive sector, or for that matter much of manufacturing, and one would suggest, other well-established sectors such as retail or large parts of banking. Finally, there is evidence that in some measure supports Dopson and Stewart's (1990) hope for middle managers in the internal market, but my results do not support extreme views such as Heckscher's (1995) on the end of loyalty, an author who has indeed fallen under considerable criticism. In his review of Heckscher, Edwards

(2000) shows how his model is undermined both by an unconvincing methodology and a confused definition of loyalty. The managers in my case-study organizations were moving with the times; however, they were doing so not by dismissing loyalty, but by seeking a redefinition of trust and loyalty, in an evolution similar to that suggested by Edwards in the same work quoted above. Also, similarly to the findings in Watson's (1994) study, the managers in my case-study organizations would equally welcome more empowerment, in the sense of more control that would enable them to serve better both their firm and their own personal requirements of self-identity.

This brings us to a critical issue which is important both for the optimistic and the pessimistic strands – trust and empowerment, present or missing – and how the conflict between optimistic and pessimistic views can be resolved. In this respect my work is in line with the theorization on the matter developed by Armstrong (1987, 1989) and Edwards (2000).

As these authors point out, the agency approach addresses some contradictions and tensions inherent in the employer-employee dynamics between the firm and its managers. It views management as a relationship which is based either on trust or, instead, on performance monitoring and control. Because trust can be costly, a conflict arises between its indispensability and the employer's economic interest in substituting for it. Developments observed at firm level reflect, therefore, deeper processes within the organization of management and its agency relationship with capital. On the one side, there is capital's dependency on trust, on the other, capital's wish to minimize its cost. Tensions in the employer-employee relationship between the firm and the manager emerge around these two contradictory forces: on one plate of the scales, trust and empowerment, on the other, supervision replacing trust. The balance is delicate.

Both pessimistic and optimistic views can, therefore, be valid, as they may just be looking at different facets of a complex situation. As Edwards remarks, at particular historical moments, this contradictory relationship takes particular turns. This is the case of the 1990s marked by pressures towards cost-cutting and closer monitoring of managers, on the one hand, and efforts to decentralize, on the other.

As we saw in the empirical chapters and have discussed further in the present chapter, contradictory forces are at work in my study organizations. It may be easy to see a cause-effect relation between fewer ranks in the hierarchy and a corporate emphasis on lateral job movement, i.e., that a reduced number of higher positions will result in an effort being made to divert employee aspirations from the traditional upward job movement. A 'strong' culture, with a discourse of 'development' and an ideology of breadth, may serve this purpose. However, another cause-effect relation appears to be contradicting this effort. A disbelief in lateral movement as a suitable career alternative to upward movement may be resulting in the covert promotion of the latter through an ideology of depth. The relative impact of these two rival forces will depend on different factors where numbers play a role. Bearing in mind that over half the managers have a clear idea that career entails upward movement, the 'depth-height' vertical force may be considerably significant. On the other hand, an organizational chart showing a limited number of hierarchical levels may act as convincing support to the 'breadth' force. The former may be associated with delegation and empowerment and the latter with cost-cutting and control – despite any 'soft' HRM discourse to the contrary – in the employer-employee relationship between the firm and the manager. Tension will exist between the two. Grounds for optimism and pessimism will coexist.

10 - The Shape of Things to Come

This chapter draws together the various conclusions reached in the previous chapters and considers their wider significance. It comprises two sections.

First, a theoretical model is presented which captures the key results of my investigation: the spiral career – flat or rising – in the cylinder-cone organization. A pictorial representation is given of the management career, which enables a clear vision of the *status quo* and of some implications which concern the future of career paths, the manager and the firm itself.

The second part considers the generalizability of my research study, how it has filled the identified lacunae in previous literature and how the current state of knowledge in this academic field has been altered and advanced with my contribution. This last section concludes with suggestions for further scholarly research and a number of lessons for practitioners.

I - THE SPIRAL CAREER IN THE CYLINDER-CONE ORGANIZATION

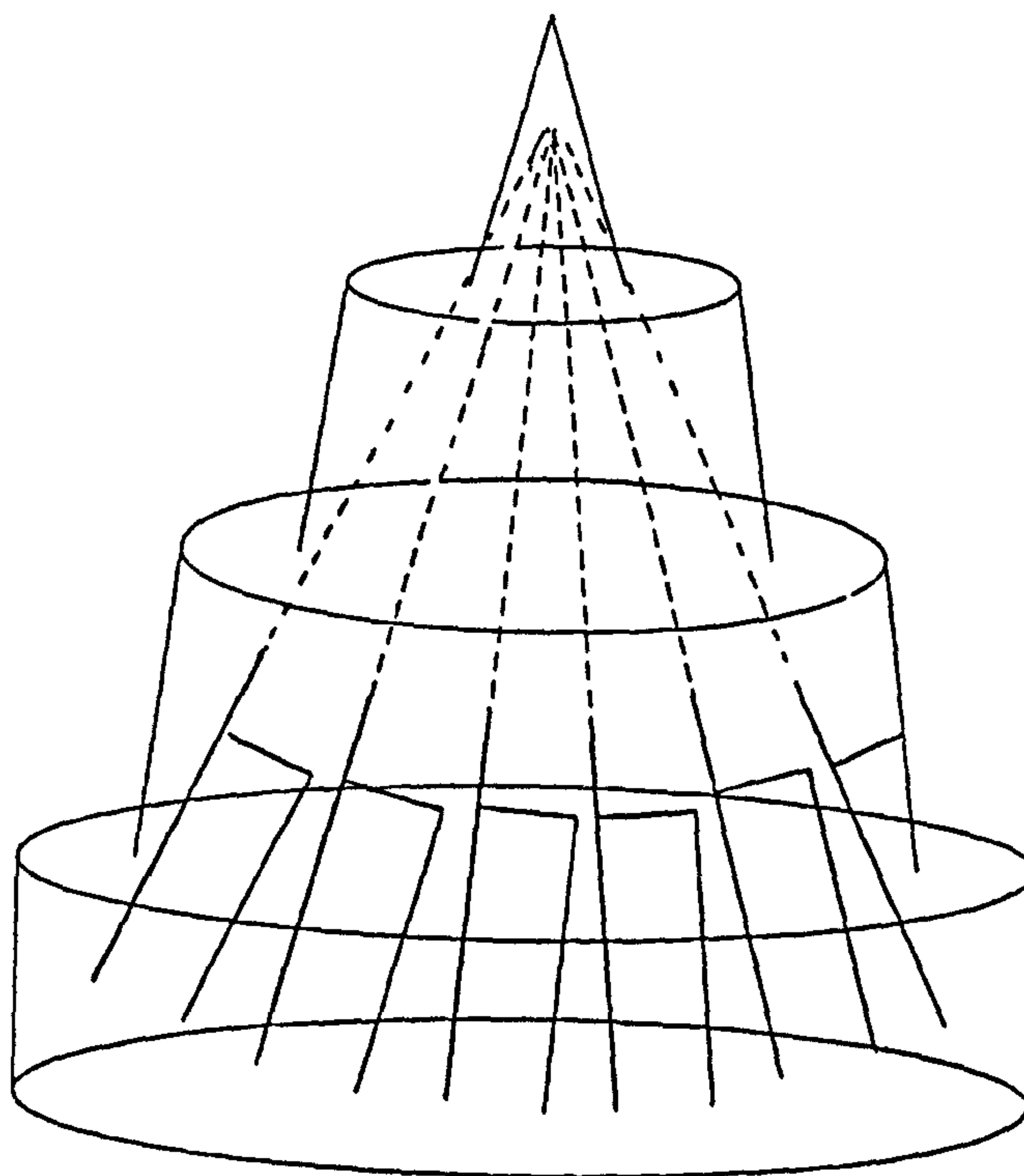


Figure 10.1 - The multiple ladder cylinder-cone organization

As discussed in CHAPTER 9, no evidence has been found that can support the revolutionary transformational change heralded by Heckscher (1995) as a reaction against, and a follow up to, the dramatic events in the corporate world of the 1980s and 1990s, including downsizing and delayering. Instead, in my investigation I have found that much of the traditional structure has stayed in place. It is so in the four case-study organizations – Rover, LucasVarity, GKN and Valeo – as well as in the two additional organizations – Mayflower and Peugeot.

My investigation has shown that a downsized organization is not necessarily a less hierarchical organization. Where incremental steps have been severed, the route to the top may then mean big jumps past the missing rungs in the ladder. Furthermore, not only does the traditional career ladder remain in existence in my case-study organizations, but it has even proliferated. With divisionalization and the development of relatively autonomous business entities, career ladders have multiplied across the wider organization. Moreover, these are two-legged ladders, at least at the lower levels, with a dual provision which caters for technical and professional career alongside the traditional managerial line of command, in which the latter reaches the top. An evolution has therefore occurred from the pyramid corporate format to a new model which is visually represented in Figure 10.1. I have named it the **cylinder-cone organization**. In its slim apex, positions are very vulnerable. Indeed, job insecurity appears to be a general threat to the employee, regardless of rank.

In the cylinder cone organization, career retains its two traditional constituents: movement and upward direction. However, upward direction no longer occupies its critical position of an intrinsic element; instead, it has become a possible alternative to a novel lateral directional orientation. This corresponds to a two-tiered system of opportunities – a **flat career spiral** and a **rising career spiral** – which operates at different levels of the cylinder-cone organization, as shown in Figure 10.2. Please see also Section III of CHAPTER 1.

Employees are encouraged to think in terms of lateral movement, even where activities are arranged by function. Moving across between ladders may in some cases lead to an increase in monetary remuneration and other rewards, or a higher grade, or both. Some managers will be just moving around in a flat spiral, others may see their career spiral rise.

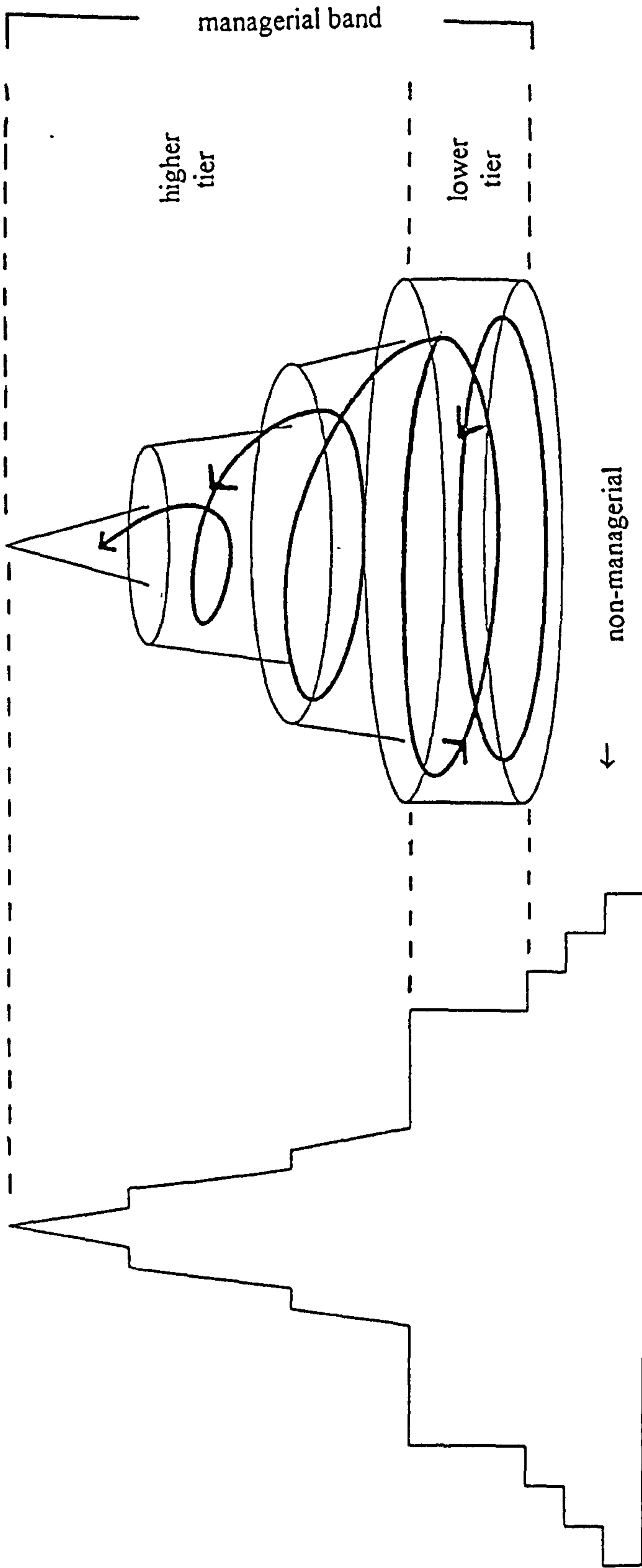


Figure 10.2 - The new career: flat or rising spiral

Amongst the latter, only a few will see their career spiral rise beyond the lower tier on to the higher tier. Fewer still will reach the top. Labelling these different categories with expressions heard from the respondents in my field work, one can say that 'the majority of us' will remain in the lower tier whilst the 'high flyers' will spiral up and some of them will shoot up to the very top as 'shining stars'. This last, and small, group faces fierce peer competition.

In the cylinder-cone organization, career management tools are commonly regarded as being inefficiently implemented. Some appraisals may lead to dismissals rather than the improvement of employees' competences. Training, in general, may be occasional rather than systematic and / or tends to provide firm-specific competences which are not easily transferable. However, there is a corporate discourse of 'development' which fosters an ideology of breadth and circulatory movement and finds application throughout the company, from the 'rounded engineer' to the globe-trotting executive. Moving around, from job to job, has also been receiving support both from several leading companies and the British national press, as discussed in the present study. Indeed, this ideology of breadth may find fertile ground in the present historical moment. Geographical distance matters less and less as air travel can take people to the other side of the world in a shorter time and electronic mail enables almost instantaneous communication around the globe.

Practices sustained by a corporate discourse of 'development' and an ideology of breadth and circulatory movement may correspond both to a flat career spiral and to a rising career spiral. Moving around with no upward progression may suit some individuals, perhaps the 11% of the respondents in my case-study organizations for whom career meant 'just a job'. However, over 50% of the respondents had a well-defined view

that upward movement is an integral part of career. These people are likely to strive to go up the ranks, and some may see the emphasis on lateral movement as little more than a corporate distraction from the individual's career aspirations.

Going up through the ranks cannot be easy in an organizational context where the removal of incremental steps has left big distances to bridge and where corporate culture points laterally instead. Under these circumstances, going up may signify having to satisfy new prerequisites, such as a university degree, and meet very heavy demands, be they extended working hours, working abroad, or simply having to satisfy ever-increasing business targets. As we have seen in earlier chapters, and in contrast to the image of the reluctant managers, managers have accepted some of these pressures: demanding goals may act as good motivators, the challenge may be enjoyed by the individual, and the employer may benefit from the employee's enhanced performance. However, the need to excel beyond certain limits may have negative effects both for the employee and the employer. Anxious employees may engage in activities which do not put the organization's interests first, but give priority to giving their career curve a momentum that will result in their career spiral rising steeper enough to reach the distant next rank up. Frustrated employees whose career efforts have not earned them promotion may also be unable to give their best to the organization. Some may be discouraged by the apparently insurmountable odds, give up their potential and sink into the flat spiral of the lower tier. At the centre of this problem in the cylinder-cone organization lies a fundamental mismatch. On the one hand, there is a corporate emphasis on a horizontal career orientation and a culture which seems to imply a flat organization. On the other hand, organizations themselves stress achievement with their rhetoric of 'development', and thus at the same time have an ideology of upward movement, while individuals can also see a

vertical career structure very much in place. These contradictory signals can breed employee doubt and discontent and can undermine the organization's efficiency.

Entwined with the issue of vertical or horizontal job moves, in my cylinder-cone case-study organizations there is also the issue of the situation of the technical and professional members of the organization, typically engineers. The value of these individuals' input to the business appears to be receiving an increased acknowledgement. However, a satisfactory solution for their careers has yet to be achieved. In the dual career system that has been installed, the managerial leg tends to reach higher than the technical / professional leg, and the traditional specialist-generalist duality continues to be a dominant notion. Thus a divide persists where people with a technical or professional specialism may not see their career spiral rise much beyond the top of the lower tier. On the other hand, in association with the higher status which is being suggested for these people, there is an ideology of depth, which defies the ideology of breadth. Its defenders may see the latter, not as widening, but as diluting competences. This response to the lateral movement trend absorbs the discourse of 'development' into the vertical dimension – for personal development speaks of achievement – whilst presenting vertical movement in a different direction – deeper, rather than higher. We may be witnessing an opening for change, inasmuch as the traditional vertical career orientation is revisited but considered from a different angle. As a result, the authority of rank may make more room for the authority of knowledge and a re-thinking of both may take place.

The flat or rising spiral career pattern, found in the cylinder-cone organization, reflects an effort to move with the times, from both the corporation and its managers. However, the companies in my research study may be faced with two problems of their own making. First, they may be adopting an 'organic' appearance that does not correspond to their

structural reality. The lateral career movement of the flat organization is being promoted in what in fact is a hierarchical organization. Keeping up with change may not mean embracing popular prescriptions that do not suit a specific kind of organization. Second, these companies may be clinging on to conceptualizations that need updating, such as the specialist-generalist dichotomy. The first problem – that of an appearance that does not fit – may reinforce the difficulty in actually keeping up with change. The discrepancy experienced between image and fact may contribute to the members of the organization reverting to the security of old frames of thought, though these may have become obsolete. A vicious circle of inadequacy may be created.

Adopting trendy but unsuitable formats whilst holding on to old frameworks of thought and action is unlikely to be the way in which organizations can move forwards successfully. However, there are encouraging signs of constructive change. The cylinder-cone organization may be trapped in a vicious circle but may also be about to break through into a new outlook that will bring improved intra-organizational career paths for its managers. The ideology of depth may be a vehicle that will take firms to an authentic breakthrough in respect of the management career, which will include a true re-thinking of the authority of rank and that of knowledge. On the other hand, an update of the current management career, as well as professional and technical careers, may be endangered by a dominant ideology of breadth which may be providing a distorted vision of what is actually happening in some firms. Tensions will always exist, but in this case an optimistic outlook on career is being overshadowed by pessimistic prospects of an imbalance which may prevent firms from genuinely moving with the times.

II - NEW KNOWLEDGE, AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Dopson and Stewart (1990) and Heckscher (1995) have been my platform of departure and benchmark for comparison and contrast of empirical and theoretical issues, as both can be seen in the same line of argument to the point that both put great value on the manager in the era of corporate downsizing, though the former place the manager inside the organization, and the latter outside the organization as an independent professional in the open market. In relation to these authors, my results engage most critically with Heckscher. There is certainly no evidence that will support the proclaimed end of the traditional corporate world and the 'professional' model of managerial employment. Also, in my research settings, a predominantly functional orientation does not support Kanter's (1983, 1989) vision of an 'integrative approach' and 'portable skills' and it does not support the 'employability' strand of thought (Handy, 1994; Godswen, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Heckscher, 1995). In relation to Dopson and Stewart's (1990) hope of empowerment for the middle manager and the management career in an era of downsizing and fewer ranks in the hierarchy, my results are consistent with the general view that the middle manager has not been wiped out. They also expand on the topic of management career, as shown below.

At an empirical level, my study has extended the limits of current knowledge with a cluster of fresh evidence on the management career and its apparent contradictions. Some findings stand out as major contributions. First, in contrast with Heckscher's model, an internal market and a corporate career ladder are very much in existence. Second, the few-rank organization is not necessarily a 'flat' organization, and managers may be faced, not with a shorter career ladder, but with a tall ladder with missing intermediate rungs. Third,

where there is a corporate emphasis on lateral job moves but the hierarchy stays in place, spiral career curves tend to develop, which for some individuals will remain flat but for others will rise. Fourth, despite the odds, in general managers try to build a constructive relationship with their employer. Fifth, those individuals who reach the top find themselves in a rewarding but vulnerable situation. This last finding also responds to Edwards' (1995) comment on the scarcity of research material on managers as employees which is in a way an implicit call for action in this area. In answering the call to fill the void, I have included more senior positions whilst other researchers may have tended to focus mainly on the middle manager (e.g., Dopson and Stewart, 1990; Hallier and Lyon, 1996; Redman *et al.*, 1997; Thomas and Dunkerley, 1999).

Within the boundaries of my investigation, a measure of generalizability can be found to the extent that similar categories and themes have emerged across the different research settings in the same sector of the economy, the automotive industry. However, can the present results be generalized beyond the confines of this investigation? There is indeed evidence that some of my key results are not exclusive to the automotive industry. This comes notably from two works which were published when I was in last phase of my study and which did not in any way influence my research. They are McGovern *et al.* (1998) and Gratton *et al.* (1999). Both sets of authors could find changes in the traditional career model after downsizing and delayering job cuts but could not find any substantive evidence of a transformational change of the kind proclaimed by Heckscher. Similarly to some of my results, they also found a corporate discourse of personal 'development' and emphasis on job lateral movement but no substantial provision of transferable skills which would assist 'employability'. Their investigation covered a wide range of sectors of the economy, including pharmaceuticals, electronics, investment banking, distribution,

telecommunications, food, retail banking, and the National Health Service. My finding that managers still look towards upward movement in the hierarchy as the main reward for their efforts also has parallels in other research contemporaneous with mine such as Thomas and Dunkerley's (1999) study, which is equally based on a wide range of sectors of the economy, including oil, brewing, insurance, local authorities, health service, military, civil service agencies, manufacturing, engineering, music industry, retail and distribution.

Theoretically, my study cuts through the evidence that has emerged from my investigation and, in first place, presents a model of interpretation of organizations in the era of downsizing: the flat or rising career route in the cylinder-cone organization. Secondly, with this model, my study redresses frameworks of analysis, inasmuch as 'downsizing' and 'delaying' may not necessarily mean a flatter career ladder. Thirdly, my theorization provides future researchers with a platform of departure for their work. Finally, my research has been an opportunity to reevaluate empirical and theoretical work from other researchers.

My study engages positively with some authors who have highlighted the contradictions and tensions faced by managers in their employment and pursuit of career. Such is the case with Storey (1989) who presents a scenario of antagonistic forces as a 'soft' and a 'hard' version of HRM. This is a situation in which there may be a discourse of 'empowerment' but, in contrast, as Collinson and Collinson (1997) have found, managers are being tightly monitored. Watson (1994) found antagonistic forces of this kind and the tensions they generate being played out through two different 'scripts' on the managerial stage. There is a close parallel in the firms I have researched. In my case-study organizations, one of the 'scripts' promotes an ideology of breadth and circulatory

movement and encourages lateral job moves. The opposing 'script' puts forward an ideology of depth and encourages vertical movement in association with a re-thinking of authority of rank and authority of knowledge.

Managers are trying to make sense of the conflicting signals that they are receiving in a work environment which is characterized both by fluidity and constraints. Different authors focus on different aspects of this mixed scenario, resulting on a divided optimistic and pessimistic literature. Based on the 'agency' problem, Armstrong (1987, 1989) and, more recently, Edwards (2000) have developed a unifying theory which brings together the two perspectives. The present study also looks at the *status quo* through this very useful lens. As shown throughout the chapters of this thesis, the results of my investigation show a current situation in which grounds for optimism and pessimism coexist. Optimism applies to the 'high flyers' and 'shining stars' who will move up in their career. However, for 'the majority of us' poor career prospects may be conducive to pessimism, although in general there tends to be a positive attitude in difficult times.

Some findings in the present study stand out as a topic of inquiry in their own right and merit further investigation. Research is recommended on four main areas. These refer, respectively, to business sector; government action; gender and socio-economics; and discourse in corporate culture.

The model of a spiral – flat or rising – career curve in the cylinder-cone organization which was identified in the present research study has emerged from an investigation on organizations in a major British industry with long traditional roots. Some of the current underlying elements that have contributed to this phenomenon can be expected to exist in the wider industrial scene. Further research is therefore suggested on other business

sectors so as to investigate comparability and contrast with the results of the present study.

Technical and professional corporate career provision has been shown in the present research study to be a critical issue. Research is suggested on the role played by the government in the way of initiatives and legislation that may influence the deep-rooted divide between authority of rank and specialist expertise. Of particular relevance will be evidence that will demonstrate the degree and the direction of influence that the government may be exerting.

Gender related issues is another area meriting further investigation. There is only one woman amongst the one hundred and fourteen managers that participated in my research study. Also, not only there is an almost exclusively male managerial population but, typically, these individuals are sole or main income earners who support their wife or partner and their children. Research is suggested on the socio-economic implications of this situation.

Corporate discourse is playing a role in the firm's culture in respect of career paths. A certain terminology may be contributing to shape managers' aspirations. The preference for the word 'development' which has emerged in my investigation may erase the notion of career from the mind of some individuals, leaving thus a vacuum in which a propitious conceptual slot can be found for propaganda on notions of 'employability'. Mental manipulation that may affect the future of the management career merits an investigation of its own. Research is suggested on developments, and their implications, in this area.

In addition to the research avenues suggested above, the new knowledge that ensues from my research study also provides a number of lessons of a pragmatic nature. These can

serve corporate decision-makers and other actors in the different companies researched in my study as well as in the wider world of business.

Some misconceptions are at work which lead on to action being taken on the basis of a distorted vision of what is actually happening. This is detrimental for the firm and its members, in this case, particularly its managers.

Where downsizing or delayering is not synonymous with 'flattening', lateral career movement in the name of personal 'development' is a poor substitute alternative for the manager who would have climbed the ladder at incremental steps if rungs had not been removed. Managers who perceive this as an elusive means of diverting upward career aspirations may feel unable to give their best to the firm, with negative implications in the running of the business.

A satisfactory solution will require a radical change. The matter will need to be approached from two different directions, dealing with two issues which in some firms will meet at the core of the problem: the re-thinking of management and the re-thinking of technical and professional careers.

The 'dual ladder' career scheme addresses the latter issue, but does so inadequately. It disturbs traditional ranking without actually changing it. Indeed, the dual career scheme is no more than a protracted version of the traditional 'line-staff' binary categorization. Intrinsic to this divide is the subordination of those who provide technical and professional input to those in the line of command. This corresponds to an obsolete understanding of management. Authority of rank played its role in industry in the days when the military, and the church, was all that was available as a model for the larger organization. The inherited model has had a long existence but is in urgent need of change. Denial of managerial identity to the technical and professional expert is also partly a hangover from

the era of craftsmanship. This needs to come to an end too. For a radical change to happen, two important steps will be needed: first, to part with the divide in which the specialist input of some individuals is managed in line functions by other individuals; and, instead, adopt a system in which technical and professional expertise is developed hand in hand with empowerment in decision-making.

These are general principles, to which a number of practical lessons can be added. The following is strongly recommended for those who are engaged in shaping their own career or the career of others:

- * Look realistically at your company's career structure. A downsized or delayed organization may not be a 'flat' organization.
- * Bear in mind that lateral movement may not lead to spiralling upwards. The resulting frustration may be detrimental to both individual and firm.
- * Make objective and constructive use of career management tools. These should deserve the trust of both employee and employer.
- * Do not cling on to mental and organizational frameworks that no longer serve their purpose. The 'line-staff' divide may be a source of inadequate technical and professional career arrangements.
- * Beware of popular prescriptive literature on management and of gurus who prophesy spectacular universal solutions. They may promise a magical world which bears little resemblance with reality.

In today's organization with fewer ranks in the hierarchy, promotion up the career ladder has become increasingly uncertain, whilst, on the other hand, the individual manager may be asked to rise to heroic levels of performance. In this *status quo*, visionary ideas of

personal employability and the end of the corporate era may easily lure managers to seek their fortune in short-term employment packages in the external market which may leave them disappointed in an inter-organizational circuit of managerial lower tiers in different firms. Furthermore, the manager can come to a parallel situation and a similar fate in the micro-cosmos of one single organization. Lateral job moves in the pursuit of personal development may result in a potential career falling flat into a circle where a rising spiral had been hoped for. In this, managers may not be the only losers; the firm may be losing the potential input of members who, constrained and disillusioned, are unable to work at their full potential. I hope that the lessons from the present investigation will assist those who are in a position to benefit from them and steer their company into a sounder future. Then we may have a more prosperous firm with intra-organizational opportunities and career paths for managers which will be better suited to the corporate world in the new millennium.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

- comp. name, control no. 0

PLEASE COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND RETURN IT IN THE PROVIDED ENVELOPE, SEALED TO ENSURE YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY, TO ISABEL COOK C/O :

PLEASE TICK AND COMPLETE THROUGHOUT AS APPROPRIATE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sex: Male Female

Age:

EDUCATION, TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Secondary Education Specify: Type (e.g. 'O' Level, GCSE) & Subject	Date Approx.	Gained before you started full- time employment	Gained since working at your present company	Financial help was received from present company

Further and Higher Education Specify: Type (e.g. 'A' Levels, Diploma, Undergraduate Degree, MBA Degree, Other Post-Graduate Degrees) & Course Title	Date Approx.	It was gained before you started full- time employment	It was gained since working at your present company	Financial help was received from present company

Technical or Vocational Specify: Type (e.g. Trade Qualification, City & Guilds) & Subject	Date Approx.	Gained before you started full- time employment	Gained since working at your present company	Financial help was received from present company

Any Other Qualification You Feel Is Relevant Specify: Type & Subject	Date Approx.	Gained before you started full- time employment	Gained since working at your present company	Financial help was received from present company

Are you currently a member of any professional society or association (e.g. The Institution of Electrical Engineers, Institute of Mechanical Engineers)?

No

Yes

Could you state, in full, which one(s) in the space provided:

CAREER TO DATE

1. How did you join this company? (please tick one):
- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Straight from education</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>From unemployment</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>After looking after family or children</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>From another company</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Other</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>(please specify):</i> | |
- 2a. Have you been employed previously elsewhere?
- | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>No</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Move to QUESTION 3 |
| <i>Yes</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
- 2b. Before joining your present company, in how many other companies have you worked full-time (exclude casual, holiday or student vacation work)?
- 2c. Please name this/these previous company/companies and using the list below label it/them as to which industrial sector it/they belong(s) to.
- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <i>A) Primary</i> | <i>D) Retail & distribution</i> | <i>G) Transport & communication</i> |
| <i>B) Manufacturing</i> | <i>E) Finance</i> | <i>H) Public administration & defence</i> |
| <i>C) Construction</i> | <i>F) Public utilities</i> | <i>I) Other (please specify)</i> |
- 2d. In which functions had you worked before entering your present company?
- | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Finance</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Product Planning</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Systems, Computing</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Sales, Marketing</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Production</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Maintenance</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Personnel</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Design</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Management trainee</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Administration</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Research & Development</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <i>Purchasing</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Quality assurance</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <i>Other</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>(please specify):</i> | | | |
- 2e. Why did you leave the last company you worked for? If you tick more than one please rank them in order of importance, where 1 = the most important reason.
- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <i>Physical working conditions</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Package of rewards & benefits given</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Poor promotion chances</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>No chance to use your skills & experience</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Unfriendly work groups</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Lack of interest in work</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Too far to travel</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Attitudes of management</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Job insecurity</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Conflicts with family/domestic duties</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Other</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>(please specify):</i> | |
3. How were you recruited to your present company?
- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Answered advertisement</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Indirect approach from company</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Joined from school/college</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Direct approach by the company</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Graduate induction program</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Unsolicited application</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Via a careers office</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <i>Other</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>(please specify):</i> | |

4. What attracted you to come and work at your present company? If you tick more than one please rank them in order of importance, where 1 = the most important reason.

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <i>Interesting work offered</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Respect for the top management team</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Physical working conditions</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Package of rewards & benefits offered</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Job security offered</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Opportunities for promotion/career development</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Good work groups</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Opportunities to use your skills & experience</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Reputation of the company</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Challenge of working in a growing company</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Near to your home</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Chance of working for an international business</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Family/domestic reasons</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>No special reason</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Other</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>(please specify):</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. How long have you worked for your present company? ..

6a. What is the title of your current job?

6b. And what is the grade of your current job (if appropriate)?

6c. To how many people do you directly report?

6d. How many people directly report to you?

6e. How long have you worked at your present job?

7. What do you consider a managerial position to entail?

8. At what age did you take up your first managerial appointment? (please tick appropriate answer)
Under 25 years old *26-29* *30-35* *36-40* *over 40*

9a. Did you join this company in your present post/job? *Yes* *Move to NEXT SECTION*
No

9b. How many separate posts/jobs have you held in this company?

9c. Please list on the next page, using the key below, your previous posts/jobs held in this company:

1) Label them according to which function they belonged to. The functions:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>A) Finance</i> | <i>F) Product Planning</i> | <i>K) Systems, Computing</i> |
| <i>B) Sales, Marketing</i> | <i>G) Production</i> | <i>L) Maintenance</i> |
| <i>C) Personnel</i> | <i>H) Design</i> | <i>M) Management trainee</i> |
| <i>D) Administration</i> | <i>I) Research & Development</i> | <i>N) Other (please specify)</i> |
| <i>E) Purchasing</i> | <i>J) Quality assurance</i> | |

2) Indicate as to the reason(s) for its occurrence:

NB: EXCLUDE GENERAL PAY INCREASES/COST OF LIVING AWARDS

- Upward move with a grade change & no pay rise = [UG]
- Upward move with a grade change & a pay rise = [UGP]
- Lateral move with no grade change & no pay rise = [L]
- Lateral move with a grade change & no pay rise = [LG]
- Lateral move with a grade change & a pay rise = [LGP]
- No job move but a salary increase/award = [P]
- Job (title) change (i.e. not a form of promotion/career move) = [O]
- Other (please specify):

3) If possible, by date of occurrence, the month and year.

Job/Post Title	Location (site and country)	Function	Reason	Date

CAREER PATHS AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

Could you please take a few moments to contemplate on how you would define the term **CAREER** (i.e. what does a career mean to you), and please write it down in the space provided:

Have any of the people listed below ever been responsible for your Career Management/Development?
 You may tick more than one.

Who?:	Whilst At *****		
	Has been or is responsible	Have there been any organisational changes which may have affected this?	Any additional comments?
The Personnel Department			
The Board			
A Senior Executive Team			
A Management Development Department			
The Head of Your Department			
Your Immediate Manager			
Yourself			
Any Other(s) (please specify):			

Please indicate whether any of the following systems/activities of career management have ever: been available (AVAI) for you to use or been used (USE) by you. You may tick more than one.

Career Management / Development Techniques Used:	Whilst At *****			Any additional comments?
	Has been or is available or used.	Have there been any organisational changes which may have affected this?	Yes/No	
	AVAI	USE	Yes/No	
Career Counselling by Supervisor				
Career Counselling by Personnel				
Mentoring (Formal)				
Mentoring (Informal)				
Assessment Centre				
Development Centre				
Postings of Internal Job Openings				
Formal Education/ training as Part of Career Development				
Tuition Refund				
Career Breaks				
Retirement Preparation Programme				
Secondments				
Any other(s) (please specify):				

From the list below please indicate your own future training need(s). If you tick more than one please rank them in order of importance, where 1 = the most important need.

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <i>Familiarity with information technology</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Foreign language skills</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Interpersonal skills</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Communication skills</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Leadership skills</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Marketing skills</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Accounting skills</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>All-round/general managerial capabilities</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Competence in international business</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Planning and scheduling</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Statistical and quantitative skills</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Time management</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Business education similar to MBA</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Operational knowledge</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Other</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>(please specify):</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Using the list below please indicate as appropriate the factors that you feel had/have positively/negatively influenced your career at ***** in each period listed.

1 = very negatively influential

3 = not influential

4 = positively influential

2 = negatively influential

5 = very positively influential

You may use the same number more than once.

Factors:	Whilst At *****		
	Degree of influence:	Have there been any organisational changes which may have affected this?	Any additional comments?
The Company's Organisational Structure			
Opportunities for Vertical Upward Moves			
Opportunities for Lateral Job Moves			
Access to Information Technology			
Job Involvement			
Appraisal and/or Self Assessment			
Further Training and/or Specialist Training			
The Company's Culture			
Your Line Manager/Immediate Boss			
Any Other(s) (please specify):			

OTHER INFORMATION

1a. Have you ever moved home to pursue a job opportunity (apart from taking up your first appointment in employment)? *No*
Yes Did you move: *Area?* *Number of times:*
Country? *Number of times:*

1b. Would you ever move home to pursue a job opportunity? *No*
Yes

2a. Approximately, how long does it take for you to travel to work?:

2b. By what means of transport do you travel by to get to work?:

3. Marital Status: *Single*
Married
Separated, Divorced or Widowed

4. Do you have any children? *No*
Yes Please fill in the following table:

Children's Age:	Number of Children:	
	Male	Female
Under 5 years		
5 through to 10 years		
11 through to 18 years		
Over 18 years		

5. Do you have any dependants other than children? *No*
Yes

6. Do you have a partner with whom you share economic responsibilities:

No Move to **QUESTION 7**

Yes Please answer the following:

Is your partner in full-time employment? *No*

Yes

Is your partner in part-time employment? *No*

Yes

Are you or is your partner the main income earner in the household? *You are*

Your partner is

You both are equal providers

7. If there are any additional comments that you may feel that you wish to express now please do so in the space provided below and continue on a separate page if needed:

***** THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME *****

APPENDIX 2

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

comp. name, control n° ()

[IN ADVANCE OF INTERVIEW READ THE RESPECTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE.
TAKE IT ALONG TO THE INTERVIEW TOGETHER WITH THESE GUIDELINES]

I would like to start by thanking you for your participation and for coming along today.
Complete anonymity of all participants is assured.

Also, if you feel uncomfortable about any of the questions, you need not answer or, preferably, are welcome to ask what their purpose is.

Lastly, I would like to ask your permission to tape the interview. It will help me as I cannot do shorthand and my note taking is not very quick.

Exploration of Career as a Concept - personal and corporate

1. In your opinion, what does the company ***** understand by the term career?

2. Do you think that *****'s understanding of the term 'career' has changed from when you first joined the company? Y/N

[If yes] In your view, what was it originally?

When and how did the change / changes take place?

How do you feel about the change / changes?

Systems of Career Management Provided by *****

3. How far would you agree with the statement that 'Career management / development has a high profile within *****? Do you:

Strongly agree Agree Are uncertain Disagree Strongly disagree

What led you to your answer?

4. Do you feel that ***** tries to find out what its employees want concerning their careers? Y/N

[If yes] In your opinion, how do they do this?

5. Do you feel that ***** places great emphasis on the geographical mobility of its employees? Y/N

[If yes] Do you believe that this applies:

Country-wide	Y/N
Continent-wide	Y/N
World-wide	Y/N

6. Do you feel that **** places great emphasis on the functional mobility of its employees? Y/N

7. Concerning career opportunities for people of your grade, are they:

Increasing There is no noticeable change Decreasing (fewer opportunities)

[If there has been a change] When did it take place?

8. Would you then say that there are in respect of one's career path:

Fewer barriers The same More barriers Different barriers

[If different] Different in what way?

[If there has been a change] When did it take place?

9. Concerning hours of work, has there been a change? Y/N

[If yes] What change has there been?

When did it change?

How does it suit you?

10. Concerning pressure and stress, has there been any of the following:

Increase No noticeable change Decrease

[If there has been a change] When did it take place?

11. What do you think a career will be like in ***** in five years' time?

12. What are your feelings about this prediction?

13. *[Look at the table on the questionnaire which lists *****'s formal techniques for career management / development, look at each ticked technique for each period in turn.]*

You ticked that you had used certain techniques during certain periods. As far as possible could you tell me what effect each one had on your career development?

TECHNIQUE	PERIOD	EFFECT

14. How well do you feel that the career management / development techniques work in practice? Do you feel they:

Work very well Work well Work poorly Do not work

15. What do you feel is the major factor of promotion within *****?

16. What do you think is the best incentive to motivate managers to give their best contribution to the company?

Individual Career Planning - UP TO THE PRESENT

17. What do you think has contributed to get you to where you are today? E.g. qualifications, experience, your mobility.

18. Do you consider that in the past you were geographically mobile? Y/N

[If yes] Mobile in respect of commuting long distances (e.g. minimum 50 miles) to work?
Y/N

[If yes] What is the longest distance you have commuted and by what form of transport?

[If yes] In respect of moving house for your work? Y/N

[If yes] How many times have you moved house?

Were you mobile:	Within the country in which you lived?	Y/N
	Within the continent in which you lived?	Y/N
	Worldwide?	Y/N

[If yes] Why were you mobile? For example, was it for a promotion, a career development move or something else.

19. Do you consider that in the past you were functionally mobile? Y/N

20. Do you feel that it is important to gain international experience? Y/N

[If yes] Why?

21. Do you feel that you have been able in the PAST to proactively shape your career within *****? Y/N

[If yes] How?

22. Have any factors external to the company (family circumstances; non-work interests; health; or others) contributed positively or negatively to shape your career? Y/N

[If yes] What are they?

23. Generally, what major factor(s) do you believe has/have positively or negatively influenced your career?

Individual Career Planning - FROM NOW ONWARDS

24. Do you believe that in the future (Let's say the next 12 months), for your work, you will be geographically mobile? Y/N

[If yes] Mobile in respect of commuting long distances (e.g. minimum 50 miles) to work? Y/N

[If yes] What is the longest distance you will be prepared to commute and by what form of transport?

Do you think this will be so for more than 12 months? Y/N

[If yes] Mobile in respect of being prepared to move house for your work? Y/N

Will you be mobile: Within the country in which you live now? Y/N
 Within the continent in which you live now? Y/N
 Worldwide? Y/N

[If yes] Why would you be mobile, i.e. what would determine your mobility? For example, for a promotion, a career development move or something else.

25. Do you believe that in the future (let's say the next 12 months) you will be functionally mobile for your work? Y/N

26. Do you feel that in the FUTURE you will be able to proactively shape your career within *****? Y/N

[If yes] How?

27. Does this coincide with your expectations for your future working life? Y/N

28. Do you feel that in the FUTURE you would be able to proactively shape your career better outside *****? Y/N

[If yes] Why?

29. Is there anything else you would like to say or any comments you would like to make?

Thank you once again for coming along.
The information provided by you and other interviewed managers should help me in identifying trends in careers of managers within organizations such as that of *****.