IDENTITY AND
CAREER

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Identity and Career

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Declaration.

This thesis is submitted as the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree in any tertiary institution and to the best of the candidate’s knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Paul Gibson


Confidentiality

For the purposes of confidentiality in this study, the names of the research collaborators have been changed, including the names of the organisations where they are employed, and the projects they are working on.
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I also acknowledge the support and patience of my wife, Anita, and the encouragement of my two lovely daughters, Loredana and Sophia. My family have made the demands of conducting research while simultaneously meeting the responsibilities of being a lecturer and administrator, easier to bear.
ABSTRACT:

The issue is making sense of identity and career as mutually contouring. I look at that contouring through a conceptual framework which constellates narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory as three related but significantly different ways of understanding human life and human action. That framework constitutes an advance upon thinking about identity and career in Modernist terms, in that each of the constituent theories goes beyond the duality of subjectivity and objectivity to reconceptualise the subject as entangled, inscribed, and involved. Given that conception, we begin to see why the achievement of a coherent identity through career is inherently problematic. To reach that way of seeing, I analyse the narrative accounts of two research partners: accounts of their lives and careers. The goal of the analysis is to demonstrate the illuminative potential of the combined theory that is developed in the first part of the thesis: a potential which is partly realized in the ways that the analysis reveals a mutual contouring that had not been fully recognised by the research partners. Finally, I conclude that career can be fruitfully seen as a nexus of opportunity for the construction and expression of narrative identity, social identity, and existential identity over time.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgments</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART ONE: CAREER AND IDENTITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Career Management – current literature</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career inquiry: the range of approaches over time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The choice of occupation or profession</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career, self, and identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The lifespan approach to the study of careers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Careers, emplotment, and authorship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career narratives: designed and coherent, or inscribed and uncertain?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career and personal responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Narrative Theory</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Epistemology and narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The nature and importance of narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emplotment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prefiguration, configuration, refiguration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficulties with mimesis and verisimilitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Narrative Theory and Configured Identity: Ricoeur</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identity and self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Three aspects of identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Verstricktsein</em> and configured identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identity and textuality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Narrative agency and authorship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Four: Social Theory and Social Identity: Bourdieu 101

- **Habitus**, field, capital, and mutual contouring
- **Habitus**
- Field
- Capital
- Sociogenesis and narrative understandings
- **Illusio** and prefiguration
- Social agency and authorship

Chapter Five: Existential Theory and Existential Identity: Heidegger 132

- **Dasein**, habitus, and prefiguration
- **Unheimlichkeit**
- Being-in-becoming
- Being and time
- Authentic temporalising and historiography
- Existential narrative agency and authorship
- Combining narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy

Chapter Six: Overview of the Conceptual Framework 169

- The combination of narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy
- Career, identity, and narrative connectedness
- Re-authoring and re-reading
- Concepts and sensemaking
- Key concepts revisited
- Identity: entangled, inscribed, involved
Chapter Seven: Methodology and Research Design

- The author’s purpose
- Epistemology
- The chosen methodology
- Research design issue one: choice of collaborators
- Research design issue two: questions and questioning
- Research design issue three: the hermeneutic circle
- Research design issue four: the plurality of interpretations
- Research design issue five: structured or semi-structured interviews

PART TWO: NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY AND CAREER

Introduction to the narratives

Chapter Eight: Harry Bennett

Chapter Nine: Anthea Williams

PART THREE: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Ten: Identity and Career

- Harry
- Anthea
- In conclusion

Postlogue

Bibliography
List of figures:

Figure One: Dimensions of identity related to career-relevant actions and to career-relevant awareness. 172

Figure Two: Career as a nexus of opportunity for the construction and expression of identity over time. 284
This study attends to the following research question:

- What understandings of the mutually contouring relationship between identity and career - understandings that are pertinent to the personal and practical concerns of career management - can be reached through an investigation that is informed by combining the narrative theory of Paul Ricoeur, the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, and the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger?

The dissertation has been structured to demonstrate that illuminative insights into identity and career as mutually contouring are made available by understanding particular case study examples of that contouring through the lens of a theory which combines the concepts and insights of Ricoeur, Bourdieu, and Heidegger – three authors whose work goes beyond the dualities of Modernism. The combined theory which is developed in Part One is central to this research project, and that theory gives the dissertation the character of a philosophical treatise. When that combined theory is applied in an analysis of the research interviews that were conducted by the author, the storied, socially inscribed, and yet personally constructed nature of identity and career comes clearly into view.

The major concern of the author is show how our being entangled in our stories, inscribed by our early social locations, and involved in our projects and practices lies behind the mutual contouring of identity and career, and the aim is thereby to show why the authorship of coherent and satisfying identities and careers is such a significant achievement. That
aim embraces recent advances upon Modernist conceptions of the person as subject. The Modernist subject – based primarily upon the Cartesian cogito - has been thought of as self-contained, unmediated, and transparently rational, and could therefore be imagined as being free to take a planned and purposeful approach to its life and career, based upon a scientifically inspired survey of its motivations and interests, and restricted only by its own reluctance to dream of bigger things and to recite positive affirmations about its ever-growing capacities.¹ The work of this author shows that we definitely are not free to straightforwardly author our personal and professional lives as works of fiction, unconstrained by confusions, historical and social traces, or uncertain endpoints - but this study also shows that we can, and sometimes do, nevertheless move toward relatively consistent sensemaking and coherent action-taking within the limits of our complex, situated, predisposed, and problematic being.

The dissertation begins with an exploration of, and a review of, the concepts of career and of career management, and concludes by presenting a refigured understanding of career and the possibilities for its management. That conclusion is reached by conducting a hermeneutic² analysis of research material – analysis which gives centre stage to narrative and identity. Three different but complementary aspects of

¹ For critiques of the Modernist subject see, for instance:
identity are explored as the dissertation unfolds: configured identity, social identity, and existential identity. Configured identity is presented as the understanding of who we are that is expressed in the stories that we tell others and ourselves about what we have done, and what we have lived through. Social identity is presented as who we are known to be in terms of our capacity for action in particular fields of business and social endeavour and interaction – fields in which some possess more ‘capital’ than others and fields in which some have a better ‘feel for the game’ than others. Existential identity is presented as what we are known to stand for, and in particular what we have chosen to stand for. In each case, the aspect of identity that the individual must seek to develop or construct, is uncertain and unclear. Identity is treated as an ongoing, lifetime issue in this dissertation, rather than as a metaphysical given.

As each aspect of this threefold account of identity is presented, a particular account of agency (narrative agency, social agency, and existential agency) will also be presented. Each type of agency has a different set of concerns and a different source of power or capacity that is discussed in relation to the key narrative processes of prefiguration, configuration, and refuguration.

The thesis is presented in three parts. Part One begins with a discussion of career literature – a discussion which makes comparisons and contrasts between previous literature and the concerns of this study. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which this dissertation extends previous approaches. We then commence the major work of the dissertation -

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philosophical work on the construction of an illuminating way to understand the mutual contouring of identity and career. Central to that philosophical endeavour, is an advance on current theorising – an advance that proceeds by combining narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory into a configuration of understanding from which the topic can be seen in a more revealing light.

Given the position that is argued for by this author, there are four points of departure for Part One, and the first is that the thoughtful practice of career management requires an understanding of the mutually contouring relationship between personal identity and career. It will be argued - and demonstrated - that our autobiographical sense of who we are, has a patterning influence upon how we work, on what we find enjoyable or meaningful in work, on the career related directions and decisions that we take, and on what we seek to achieve in our careers. Conversely, our narrative sense of our career experiences, our projects and assignments, successes and failures, has a shaping influence on what we conceive our identities to be. If we consider our careers in isolation from our identities, therefore, we fail to recognise key personal issues that underlie the potential that careers have to provide coherence and value in our lives.

The second point of departure is that gaining insight into the relationship between identity and career involves seeing that relationship from the horizon of narrative theory, for three reasons:

1. Identities and careers are narrative constructions, and are therefore interpretations (which can be accepted or contested).

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2. Identities and careers are authored, sometimes by the person whose identity and career is at issue, sometimes by others, sometimes by our situations (although it may be more appropriate at such times to speak of chance rather than authorship).

3. It is through recounting the stories of our careers and of our identities, that we are able to trace the overlays of plot, to track overlapping issues of character, to see similar or related patterns of desire and concern, and reach a position from which to consider re-authoring.

The primary relevance of narrative to thoughtful career management lies in the relevance of the past to the present and the future. If we are to bring more of what we want into the character of and the lived experiences of our careers, then we need to understand how we managed to find career satisfaction – even if only partially and rarely – in the past. In telling those stories which show the overlapping and mutual influencing of identity and career, we provide a retrodictive explanation of how things sometimes turned out the way we liked or the way we planned, and an explanation of why things sometimes turned out badly, and we thereby configure an understanding that can inform our present career decisions and our future planning – accepting that those plans are narratives which are contestable.

The third point of departure is that not only narrative theory but also existential philosophy - as developed by Heidegger, will be useful to our

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5 White, M. op. cit.
7 To configure events over time, is to place them into a relationship which reveals meanings additional to that which is integral to the events taken in isolation from each other. See Ricoeur P 1984, Time and Narrative Vol. 1, Tr. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
endeavour - if we are to reach an understanding of career management as lived experience. In addition to an exploration of Heidegger’s analysis of the human way of being, the thesis also makes reference to the thinking of Octavio Paz, the Mexican cultural critic, whose existential analysis of Mexican culture as a culture of disguise earned him a Nobel Prize. That analysis will be shown to have a significant and illuminating relevance to the analysis which this author conducts of the life and career narratives of his research collaborators.

There are three complementarities between narrative theory and existential philosophy that support its place in this dissertation:

1. Existentialism seeks to heed, to be caringly attuned to, the human project of life and its experiences. Similarly, narrative theorists alert us to the temporal and contextual nature of experience, and to life as project: life as the meaning of what one has undertaken and undergone.

2. Existential research is a search for what it means to be human, as revealed by our understanding of lived experiences, and by our comportment in the world. Similarly, narrative theorists provide us with a perspective on what it is to be human, to be a self as a narrative centre of gravity.

3. Existential research is a poetising activity. An existential report cannot be summarised, just as a poem cannot be summarised. An existential report does not only present findings – it also evokes experience.

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10 Flanagan, O. op. cit.
Similarly, the research inspired by narrative theory is alert to style, genre, plot, and language.\footnote{Hillman, J. 1983, \textit{Healing Fictions}, Spring Publications, Woodstock.}

The fourth point of departure for the thesis is that we also need to call upon social theory if we are to adequately account for the experience of, and the relationship between, career and identity, because careers occur in social space and identities have an irreducibly social dimension and social genesis. The work of Bourdieu is referred to primarily, although not exclusively, in discussing social identity, just as the work of Ricoeur and Polkinghorne is referred to primarily, although not exclusively, in discussing configured identity.

By giving equal attention to configured, social, and existential identity, and equal importance to both identity and career, this study goes beyond the dichotomies embedded in the dualism of subjectivism and objectivism. The importance and implications of avoiding rather than participating in oppositional pairs, and replacing the dualisms of earlier thinking with a sensibility to what is co-constitutive or mutually contouring, has recently been discussed by Bernstein and others,\footnote{Bernstein, R. 1983, \textit{Beyond Objectivism and Relativism}, Basil Blackwell, Oxford; and also, for instance, Grosz, E. 1994, \textit{Volatile Bodies}, Allen &Unwin, St Leonards, NSW; and Hekman, S. 1986, \textit{Hermeneutics and the Sociology of Knowledge}, Polity Press, Cambridge; and Gergen, K. 1995, \textit{Social Construction and the Transformation of Identity Politics}, \url{www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/kgergen1/text8.html}, 30/8/99.} and will be firstly explained in Chapters Two and Three, and later spelt out completely in conjunction with Heidegger’s account of \textit{Dasein}\footnote{“the type of Being which is distinctive of human beings”, Mulhall, S. 1996, \textit{Heidegger and Being and Time}, Routledge, London, p14.} as
always and already being-in-the-world,\textsuperscript{14} and Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, field, and capital,\textsuperscript{15} in Chapters Four and Five.

A narrative approach to understanding how identity and career are mutually contouring, is an approach that calls us to focus upon the stories that the research contributors are living: both the stories they have absorbed from significant others and from their culture (and may be living in an unthinking or, as Heidegger\textsuperscript{16} would say, an ‘inauthentic’ fashion), and the stories they may consciously be authoring concerning who they are and who they are in the process of becoming. Research was undertaken by interviewing two people who were chosen for their interest in the project and for being in careers which diverged significantly from earlier life trajectories. From their experiences within those careers, these collaborators were well placed to reflect upon and narrate their understandings of career and identity. They were invited to view their lives and careers as story and to look for places in which those storylines informed each other, places in which the lines crossed or ran in parallel, places in which the lines diverged and places in which one storyline seemed to react against the other rather than in sympathy with the other.

Part Two presents the reflections and stories of those two research collaborators, as a demonstration of the ways in which the new, combined theory that was developed in Part One, allows us to see particular instances of career and identity. To obtain those stories, the two research collaborators were asked about:

\textsuperscript{16} Heidegger, M. op. cit.
• How they understood and accounted for their autobiographical identity and their career identity.
• Ways in which their careers followed the trajectory of class or gender or family or culture, and ways in which their careers departed from those trajectories.
• The times of greatest significance in life and in career.
• What it was like during those times when their career seemed right for them.
• What it was like during those times when their career seemed wrong for them.
• What enabled or led to turning points or epiphanies in autobiography and career, and the impact of those turning points upon identity.
• What each person thought their life and career to date seemed to say about them.
• Ways in which their career to date has enabled – or impeded – a valued expression of, and construction of, identity.
• How each person thought their twin stories of life and career might best be continued.\textsuperscript{17}

Part Three analyses the examples of identity and career that were provided in Part Two. That analysis proceeds in terms of the theory that was developed in Part One. We then conclude the thesis with a discussion of the benefits – in terms of available insights – that have been gained from combining the theories of Heidegger, Ricoeur, and Bourdieu. In particular, it is argued that the combination allows us to overcome some

\textsuperscript{17} Those discussion topics were the \textit{basis} for the research conversations – they are not meant to serve here as a complete list of all that was discussed.
limitations that each theory suffers from (in relation to our topic), when employed in isolation from the others.

To foreground identity, career, and stories, and the relationship between them, is to approach the study of career management in terms that are appropriate to beings who live in and by narrative: persons. The epistemological position which is developed later in the thesis, includes the contention that to know other people is to know the story in which they are participating. Although career management is about the gaining of skills, competencies and knowledge, it is also about who to be as a person, and is therefore about issues of identity.

This author’s decision to speak of identity rather than self is a decision that needs to be explained in full. That explanation is provided in Chapter Three, but the general point which we can make here is that the decision was motivated, to use Flanagan’s words, by “disenchantment with the idea that a person might be essentially constituted by an immutable soul or transcendental ego.”¹⁸ This disenchantment does not deny subjective experience. Subjective experiences happen, they occur, but they are always mediated by objective aspects of the world in which we dwell, by the tradition that inheres in language and in social practices and structures and by the stances upon what it is to be human that are embodied in those practices and structures. Subjective experience is not the immaculate, direct, autonomously personal phenomenon imagined by the Cartesian and Kantian tradition and embraced by positivist Modernism. Still, it is important to acknowledge that although the arguments for a self which is socially constructed do make it more strategically sensible to speak of

identity rather than self, and do deflate earlier conceptions of the self, they do not remove the experience of being conscious, the experience of experiencing, and the experiences of living a life and having a career. Instead, those arguments alert us to new possibilities for understanding the nature of those experiences.

As an inquiry into the sometimes deliberate, sometimes accidental, authoring of identity and career, this study uses the notion of autobiographical identity in the sense of ‘who I can understand myself to be, depending upon how I tell my story’ rather than taking autobiography to be a statement of ‘who I am, definitively’. Starting from this point, we require a more detailed account of what it means to speak of identity and career as interpretation and as story, and Part One will provide that account.
PART ONE: CAREER AND IDENTITY
Chapter One: Career Management

Literature

The literature on career management is selectively reviewed in this chapter, with a particular focus on issues that have figured most prominently in that literature, and on the concepts that have been developed in relation to those issues. Special attention is paid to the concept of career and its implications for the notion of career management. As the review is unfolding, comparisons and contrasts will be made between previous literature and the concerns and design of this study. The dissertation will thereby be located against the background of previous inquiry: a location which foregrounds those ways in which this study departs from some previous approaches, and those ways in which it extends some previous approaches.

In particular, it will be shown that previous literature on career and its management has been primarily objectivist and Modernist in its approach. A duality has thereby been established between the self and its psychological ‘contents’ on the one hand, and the organisational and social context within which careers are played out, on the other hand. The combination of narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy that is presented in subsequent chapters, will take us beyond that duality, and will thereby advance our thinking about identity and career.

Career inquiry: the range of approaches over time

An overview of the history of career management literature shows movement along a range of pragmatic concerns. There has been a movement from earlier (although still active and significant) questions
about the person/occupation fit,\textsuperscript{19} to more recent concerns with career as a journey over time and along the lifespan\textsuperscript{20} - concerns which include the question of how we can find more meaning in work\textsuperscript{21} - to contemporary issues about career as being primarily the responsibility of the individual rather than the organisation.\textsuperscript{22} There are strong connections between those pragmatic concerns and the framework of theory that is constructed in this dissertation. Questions about how to achieve a match between person and occupation can be addressed not only from the notion of personality that is widespread in the career management literature, but also from the notion of life and career as storied – a notion which comes to prominence when we take narrative theory into account – and by employing the concept of habitus that has been proposed by Bourdieu\textsuperscript{23} in his writings on social theory, which are discussed in Chapter Four.

Interest in career as a journey over time can be pursued not only from the lifespan perspective that is currently found in the literature, but also from the perspective (explored in Chapter Three of this dissertation) of \textit{Configured Identity}: a perspective that is based upon narrative theory and its presentation of events as significant in relation to each other as they occur over time, and in relation to the shaping of and to the expression of, identity. Finally, issues that are being raised in the career management

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literature in response to the challenge of taking personal responsibility for career development, in contrast to a mindset which looks to the organisation to shoulder that responsibility, are issues that resonate with the perspective of existential theory (a perspective that is discussed in Chapter Five of this dissertation). That discussion focuses on the unsettled and contingent nature of identity and career.

The choice of occupation or profession
Turning now to early inquiries into career management, such as those of Roe\textsuperscript{24} in 1956 and Holland\textsuperscript{25} in 1959, we find that they were centred on questions about how to match individual interests and capacities with occupational choice. These questions are still significant in the field, as evidenced by the wide range of test instruments that are reviewed and discussed in relation to assisting career counsellors when advising clients about career decisions. Levinson, Ohler, Caswell, and Kiewa,\textsuperscript{26} for instance, were writing out of the same tradition as Holland when, in 1998, they reviewed six instruments that have been designed to measure an individual’s ability to make appropriate career choices. These authors link their review to a concern with best practice for counsellors, a concern which is predicated on the view that “fostering a client’s readiness to make career decisions is the cornerstone of effective career counselling.”\textsuperscript{27} Levinson et al summed up their assessment of the six instruments with the recommendation that “professionals should consider the instrument’s psychometric properties, cost, administration time,

\textsuperscript{24} Roe, A. op. cit.
reading level, and scoring options.” Given the article’s purpose, it is not surprising that the authors focus on issues of instrument validity, internal consistency, and reliability of samples.

Levinson et al do mention however, that counsellors should also consider “the conceptual model on which the instrument is based,” but unfortunately, they provide no discussion of underlying conceptual models. This lack of discussion is perhaps symptomatic of a feature noted by Hackett, Lent, and Greenhaus, in their review of vocational theory and research. They comment on the scarcity of coordinated research programs, and suggest that this scarcity might “reflect the atheoretical nature of much of the empirical activity in the field.” One of the significant contributions that the current dissertation makes to the field of career management, therefore, is research that has been designed to demonstrate the value of a fully elaborated theoretical position. Chapter Seven explains the essential connection between the author’s purpose, his epistemological assumptions, his choice of methodology, and his goal of demonstrating the insights that are possible when case study examples of life and career, as mutually contouring, are viewed from the horizon of understanding that is made possible by combining narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory.

Although Levinson et al do not discuss underlying theory, we can infer from the fact that the diagnostic instruments they assess have been designed to uncover and/or measure the motives and needs of individual

27 ibid. p476.
28 ibid. p481.
29 ibid. p481.
persons, and from the fact that these instruments are being assessed as tools relevant to the provision of career selection and management advice, that the theory underlying such instruments and their application assumes that those motives and needs “prefigure an individual’s career.”32 Certainly, that seems to have been the view of Holland when he wrote that “the choice of an occupation is an expressive act which reflects the person’s motivation, knowledge, personality, and ability.”33 Holland maintained that career advice should attempt to match personality type with type of work environment. “In the realistic work environment, for example, the largest percentage of people would reflect the realistic personality.”34 If we work from this assumption, it follows that the motives and needs of the individual have to be categorised by the career counsellor and then used as the principal basis for decision making advice.

Now that we have identified some of the assumptions which underlie the use of diagnostic instruments, an alternative assumption about career management that can be found in the literature will be presented and discussed as a contrasting point of view. The Chicago sociologists who began their work at the beginning of last century, established a different tradition in the history of this field – one which begins from a view that reverses the personality-centred approach, and argues instead that career experiences actually prefigure motives and needs.35 On this view, inspired by the concept of socialisation, “the interpretive shifts that attend career transitions involve more than simply ‘learning the ropes’; they also entail

31 ibid. p35.
33 Holland, K. L. op. cit. p8.
34 Lock, R. D. op. cit. p15.
appropriation of … ‘a vocabulary of motive.’ A vocabulary of motive is a rhetoric typical of the occupants of a certain status.”\textsuperscript{36} Importantly, such rhetorics are tied to the justifications for action and “act as seed crystals for the formation of an occupational identity.”\textsuperscript{37} As a consequence, occupational role bearers become motivationally adjusted, over time, to (and in a sense by) the objective conditions of their career. So rather than the career management issue being how to choose a career that fits the client’s personality, the issue changes to how personalities come to fit careers.

Without wanting to deny the important insights of the socialisation-centred view, it must be said that the position falls short of a key principle that this author has adopted in relation to theory construction, in that it privileges the objective side of the subjective/objective duality, just as the personality-centred approach of Holland and his followers privileges the subjective side of the duality. The position that this author prefers, a position that has been discussed at length by Bernstein,\textsuperscript{38} goes beyond objectivity and subjectivity. To go beyond the personality-centred/socialisation-centred duality, a duality that predominates in the career management literature, we will turn – in Chapter Four - to the work of Bourdieu and his concept of habitus\textsuperscript{39} as a set of dispositions to perceive and behave.

The dispositions of habitus have been structured by objective conditions, and operate as subjective conditions that structure objective conditions,\

\textsuperscript{35} Barley, S. op. cit. p55.  
\textsuperscript{36} ibid. p55.  
\textsuperscript{37} ibid. p55.  
\textsuperscript{38} Bernstein, R op. cit.  
through the actions of agents who express mastery of the embodied rules of the game which apply in particular fields of action. Habitus and its relevance to understanding career management is - as has already been mentioned - explored in full in Chapter Four: *Social Theory and Social Identity: Bourdieu*. Chapter Four emphasises the mutual contouring of the objective and the subjective dimensions, an emphasis that is central to the strategy of this dissertation, because the concept of mutual contouring frees us from unnecessary controversies about which dimension, as a side of the duality, is primary.

An additional reason for seeking a perspective which goes beyond unnecessary dualisms, is provided by Bloch, who discusses the problem of finding meaning at work. She argues for the importance of complementarity in the search for meaning, by pointing out that “harmony, unity, the embracing of duality until it is oneness, are keys to a meaningful life. It is difficult to abandon Cartesian notions of duality – self versus other, person versus thing, body versus mind, work versus pleasure. Yet that is what must happen for meaningfulness to be present.”

The meaning that Bloch has in mind, is that which comes to us when we are involved in, and are absorbed by, our work, and being absorbed is an experience which resonates with Heidegger’s account of being-in-the-world – not in the spatial sense of “being *in*”, but in the “*involved*” sense of caring about what we are doing. Chapter Five provides a more complete discussion of career as a form of being-in-the-world.

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40 Bloch, D. P. op. cit. p189.
Career, Self, and Identity

Given our focus on the mutual contouring of identity and career, Super’s vocational development theory, which took the initial interest in matching needs and capacities to occupations several steps further (in that he described the dynamics of how people choose and implement a self-concept through their work), has direct relevance to the concerns of this dissertation. Super conceived of vocational development as only one part of a person’s total growth. He divided the vocational part of life into the stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline, with each stage containing a set of sub-stages. According to Super, as a person works through the tasks and issues associated with each life-stage, he makes choices which speak of who he is. Viewed in this way, the process of career development is essentially the development of a person’s ‘self-concept’.

This study also seeks to understand the ways in which identity can be expressed through career, but the approach taken here, involves considerable conceptual departures from the approach taken by Super. Perhaps of most importance is this author’s decision to work with the concept of identity rather than the concept of self. The argument in Chapter Three therefore provides a second significant contribution that this dissertation makes to the field of career management, in that it clarifies not only the concept of identity in relation to career, but also explains how our thinking in this field can be advanced by replacing the concept of self with the concept of identity. A key point in that argument concerns the extent to which the concept of the self is embedded in a resistant, individualist philosophy.

If, as Geertz maintains, the self is conventionally thought of as “a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgement and action, organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background,” then the field of career management is in conceptual difficulty if it seeks to recognise and account for the influence of workplace experiences and organisational structures and occupational rhetorics on the shaping of the self - the self which is independent of and resistant to its environment. To continue to work with the concept of the self is to remain committed – even if unknowingly – to the oppositional duality of personality-centred/socialisation-centred accounts of career management. Chapter Four explains how the concept of identity, in conjunction with Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, enables us to go beyond that duality and to talk coherently about the mutual contouring of identity and career.

The lifespan approach to the study of careers
Career management literature has also seen an application of concepts and theories from fields other than business and psychology, to career management research. The concept of human development across the lifespan, for instance, has been used as a lens for viewing career dynamics. That approach contains important parallels with the theoretical position developed in this dissertation. Levinson explains that he took the cue for his understanding of adult development from Erikson, whose

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43 Levinson, D. J. op. cit. pp3-13.
“developmental concepts arose out of his primary concern with the life course: the process of living, the idea of life history rather than case history, the use of biography rather than therapy or testing as his chief research method.”

Similarly, the research for this dissertation is based upon the authoring of biographies and the co-authoring of autobiographies (although not in the standard sense).

A further feature of Erikson’s conception of the life course was that “the meaning of a stage is defined in part by its place in the total sequence.”

This conception mirrors a key principle of hermeneutics that is employed in the research methodology of this dissertation: the principle of the hermeneutic circle, which is discussed in Chapter Seven. Finally, Erikson wrote in terms that are sympathetic to the idea of mutual contouring that is pursued in this study: “Without abandoning the distinction between the self (psyche, personality, inner world) and the external world (society, culture, institutions, history), he gave first consideration to the life course – the engagement of self with world.”

There are echoes here not only of mutual contouring but also of the Existential concept of Dasein as always and already being-in-the-world, which we discuss in relation to career and identity, in Chapter Six.

The theory of adult development that Levinson built upon Erikson’s earlier model, is intended to provide a unifying scheme for making sense of disparate topics in the field of adult development – topics that have no evident connection with each other: “personality change and development, occupational career development, marriage and family

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44 ibid. pp3.
45 ibid. pp3.
46 ibid. pp3.
development, adult socialization, biological development, adaptation to stress, and more.  His contention is that these topics can be understood from a “perspective that combines development and socialization and draws equally on biology, psychology, and social science, as well as on the humanities.”  Although this author’s intentions are not so ambitious, the combination of Narrative Theory, Social Theory, and Existential Philosophy does follow in the spirit of Levinson’s attempt to introduce thinking from other fields to the area of career management. A major difference, however, is that unlike “biology, psychology, social science, and the humanities;” narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy share many fundamental assumptions about how to understand human experience and action.

**Careers, emplotment, and authorship**

One of those shared fundamental assumptions is that, as social and narrative agents, persons interpret their situations and act upon those interpretations, rather than being driven solely or exclusively by personality imperatives. The idea of development, to take an example which picks up the earlier part of this discussion, contains within it the sense of moving purposefully from one stage of life or career to another, and that sense relies upon the ability of the individual and/or the career counsellor, to interpret earlier life and career actions and experiences and what those actions and experiences ‘say’ about the client’s underlying purposes, by ‘reading’ the life and career of the individual as narrative. Savickas, for instance, proposes that a key task for a career counsellor is to narrate the client’s life “in a way that fosters understanding of the

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47 ibid. pp8.
49 These two concepts are explained in Chapter Five and Chapter Six respectively.
origins and meanings of clients’ life themes and their relevance for career development. The narration helps clients to understand themselves and engage in more purposeful action.”\(^{50}\) Cochran\(^{51}\) is another author who has employed the narrative approach to understanding career management in the centre of his form of career counselling. His recommendations on counselling agree with the position taken by authors such as Levinson et al (who write from within what this author is calling ‘the personality-centred approach’), that “fostering a client's readiness to make career decisions is the cornerstone of effective career counselling,”\(^{52}\) but Cochran’s way of helping a client reach that state of readiness, radically challenges the personality-centred view of what career decisions should be based on.

Whereas those authors and researchers who give primacy to personality have sought to measure and/or describe the personality type to be matched to an occupation, so that career decisions can be based upon personality type as identified by the administration of test instruments, Cochran argues that "career counselling is concerned with the main character to be lived out in a career plot. Suitable employment is not only about matching, but also about the proper vehicle through which a certain character can be enacted in a certain kind of drama."\(^{53}\) Just as shifting from the perspective of the personality-centred approach, to the socialisation-centred approach, leads to a change in the career management task - from that of choosing a career which matches personality, to understanding and managing the processes whereby


\(^{51}\) Cochran, L. op. cit.

\(^{52}\) Levinson, E. Ohler, D. Caswel, S. and Kiewa, K. op. cit. p481.
personality comes to match career - so too the perspective recommended by Cochran leads us to shift our attention from personality (which is inherent) to character or identity (which is authored), and thereby from the problem of ‘matching’, to the problem of ‘emplotment’.

Cochran argues that career management should be primarily concerned with the issue of "how a person can be cast as the main character in a career narrative that is meaningful, productive, and fulfilling." This author’s view is that, before we attempt to cast ourselves in a career narrative that is meaningful, productive, and fulfilling, we first need to engage with a set of issues concerning the nature and dynamics of authorship and emplotment. Chapters Three, Four, and Five of this dissertation, all address the nature of authorship, including the grounds upon which it is based, and its relationship with our being-in-the-world. The nature of emplotment is addressed in Chapter Two, by taking account of Aristotle’s concept of mimesis, and Ricoeur’s concepts of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. In the process of referring to, and exploring, the work of those major theorists, we reach an account of emplotment which not only reveals the dynamics of mimesis as a creative act of the imagination, but also makes intelligible (rather than assumes) our capacity for hermeneutic composition – a capacity which Cochran’s work relies upon but does not explain. To the extent that these chapters advance our understanding of the nature, dynamics, and possibilities of authorship and emplotment, in relation to career

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53 Cochran, L. op. cit. pviii.
54 ibid. pix.
56 To construct, and to comprehend, a narrative, we need the capacity to see how “parts and wholes in a narrative rely upon each other for their viability.” Bruner, J. 1981 “The Narrative Construction of Reality” in *Critical Inquiry*, 18, Autumn, p150.
management, they constitute a third significant contribution to the theory and literature of career management.

**Career narratives: designed and coherent, or inscribed and uncertain?**

Reference to narrative and character, rather than psychology and personality, helps us to avoid focusing excessively upon – or privileging – any one side of the objective/subjective epistemological divide, and that reference point is thereby complementary to the role that the concept of habitus plays in freeing this dissertation from dualities that would otherwise obscure the mutual contouring of identity and career. Cochran notes that "for some time, scholars have been dissatisfied with the limits of the objective tradition, but have had no way to offer an adequate alternative." The narrative approach provides that alternative because narratives encompass both the subjective and the objective dimensions of personal and public life, and narratives encompass those dimensions by configurations which demonstrate how, over time, each contours the other.

Cochran's intention is not, however, to study and understand specific cases of the mutual contouring of identity and career. His intention is to focus on "practical ways to implement a narrative perspective" in career counselling. So even though his book mirrors the perspective of this dissertation in terms of its general orientation, this dissertation adds to the contribution made by Cochran, in two ways: firstly, this study seeks to understand its subject through the lens of existential and social theory, in

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57 Our socially inscribed predispositions. Chapter Four will treat habitus in full.
58 Cochran, L. op. cit. pix.
59 ibid. px.
addition to narrative theory; and secondly, this study travels in a different
direction to Cochran, in that it is concerned to find a retrodictive
understanding of individual cases, whereas Cochran is primarily
concerned to offer techniques for counsellors who want to help their
clients design future careers. Nevertheless, his approach is weakened by
its total reliance upon narrative theory, because it thereby neglects the
broader perspective that is available when we combine narrative theory
with social and existential philosophy.

The outcome of Cochran's approach to career counselling is what he calls
a 'portrait report', which addresses four aspects of the client's situation
and the client’s future, based upon narrative exercises concerning that
person's past. We will briefly summarise the characteristics of a ‘portrait
report’ and then discuss the ways in which such a report would be
stronger if Cochran had considered social and existential philosophy in
addition to narrative theory. A ‘portrait report’ begins with:

1. List of Strengths:
Given what the counsellor has heard about the other person's life, what
that person has enjoyed and endured and achieved, where she has come
from and how she got to where she is now, and her own assessment of her
strengths and vulnerabilities, the counsellor can provide the client with
his understanding and assessment of what her strong points are - her
character strengths as a person.60

2. Work Needs:
The counsellor’s portrait should answer the question of 'What sort of
work environment is most likely to facilitate rather than hinder the best

60 ibid. p93.
performance for this person?' A calm environment, not distracted by urgencies or conflict, or unrealistic demands; a supportive and open communication style from colleagues; manageable challenges?61

3. Vulnerabilities:
According to Cochran, a vulnerability is significant if it is expected as an enduring feature of the client's feelings and thoughts, her reactions to the behaviours of others and to situations that she finds difficult. Taking the stories that the client has told into account, the counsellor can describe what could be the vulnerabilities that may undermine or sidetrack the client’s performance in the workplace.62

4. Purpose:
The theme of someone's earlier life problems and of their earlier strivings can suggest a sense of purpose or core motivation that points toward a future narrative – a purpose that can help the client identify what matters most about his or her future work. Cochran provides the following example of a 'mission' that he prepared for a teacher, based upon the life story of that person:

“In life, there are many traps which people survive, and fit in by not being themselves. They learn to deaden themselves, to go to sleep at the switch. Yet each person has a gift, a source of vitality and zest, that might remain muted if not for someone who can rekindle that excitement and open doors. You come alive in opening those doors, helping people to overcome life's traps in order to realize personal gifts and passions, and find a place.”63

61 ibid. p94.
62 ibid. p94.
63 ibid. p92.
Not surprisingly, the identification of – or co-authoring of – purpose, is the most difficult and the most crucial part of Cochran’s process.

The final step in Cochran’s process occurs when the counsellor and the client work from the portrait report to co-author a future career narrative, one which emphasises agency and meaningful action on the part of the client: “If a career counsellor had adequate time, he or she would prepare a life story and project it into the future, showing how the most powerful themes of meaning might be harmoniously united and completed.”\(^\text{64}\) The key to narrative coherence is the client’s sense of purpose: “in the narration, the pivotal part is the mission statement … if this is off, it is important to pause and try to revise it accordingly.”\(^\text{65}\) Cochran recognises that a client’s sense of purpose cannot be invented or imposed: “a better story is created, not by imposition, but by elaborating what is already there in the life history.”\(^\text{66}\) Although Cochran recognises this point, his reliance on narrative theory without reference to social theory and existential theory, limits the strength of his account of career authorship in two ways.

Firstly, if Cochran had provided a thorough consideration of social theory, he could have also provided a richer account of how life history shapes purpose, particularly in relation to early social location and the subsequent sense of *Illusio*, a concept that has been central to the work of Bourdieu: *Illusio* consists of the conviction that the quest of one’s career is worth the effort, even to the point of being “possessed by the game.”\(^\text{67}\)

\(^{64}\) ibid. p91.
\(^{65}\) ibid. p95.
\(^{66}\) ibid. p99.
Chapter Five explains how Bourdieu’s theory provides explanatory power for the notion of socially storied identity, explanatory power which makes intelligible the socially inscribed dimension of an individual’s sense of purpose. Part Two, *Narratives of Identity and Career*, provides examples of the application of Bourdieu’s theory to particular cases.

Secondly, if Cochran had provided a thorough consideration of existential theory, he could have also provided an explanation of those occasions when purpose falls away from us, and we are left with an incoherent narrative. Existentialism accounts for the loss of meaning by showing how the identity and purpose that we like to think of as inherent and settled, is in fact contingent and fundamentally unsettled. Social theory and existential theory provide an important balance to the expectations that narrative theory can lead us to have, when it is applied in isolation, for although narrative coherence satisfies our hermeneutic desire for closure, it does not follow that we should thereby expect the lived experience of our lives and careers to conform to the ideals of narrative design. Coherence is a goal that is best worked toward from within an awareness of those life and career factors that originate from the social and existential poles of our being.

**Careers and personal responsibility**

The notion of career as a story that unfolds and gains meaning over time, through the opportunities that it presents for the expression of identity, is a long way from the static notion of career as an occupation. Accompanying this shift in emphasis from choice of occupation, to authorship of a coherent narrative which embodies the individual’s career quest, attention has recently been paid in the literature, to the new realities of contemporary careers, and to the implications of those realities
for career management. Hall, for example, argues that long service and corporate loyalty is being replaced by an approach to career management that he refers to as the ‘protean career’. 68 Protean careers are directed by the person, not the organisation, and the rewards are more likely to be psychological than vertical. The key relationship is between the person and his work, not the person and his organisation. The acceptance of responsibility which goes along with the protean career, entails not only a seeking after purpose and coherence, not only the development of strategically significant skills, but also an awareness of contingency and the need to ‘make the most’ of unplanned events.

We have discussed purpose and coherence in the previous section, and will return to those concepts many times in the dissertation. Strategically significant career skills, which need to be discussed as the second part of taking personal responsibility for one’s career, are now being identified in the literature, within the context of “downsizing, delayering, globalization, and new strategies (that) have brought confusion and dislocation for individuals, and much coverage in the business press about the so-called end of the career.” 69 That context has led authors such as Moses 70 to recommend ways in which individuals can become “career activists”, and within the context just described, it is not surprising that her recommendations begin with the idea of “defining yourself independently of your organization and taking charge of your career choices.” 71 Moses associates the idea of self-definition with the idea of narrative, by contending that “becoming a career activist means: Writing

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your own script rather than waiting for someone to write it for you.”

The tone of her article however, is upbeat and simplistic, to such an extent that she fails to discuss or even acknowledge the complexities and difficulties involved in “writing your own script.”

In particular, Moses ignores the uncertain nature of our personal identities and the extent to which our daily existence occurs as ‘thrown projection’ – a term borrowed from Heidegger and discussed in Chapter Five of this dissertation. Thrown projection entails that although we are partly free to write our own script, we are also essentially embedded in the scripts of our personal and communal history. As a consequence – to foreshadow a conclusion that is reached in Chapter Six – careers are not only scripts written by individuals who design their own futures, they are also the acting out of previously embedded preoccupations (many of which, as Bourdieu points out, are the result of sociogenesis) and the continuance of unfinished stories that were begun earlier in the person’s life. Without returning to, and attending to, those themes and issues that preoccupy us, the significance of events in our career as narrative is diminished, and our career becomes less than it could be in terms of identity and meaning.

In some ways, however, that is not a fair criticism of Moses because, although she mentions identity and narrative, her primary concern is with strategies for obtaining employment in an unstable job market. Nevertheless, even when considered in relation to that goal, Moses’ “12 new rules for career success” – rules such as “think globally,” “communicate powerfully,” and “look to the future,” – lack credibility.

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71 ibid. p28.
72 ibid., p29.
They are not supported by reference to any empirical studies, nor are they justified by reference to any analytical scheme that purports to explain the connections between situational change and her putative strategic career skills.

A more respectable attempt is made by Pearse,73 who links his recommendations with an analysis based upon the concept of the “Information/Learning Age.”74 Pearse refers to specific changes resulting from new technologies and increased global competition, to justify his version of “career adaptability skills.”75 Central to adaptability is a welcoming rather than a resentful attitude to change, an attitude that seems to be at odds with Moses’ and even Cochran’s ideas about career as an enactment of the individual’s purpose and about a career script that can be written prior to unpredictable future events.

This problem brings us to the third aspect of taking responsibility for one’s career, an aspect which emphasises that responsibility for career management requires an awareness of contingency and of the need to make the most of unplanned events. Mitchell, Levin, and Krumboltz76 have discussed this aspect of career responsibility in a recent article on the importance of planned happenstance in career management. These authors contend that traditional career counselling proceeds as if chance plays no role in career, when the opposite is true. “The traditional trait-and-factor approach of matching individual interests, skills, and values with specific occupations is seen as a way to reduce the role of chance,

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73 Pearse, R. F. op. cit.
74 ibid. p15.
75 ibid. p18.
luck, or happenstance. In fact, career counsellors prefer clients who seem to be heading in a definite direction or seem on the right track as the counsellor has helped them to define it.” Clearly, we would be advantaged in the management of our careers if, instead of being locked into a definite direction, we were able to “generate, recognize, and incorporate chance events into (our) career development.” To help us develop that capacity, Mitchell et al write about reframing indecision as open-mindedness, and learning how to initiate actions which increase the likelihood of beneficial unplanned events in the future.

When we take this aspect of career management seriously, we find that once again, the importance of combining narrative theory with social theory and existential philosophy, comes to the fore. The need to balance the desire for narrative coherence and closure, against the social and existential poles of our being, was referred to earlier in this discussion. Existentialism, as a philosophy of human being, alerts us to the contingent nature of our lives and careers, and thereby calls for a rethinking of the view that our careers should be planned and should run according to the script of our desires. Sartre consistently railed against narratives that misrepresent lived experience by linking all the elements of a story together as necessary rather than contingent. Narrative necessity appeals to our desire on the everyday level of existence – the level that Heidegger refers to as “Dasein”- for life to be predictable and reassuringly easy to understand. Human reality, however, is not

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77 ibid. p118.
78 ibid. p118.
80 Heidegger, M. op. cit.
grounded in necessity. We are contingent. Our existence precedes our essence, and our expectations of life and career, and our interpretations of life and career, should reflect that contingency. A more complete discussion of these issues is provided in Chapter Five.

Our selection of the career management literature has shown that there are strong connections between the history of the field and the research topic of this dissertation, just as there are strong connections between some of the central contemporary issues, and our research topic. The review has also shown the potential for the current dissertation to add significantly to the past and current literature on career management, primarily from the strategy of combining the insights of social theory and existential philosophy with those of narrative theory.
Chapter Two: Narrative Theory

This chapter on narrative theory is designed to lay the groundwork for the subsequent discussion of configured, or storied, identity. We highlighted the importance of narrative coherence in the previous chapter’s discussion of career, and our task now is to expand upon that notion – firstly in relation to narrative itself, and secondly (in Chapter Three) in relation to identity.

Narrative theory as developed by Ricoeur, Polkinghorne, Sarbin, Spence, Bruner, Schaffer, White, MacIntyre, Carr, Freeman, and Gergen will be our primary concern in this chapter. To begin, we shall examine the value of narrative as a way of making sense, as a root metaphor. To this end, we discuss the narrative metaphor within the context of the root metaphor of Mechanism which has informed much of Western thinking and research since the Enlightenment. Epistemological issues are foregrounded in this part of the chapter. That early discussion sets the scene for a detailed treatment of the nature and importance of narrative later in this chapter which, in its turn, sets the scene for an account of narrativised identity and career in the following chapter.

Epistemology and narrative

Hermeneutic research into identity and career requires an initial exploration and discussion of the metaphors that underlie different ways

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81 The term ‘root metaphor’ was first elaborated by Pepper, S. 1942, World Hypotheses, University of California Press, Berkeley. James Hillman comments on Pepper’s root metaphor concept that “the ‘root metaphor’ idea is itself a metaphor, relying on one of the archetypal themes of the imagination : that of roots. In the language of Gaston Bachelard, it belongs to the imagination of the element earth, so that when we can discover a root metaphor we gain the conviction that we have come upon an idea that is basic, grounded, solid, and supportive” Hillman, J. 1992, Re-Visioning Psychology, Harper Perrenial, New York, p246.
of conducting research. “Metaphors can be understood as ways of imagining reality, or portraying in concept, image or symbol something about the nature of what one is trying to understand or express.”82 Given that metaphors are ways of describing and making sense of the world, they influence our thinking about ontological and epistemological issues, and metaphors thereby influence our thinking about, our designing of, and our ways of engaging in, research. Elaborating the differences and similarities between metaphors makes visible the perspectives from which we see and act and conduct research, and the potential value in each perspective.

Although metaphors may be usually thought of as no more than literary devices – techniques for adding colour and movement to the language of a character or to the description of a scene – metaphorical thinking occurs whenever we seek to understand one event or experience in terms of another. Metaphor is thereby highly significant in our lives. Morgan, for instance, holds that “research in a wide variety of fields has demonstrated that metaphor exerts a formidable influence on science, on our language and on how we think, as well as on how we express ourselves on a day-to-day basis.”83 When we understand through metaphor, we understand a complex phenomenon such as an organisation, as if it was something else that we already have some understandings of, such as a machine, or a culture, or an organism. This type of thinking allows us to transpose our understandings of cultures, organisms, and machines, to an organisation.

Morgan has been concerned to explore the different metaphors through which we interpret our organisations. Sarbin,\textsuperscript{84} however, has an even broader concern, and he outlines six traditional sources of the concepts and categories in terms of which we interpret our world. Each of these basic conceptions is derived from a different root metaphor, but he gives most attention to Mechanism, “the dominant world view in Western civilisation”, and Contextualism, for which “the root metaphor … is the historical act.”\textsuperscript{85} The historical act is dynamic and dramatic – it stands out from the general flow of events – and, as Sarbin points out, drama is a subordinate concept to the superordinate concept of narrative.

The narrative metaphor can be characterised as describing or interpreting the natural world, and the social world, and our individual lives, as a story or a set of stories. When we look through the narrative metaphor, events are understood not in causal terms but in terms of context and plot, in terms of the meaning which follows from the place of each event in relation to the overall pattern of events as they occur over time and in relation to their impact upon the concerns of people who are actors in the drama. The narrative metaphor has powerful explanatory value. “Before the modern era, all peoples of the world, whatever their level of sophistication or lack of it, attempted to answer (these and other) ‘big questions’ (Why is there something and not nothing? Who made the world and why? Why did trouble and sorrow enter the world?) through stories.”\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{85} ibid., p6.
Similarly, Mechanism, the notion of the world as machine-like in its functioning, has also been a powerful influence on Western thinking and research: “Scientists have produced mechanistic interpretations of the natural world, and philosophers and psychologists have articulated mechanistic theories of human mind and behaviour. Increasingly, we have learned to use the machine as a metaphor for ourselves and our society, and to mold our world in accordance with mechanical principles.”\(^{87}\) Whereas the narrative metaphor works with the concepts of meaning, language, action, context, abduction and plot, to produce narrative knowing, Mechanism as a metaphor works with the concepts of parts, behaviour, abstraction, deduction and causality.

Sarbin emphasises the impact of root metaphors in human life when he comments that they provide a “framework for the construing of occurrences in the natural and man-made worlds.”\(^{88}\) That framework exerts a power over us for two reasons. The first reason, already outlined above, is that root metaphors have considerable explanatory value. “A man desiring to understand the world looks about for a clue to its comprehension. He pitches upon some area of commonsense fact and tries to understand other areas in terms of this one. This original idea becomes his basic root analogy or root metaphor. He describes as best he can the characteristics of this area, or …. discriminates its structure. A list of its structural characteristics (categories) becomes his basic conceptions of explanation and description … in terms of these categories he proceeds to study all other areas of fact … he undertakes to interpret all facts in terms of these categories.”\(^{89}\)

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87 Morgan, G. op. cit. p20.
88 Sarbin, T. op. cit. p5.
89 Pepper, S. op. cit. p91, quoted in Sarbin, 1986 op. cit.
The second reason that metaphorical frameworks exert a power over us is that they operate below the surface\textsuperscript{90} of our awareness. Over time, the metaphoric qualities of a root metaphor become submerged to the extent that users of the term “may treat the figure as a literal expression.”\textsuperscript{91} Donald Spence warns that if metaphors become literalised, we lose some of their explanatory value because their use as an aid to comprehension depends significantly upon our awareness of their metaphoric nature,\textsuperscript{92} and because the shift to literalism simultaneously increases a metaphor’s power to blind us to alternative ways of seeing.

That is sufficient reason then, for discussing the differences and similarities between the narrative metaphor and Mechanism – although the intention is to clarify the focus and value of each metaphor rather than to establish a dualism in which one way of sensemaking is privileged over the other. The epistemological stance of this dissertation is post paradigmatic: narrative provides us with a way of knowing that is different to, not better than, Mechanism. Spence makes the point that the central issue in relation to metaphors is not one of confirmation or disconfirmation but rather which metaphors to choose and whether they facilitate or interfere with discovery.\textsuperscript{93}

Mechanism as a root metaphor can be traced back to Newton and Descartes, and is often associated with Enlightenment thought.\textsuperscript{94} From this perspective – which provides us with a story for understanding and

\textsuperscript{90} The metaphor of depth is exercising its power in this writing.
\textsuperscript{91} Sarbin, T. op. cit. p5.
\textsuperscript{93} ibid. p7.
\textsuperscript{94} See, for instance, Hekman, S. op. cit. and Dreyfus, H. L. op. cit.
operating upon the world - the universe functions as a vast machine: a machine in which objects follow the laws of physics, and humans and their societies follow the laws of nature. “The Enlightenment witnessed a period of spectacular triumphs in the natural sciences. Beginning with Newton and Galileo, the natural sciences began a conquest of the natural world which was a staggering success. … The social sciences were born in the shadow of these triumphs.”

Hekman argues that Enlightenment thought left the following prescription as a legacy for the social sciences: “develop a … methodology based upon the eternal truths of human nature, purged of historical and cultural prejudices, and follow the nomological-deductive method of the natural sciences in order to formulate scientific laws about human beings.” This conception of laws which are purged of historical and cultural prejudices has, as Hekman says, contributed to some spectacular successes in the natural sciences. It is a conception however, which has a different emphasis than the contextual emphasis of the narrative metaphor. In terms of the narrative metaphor, “the meanings to be assigned to any actor’s performance are a function of the context.”

History and culture provide context. Past events in the timeline of a narrative are crucial to the understanding of a character’s reactions to present events, so attempting to understand human behaviour without reference to context makes no sense from within the narrative metaphor. Characters in a narrative do not behave in ways that are predictable and law-like; instead, they read the context in which they are placed and then

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95 Hekman, S. op. cit. p5.
96 ibid. p6.
97 Sarbin, T. op. cit. p6.
act according to their own set of concerns and their own framework of meanings and their community’s framework of meanings. Consequently, the research project for this dissertation included an invitation to contributors – who are characters in their own narratives – to consider their understanding of their careers within the contexts of their lives, and within the context of plot and its organising principles.

Social psychologists, organisational psychologists, and even psychoanalysts – who take subjectivity as their focus - have often been guided by Mechanism rather than narrative in their approach to theory, research, and practice. Our concern is to reach an understanding of career management which is sensitive to the narrative metaphor, so it is important to be clear about ways in which Mechanism has underpinned many previous attempts at understanding people and their actions.

Sarbin contends that social psychologists, “having their roots in efforts to establish a science of behaviour on mechanistic principles, have been slow to adopt concepts and methods that depart from the objective of uncovering context-free laws of behaviour.”98 The same claim has been made in relation to organisational theorists. Burrell and Morgan99 detail ways in which Mechanism has informed objectivist, functionalist approaches to organisational research. “The world of work is treated as a world of hard concrete reality characterised by uniformities and regularities which can be understood in terms of cause and effect. Given these assumptions the individual is accorded an essentially passive role;

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98 ibid. p23.
his behaviour is regarded as being determined by the work
environment.”\textsuperscript{100}

This theme of human behaviour as the outcome of causal factors which
can be accurately identified and placed within a predictive model, can be
found in organisational theory from Taylor\textsuperscript{101} to Herzberg\textsuperscript{102} to Vroom.\textsuperscript{103}
Burrell and Morgan argue that the difference between much of the
contemporary work in organisational research and the approach taken by
Taylor at the beginning of this century, is only superficial. The difference
is one of moving to increasingly complex models of human nature, whilst
remaining within the confines of the Mechanistic metaphor. “They have
searched for solutions in humanistic and cognitive psychology, primarily
with a view to slotting complex psychological man into the framework of
a deterministic theory of work behaviour.”\textsuperscript{104}

Not surprisingly, given the success of Mechanism, we find the notions of
structure and cause even within Freudian theory and practice. The task of
the analyst is to look for the originating cause of the neurosis, to help the
patient recognise and understand that cause, to vent the associated
emotions in some cathartic manner, and thereby to be freed from the
limiting effects of neurosis. Hillman accounts for the objectivist tenor of
psychiatric discourse by referring to the dominance of Mechanism at the
time of Freud’s writing. “His psychoanalysis could make no further
headway in the world of medicine, unless it could find a suitable form of

\textsuperscript{100} ibid. p130.
\textsuperscript{103} Vroom, V. H. & Yetton, P. W. 1973, \textit{Leadership and Decision Making}, University of Pittsburgh,
Pittsburgh.
\textsuperscript{104} Burrell G. and Morgan G. op. cit. p146.
‘telling’ that gave the conviction, if not the substance, of medical empiricism.”\textsuperscript{105}

On this empiricist model of the mind and of mental life, the mind is a structured mechanism that operates according to laws of cause and effect. Empiricist research should therefore identify and categorise typical causes associated with typical neuroses, and research reports should describe the mind’s machinery and its laws of operation. Spence points to empirical research in the field of psychoanalysis which is designed to “establish the lawfulness that is a necessary part of science. To say that early events have a necessary, lawful, and predictable influence on later developments and to collect evidence for these impingements prepares the way for an understanding of the forms of influence and their classification …. Once this step is taken we would have a framework within which observations could be fitted, and we would be on our way toward building a nomothetic science.”\textsuperscript{106} Spence then goes on to argue that, to date, the search for this type of evidence has come up empty.

The Freudian model does mix its metaphors though, as it affords a key role to interpretation and understanding, neither of which belong in the objective and nomothetic domain of the empiricist. Schaffer,\textsuperscript{107} Spence,\textsuperscript{108} Hillman,\textsuperscript{109} and Brooks\textsuperscript{110} all highlight the narrative quality of psychoanalysis, in spite of “the mechanistic language of Freud’s

\textsuperscript{105} Hillman, J. op. cit. p5.
\textsuperscript{106} Spence, D. op. cit. p79.
\textsuperscript{108} Spence, D. op. cit.
\textsuperscript{109} Hillman, J. op. cit.
metapsychology."\textsuperscript{111} It appears that the deeper a theory moves into human subjectivity, the harder it is to maintain the objectivist tenor of Mechanism. Further discussion of the disguised role that narrative plays in Freudian theory and the central role that narrative plays in therapy, is provided in Chapter Three: \textit{Narrative Theory and Configured Identity: Ricoeur.}

In spite of Freud’s apparent attraction to Mechanism, the empiricist model and its reliance upon mechanism as root metaphor has been seen as inappropriate by a strong tradition of other thinkers who had the understanding of people as their goal. Vico clearly supported “dialectical thinking, metaphor, … rhetoric, … history, … tradition and … imagination and rejected the attempt to organise society in accordance with abstract principles.”\textsuperscript{112} Herder, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Rorty have developed similar notions. A contemporary member of that tradition, Clifford Geertz, has pointed out that “the strict separation of theory and data, the ‘brute fact’ idea; the effort to create a formal vocabulary of analysis purged of all subjective reference, the ‘ideal language’ idea … none of these can prosper when explanation comes to be regarded as a matter of connecting action to its sense rather than behaviour to its determinants.”\textsuperscript{113}

Michael White observes that when we connect action to its sense, we “attend to how persons are actively engaged in making their lives up as they go about the processes of attributing meaning to their experience, to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Schaffer, R. op. cit. p38-39.
\end{enumerate}
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how persons shape and re-shape their lives as they tell and re-tell, or as they perform and re-perform the stories of their lives."\textsuperscript{114} To conduct research into identity and career as sensemaking, as this author has done, is to conduct research within the hermeneutic\textsuperscript{115} tradition and therefore from within the narrative metaphor. When we approach the world through the narrative metaphor, we look for the place of an action in a plot. We connect action to the ambitions, fears, hopes, and understandings of the protagonist: to the framework or pattern of meaning that we ascribe to the actor.

Clearly, to attend to the sense making which lies at the heart of career management is to reveal career management in quite a different form to that which would result from searching for determinants of behaviour. If we adopt narrative as root metaphor, as our primary way of making sense, our epistemological position is that to know other people is to know the story in which they are participating. Consequently, we do not begin research from the assumption that, for instance, early, traumatic life incidents cause subsequent beliefs, feelings, and decisions. We assume instead that it is people’s interpretations of those incidents, and the placement of those interpretations in plot, in larger narratives that inform their thinking and perception, that shape their being. We will therefore direct our attention now to the nature and importance of narrative in general and plot in particular.

\textsuperscript{114} White, M. op. cit. p216.
\textsuperscript{115} Gadamer, H-G, op. cit.
The nature and importance of narrative

*I propose the narratory principle: that human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures.*

Theodore Sarbin

This section will establish the nature of narrative and its fundamental importance in human life and particularly in relation to our ability to understand our situation and our identity. The narrative features of emplotment and configuration will be explained and discussed in the two sections which follow this, then highlighted as crucial to identity and career in the next chapter.

Narrative is ubiquitous in human life for at least eight reasons that this author has identified by reading narrative theory with a question in mind: ‘Why are stories of who we are and what we are doing found in each person’s life and in every culture?’ When explained separately and then considered as a whole, those eight reasons bring out features of narrative which account for its ubiquity and its relevance in relation to understanding how people make sense of their lives and careers. Each narrative feature will be introduced and explained here, then taken up again at key points later in the dissertation.

1. Narrative is central to the phenomenon of understanding. To understand who we are, to understand others, and to understand the events which constitute our lives, is to think in terms of narrative. Polkinghorne argues that narrative is “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful.”¹¹⁶ This claim to primacy rests upon the role that narrative understandings and explanations play in

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¹¹⁶ Polkinghorne, D. op. cit. p1.
human life which is inherently temporal and purposeful: “In the narrative schema for organizing information, an event is understood to have been explained when its role and significance in relation to a human project is identified. … When a human event is said not to make sense, it is usually not because a person is unable to place it in the proper category. The difficulty stems, instead, from a person’s inability to integrate the event into a plot whereby it becomes understandable in the context of what has happened.”

Given that we live and act in historical and situational contexts, our foremost need is for an understanding which relates situational aspects in meaningful ways. MacIntyre has a similar view of how we use our understandings of situations to understand individuals and their actions: “in successfully identifying and understanding what someone else is doing we always move towards placing a particular episode in the context of a set of narrative histories, histories both of the individuals concerned and of the settings in which they act.”

McIntyre’s emphasis on situational and historical understanding can be supplemented by Bruner’s analysis of the characteristics of narratives themselves. The manner in which narrative enfolds and exhibits the relationship between events, the intentions of protagonists, and actions, over time, is highlighted by Bruner, as is the notion of agency. Bruner calls attention to:

- Narrative diachronicity: a narrative is an account of events occurring over human time.

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117 ibid. p21
Particularity: although narratives take particular happenings as their ostensive reference, those particulars achieve emblematic status through embeddedness in stories which are in some sense generic.

Intentional state entailment: narratives are about people acting in a setting, and the happenings which befall them must be relevant to their intentional states while so engaged - to their beliefs, desires, values, theories, and so on. But intentional states in narrative never fully determine the course of events, since a character with a particular intentional state might end up doing practically anything. Some measure of agency is always present in narrative, and agency presupposes choice. Intentional states allow us to enter the ways in which a character might perceive a situation, but there is a loose link between intentional states and subsequent action: narrative accounts cannot provide causal explanations.

Canonicity and breach: to be worth telling, a narrative must be about how an implicit canonical script has been breached or deviated from. Such breaches are familiar human plights: the betrayed wife, the cuckolded husband, the fleeced innocent.

Referentiality: the acceptability of a narrative depends not on its correctly referring to reality, but on its verisimilitude.

Genericness: genres seem to provide both readers and writers with commodious and conventional ‘models’ for limiting the hermeneutic task of making sense of human happenings.

Normativeness: the ‘tellability’ of narratives rest upon a breach of conventional expectation and a breach presupposes a norm. When a breach occurs, Trouble ensues. It is not required of narrative; however, that the Trouble with which it deals be resolved. The ‘consoling plot’
is not the comfort of a happy ending but the comprehension of plight that, by being made interpretable, becomes bearable.\textsuperscript{119}

Temporality, agency, historicity, and verisimilitude are terms that we will return to often – each time adding to the account of narrative knowing and understanding that we are developing.

2. Narratives are told and retold, authored and re-authored, because they capture events and experiences in a way that enables us to reflectively examine our lives and our practices. When we want to think about what is important in our practices, we can turn to the stories that we and others tell. Jalongo, Isenberg, and Gerbracht, have examined teachers’ stories and show how “teachers seek and share stories about life in classrooms because these narratives offer reassurance and renewal, show teachers at their best and worst, and afford us the luxury of examining closely and thinking deeply about education.”\textsuperscript{120} The same phenomenon can be found in other occupations and professions. It is a phenomenon, a practice, which follows from the desire that many people have to learn from experience and it follows from their recognition that narratives capture those aspects of experience which matter most to us.

When we want to think about what is important in our lives as a whole or what our lives have been or are in the process of becoming, narratives provide a way of seeing what we have done and where we seem to be going. By examining our autobiographical identity in this

\textsuperscript{119} Bruner, J. 1981 op. cit. p6-19.

fashion, we not only encounter our identity, we also contribute to it. Nozick discusses the impact of such examination and says that “The understanding gained in examining a life itself comes to permeate that life and direct its course. To live an examined life is to make a self-portrait. Staring out at us from his later self-portraits, Rembrandt is not simply someone who looks like that but one who also sees and knows himself as that, with the courage this requires. We see him knowing himself. And he unflinchingly looks out at us too who are seeing him look so unflinchingly at himself, and that look of his not only shows himself to us so knowing, it patiently waits for us too to become with equal honesty knowing of ourselves.”

Using narratives as reflective devices is central to the research method described in Chapter Seven.

3. The world of action and experience can be represented in narratives and, as discussed above, reflected upon, because experience and action - before they are represented in narrative – have a narrative structure. Carr rejects the views of Mink and Kermode who see narratives as imposing a form on events that events do not have in themselves. Whereas Mink holds that “stories are not lived but told. Life has no beginnings, middles and ends … narrative qualities are transferred from art to life,” and Kermode argues that we are mistaken when we attribute narrative coherence to real events: “In ‘making sense’ of the world we … feel a need to experience that concordance of beginning, middle and end which is the essence of our explanatory fictions.”

Carr provides an extended analysis of experience and action which reveals that their intelligibility derives from the intrinsically contextual aspects of their temporal and intentional dimensions. He thereby supports his contention that our stories “get their narrative structure from the human world in which they have their origin. It is to this origin that they owe not only their capacity to represent the real world but also the very idea of undertaking such a representation.”

We return to a discussion of the narrational nature of lived experience when we explore Ricoeur’s concept of prefiguration, and again in the concluding section of this chapter when we highlight controversies and uncertainties within the field of narrative theory.

4. People often wish to find meaning in events, actions, and experiences, and narrative can meet that need. Edward Bruner, in writing of the importance that narratives have for cultures, explains that “as we can only enter the world in the middle, in the present, then stories serve as meaning-generating interpretive devices which frame the present within a hypothetical past and an anticipated future.” Jerome Bruner’s distinction between paradigmatic cognition and narrative cognition as modes of ordering experience or constructing reality takes us further into this relationship between narratives and the wish for meaning. Whereas the paradigmatic has the narrative of the establishment of truth as its aim, the narrative mode seeks to convince on the basis of verisimilitude or lifelikeness. Parry and Doan employ Bruner’s distinction in their therapeutic and conceptual work,

but expand the concept of verisimilitude to include the condition that narratives, to be convincing, must be ‘sufficiently’ meaningful – only then will those who strongly desire meaning consider the narrative to be lifelike. Parry and Doan refer us to the great narrative works of each culture, which have “a quality of sufficiency. They give an answer to one of the big ‘why’ questions in a way that most fully accounts for the implications of the question through images that make life meaningful within that culture. In other words, it is the meaningfulness of the answers given, rather than their factual truthfulness, that gives them their credibility.” We take up the theme of narratives and the desire for meaning in Chapter Three, when we look at narrative and psychoanalysis (and in particular Brooks’ analysis of textual dynamics and their psychic equivalents) \(^{128}\) and at the notions of authoring and re-authoring.

5. Generating our desire for meaning is the fundamental, ontological, role that interpretation plays in the human way of being that has been uncovered by Heidegger.\(^ {129}\) As existential beings, our comportment does not reflect a determinate essence, a soul or a self, rather, it derives from a community interpretation of being into which we have been ‘thrown’, an interpretation that we rely upon as the primordial ground upon which things make sense. If our existence as interpreting beings who must take a stand on what it is to ‘be’ precedes our essence, then rather than having a fixed and predetermined nature to which we can aspire to be true, each of us is always in the process of

\(^{127}\) Parry, A. and Doan, R. op. cit. p2.
\(^{128}\) Brooks, P. op. cit.
becoming in terms of some aspiration or interpretation. “No complete account can be given of a human being without reference to what he is in the process of becoming - without reference, that is, to the projects and intentions which he is on the way to realizing, and in terms of which sense is made of his present condition.”¹³⁰ By emphasising current and future projects, Cooper - following Heidegger - highlights the primordial role of time in what it is to be a person.

Here, then, we have a further reason for the importance and ubiquity of narrative in human life. Heidegger argues that our being-in-the-world is grounded upon the experience of time,¹³¹ and so too are narratives fundamentally temporal: they capture and exhibit meaningful relationships between events over time. In Ricoeur’s words, “time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.”¹³² Narratives display the interactions between desires, intentions, actions, and outcomes over time; and narratives render the development of character over time. In sum, narratives show us people as being in becoming. This existential dimension of narratives will be fully explored in Chapter Five.

¹³¹ Mulhall explains this important point by saying: “Dasein’s relations with specific existentiell possibilities presupposes its existence as thrown projection – possessed of understanding, possessed by moods; and these elements of the care structure have temporality as their condition of possibility. It follows that the basis of Dasein’s openness to entities is its openness to past, present, and future; for Dasein to disclose entities is for it to manifest a present concern for them, that grows from its having taken on a project and being oriented toward its future realization. Dasein’s worldliness is thus grounded upon the temporalizing of temporality. Mulhall, S. op. cit. p155.
6. Narratives accrue to create a culture, a history, or tradition and at the personal level accounts of life events are eventually converted into more or less coherent autobiographies. The traditions constituted by narrative accrual are, as Gadamer has shown, not just a background to our lives, they are the very means by which understanding is possible in human social life. “Gadamer’s ontological perspective reveals that human beings live inside tradition and prejudice. They cannot transcend it or, as Derrida suggests, completely deconstruct it. The claim to do so defies not only the possibility of human communication but what Gadamer and Heidegger have revealed to be the ontological condition of human beings.” The fundamental role of tradition in understanding will be taken up again in Chapter Five.

7. Narratives are inscribed in the body. This claim goes beyond the usual notion of understanding as a realisation, to the notion of embodied understanding, or comportment: knowledge that we have without knowing. Bourdieu has given us powerful insights into embodied understanding through his concept of *habitus*. “The practices of the members of the same group or, in a differentiated society, the same class, are always more and better harmonized than the agents know or wish, because, as Leibniz says, ‘following his own laws’, each ‘nonetheless agrees with the other’. The habitus is precisely this immanent law, *lex insita*, inscribed in bodies by identical histories, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but also for practices of co-ordination.” We will draw connections

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133 Bruner, J. 1981 op. cit.
134 Hekman, S. op. cit. p196.
between habitus and narratives, and pursue the notion of embodied social narratives, in Chapter Four.

8. Narratives fashion identity. At the individual level, we can identify with an image that persists over time and informs the stories that we construct about who we are and what we are doing; stories which then act back upon our image by clarifying and strengthening it. This was a move that Sartre, for instance, seems to have made in response to his doubts about his physical attractiveness. “His faith in willpower was reinforced by an energetic but compulsive refusal to recognize himself as a victim of genetic accident. At times he felt jubilantly full of himself, bursting with pride in his future. Looking at self-important senior citizens, he felt vibrantly aware of his hidden powers, as if the spectacles, the squinting eyes, the unprepossessing face, the diminutive body were the disguise he had selected. ‘Confronted with men who are intimidating and reserved’, he later wrote to a girl, ‘you’ll be able to think that these are marionettes you can manipulate.’ It was his own secret strength he was thinking of. The childhood feeling of playacting survived in a different form: the ‘student Sartre’ was the great man of the future pretending to be just a student. This was the Ecole chapter of the autobiography he was living.”

At the collective level, “all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely of our own making.”

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136 Hayman, R. op. cit. p59.
These social narratives range from the stories of one’s family, one’s workplace, the football club, the local and international information and entertainment media, and the nation. Each of us becomes who we are in relation to our own story and in relation to collective stories, whether that relationship is, as Levinson puts it “one of resistance, reconfiguration, or resignation.”

It is not just social narrative as story which fashions identities, it is also the form of those narratives. Gergen contends that “the very categories by which we understand individual identities is largely a byproduct of discursive elaboration.” The notion of narrativised individual identity will constitute a major portion of Chapter Three, and collective, social sources of narrativised identity will be a primary concern in Chapter Four.

Narrativised identity provides a guide for action, and to fully understand how, we need to understand plots in terms of their construction and reconstruction. That is our next topic.

**Emplotment**

We concluded the previous section with the comment that narrativised identity provides a guide for action within our careers, but to see just how that narrativisation can occur, we firstly have to look in a general sense at the nature and dynamics of emplotment.

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139 Gergen, K. J. 1998, “Narrative, Moral Identity and Historical Consciousness: a Social Constructionist Account”, [http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/kgergen1/text3.html](http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/kgergen1/text3.html), 30/8/99: “The sense of a self possessing the faculty for rational and objective deliberation, for example, can importantly be traced to the texts (and conversations) of 17th and 18th Century educated society. An appreciation of the individual’s capacity for genius and inspiration, the recognition of deep passions, and the suspicion of deep disturbance were made possible largely by the discourses (both arts and letters) of the 19th Century Romanticists. Further, these concepts of the person – as rational, passionate,
When we provide a meaningful constellation for a set of events, we call upon the human capacity for emplotment. Bruner uses the term ‘hermeneutic composability’ for the revealing effect of plot: “parts and wholes in a narrative rely on each other for their viability. This is true both for the construction and the comprehension of narratives.” Our capacity for hermeneutic composition is pivotal to how we reach an understanding of our careers, so a full rendering of it is needed as a key part of the argument in this thesis. Ricoeur provides us with an account that not only explains how plot is implicit in our understandings of everyday action, but also explains how an implicit plot can be opened up to conscious awareness through being articulated, and how – once articulated as a particular configuration – plot is available to be reconfigured, just as a person’s life can become available for reconsideration and re-authoring.

To connect events and actions over time in a manner that reveals their significance in relation to each other, to their contexts, and to a valued endpoint, is to employ the transformational effect of plot. Ricoeur contrasts the “existential burden of discordance” which so troubled Augustine, with “the triumph of concordance over discordance” that Aristotle discerned in the poetic act of emplotment. Plots provide relational significance for the parts and wholes through which and within which we live. Ricoeur explains that “By means of the plot, goals, causes,
and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action.”144

The composition of a plot (mimesis) is to be distinguished from the plot itself (muthos). By ‘mimesis’, Aristotle meant the imitating or representing of action in the medium of metrical language, and by ‘muthos’, he meant the organising of events. 145 Although mimesis and muthos are distinct, Aristotle defined each in terms of the other, so that imitating or representing “is a mimetic activity inasmuch as it produces something, namely, the organization of events by emplotment.”146 Ricoeur is at pains to stress, however, that mimesis cannot be interpreted in terms of a copy or exact replica. Mimesis is directed more at the coherence of the muthos than at exactly replicating the details of a particular story: “to make up a plot is already to make the intelligible spring from the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary or the probable from the episodic.”147

Clearly then, the analysis of how contributors to this study understand the relationship between their autobiographical story and their career story, needs to pay as much attention to the mimetic act as to the stories themselves. Polkinghorne reminds us that more than one plot can “provide a meaningful constellation and integration of the same set of events.”148 Narrative understandings, as the outcome of mimetic acts, should therefore be open to revision, to reworking, in at least two senses: in the sense of which events are chosen as pertinent to the story, and in

the sense of which genre is most appropriate for the story. We shall return
to these possibilities in the concluding section of this chapter, and more
fully in Chapter Three when we explore the nature of authoring and re-
authoring.

The importance of being open to revising our narrative understandings
 derives from the connection between narrative and action. Drummond, in
discussing Ricoeur, emphasises that “narratives are grounded in the world
of action, in other words narratives lead individuals to intervene in the
course of things.”149 One of the primary areas of our own lives in which
our narrative understandings can lead us to intervene or manage more
thoughtfully, is our careers.

The most illuminating plot for a career narrative, the most helpful idea
from which to organise those experiences which constitute the narrative
of a career, may not be a plot of detection,150 as an interest in
psychodynamics might suggest, but a plot of quest. This is because quest
combines action with insight and personal change: quest is about the
making of character through action, rather than the uncovering of what is
already there, through detection. To organise the interpretation and
expression of one’s experiences in accordance with the guiding idea of
quest is to see connections between experiences which would otherwise
be configured and understood differently. The issue of what constitutes
the most illuminating plot for understanding identity and career will be
returned to when the narratives of the contributors are analysed in Part

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148 Polkinghorne D. op. cit. p19.
theory for management”, in Current Topics in Management, Vol. 3, p68.
150 See Spence, D. op. cit. for a discussion of Freudian psychoanalysis as an instantiation of detective
plot.
Three. We turn now to Ricoeur’s account of mimesis1 (prefiguration), mimesis2 (configuration), and mimesis3 (refiguration), which will take us further into the dynamics of emplotment.

**Prefiguration, configuration, refiguration**

Ricoeur refers to the first level of our capacity for emplotment as ‘mimesis1’. At this level, events are not experienced consciously as narrative, but they are prefigured in narrative form. At the level of mimesis1, we can speak of “the pre-comprehension or implicit understanding which we have of human action – of the way in which everyday activity orders past, present, and future in relation to each other. Such an understanding recognises in action itself temporal structures which prefigure narration.”  

Ricoeur makes the same point by saying “the composition of the plot is grounded in a preunderstanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character.”

Ricouer, Carr, and Schaffer all characterise actions as goal directed and intentional so when we act or observe action our experience is already that of a prefigured narrative. Carr argues, and he is supported by Schaffer, that “no elements enter our experience unstoried or unnarrativized.” In terms of career then, although we may rarely or never explicitly conceive of what we are doing as story, prefiguration does provide us with the ability to produce a storied account when asked.

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153 ibid.
154 Carr, D. op. cit.
155 Schaffer R. op. cit.
156 Carr, D. op. cit. p68.
Meaning, as the relational significance revealed by plot, is opened up through the act of configuration, which is referred to by Ricoeur as ‘mimesis2’. If we configure a prefigured career narrative, we answer questions about what is happening or what has been happening in that career. To put this act in Ricoeur’s terms, when we configure a career, we transform “the events into a story. This configurational act consists of ‘grasping together’ the detailed actions or what I have called the story’s incidents. It draws from this manifold of events the unity of one temporal whole.”157 A configured life or career, a narrativised life or career, exhibits concordant discordance, through the work of the productive imagination.

Refiguration (mimesis3) leads to the capacity to forge new narratives and therefore new ways of acting in the world, new ways of ‘managing one’s career’. “Mimesis3 marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader; the intersection, therefore, of the world configured by the poem and the world wherein real action occurs and unfolds its specific temporality.”158 When we encounter a text, we encounter a configuration that can lead us to reunderstand, to reconfigure, our prior understanding of who and where we are. Whereas an act of configuration produces a narrativised account of where we are or where we have been, and provides some indication of where we might go, refiguration leads to the question of where to go next in terms of action and understanding. To refigure a career is to re-author the narrative of

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158 ibid. p71.
career and thereby to influence the identity of the person whose career is being ‘written’.

When we reach Part Three of this dissertation and attempt a hermeneutic analysis of the narratives contributed by those who brought their goodwill and their stories to the research project, Ricoeur’s work will provide essential openings through which new understandings can enter.

**Difficulties with mimesis and verisimilitude**

Narrative theory as it has been presented in this chapter, will help us to recognise career and identity as mutually contouring, because we have established the ubiquity and importance of narrative and its central, configuring role in human life and in human understanding. The authors whose work we have reviewed and discussed, assist us to understand the vital relationships between narrative, time, plot, and the productive imagination which animates prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. For the sake of exposition, however, the discussion has omitted mention of what is unresolved, what is controversial, in narrative theory. We now need to highlight some difficulties, partly because this investigation and its method of analysis should not proceed without an awareness of them, and partly because the research, although primarily aimed at reaching an understanding of identity and career as mutually contouring, may contribute to their resolution.

Given the mimetic nature of narrativisation, it is not surprising that discussions of uncertainty or puzzlement centre on the problematics of verisimilitude. Narratives, as historical accounts, present events in sequences as those events lead to a destination. What comes first though, the destination or the events? Freeman states the issue for us: “While on
the one hand … beginning leads to end, there is also a sense in which end leads to beginning, the outcome in question serving as the organizing principle around which the story is told.”159 And again: “How, after all, does one even decide which facts are pertinent unless one already has a story in mind?”160 The same point can of course be made about the stories told by the contributors to this study, and we can ask of their stories and of them: Why was that version of what your life and career have come to, chosen as the organising principle of your narrative? What has been left out as a result of beginning from that end?

There is a second sense in which the relationship between living and telling is problematic, stemming from the concern – already raised in several places in this dissertation161 – that narrative structures can mislead us about, can cause us to misunderstand, lived experience. “Do narratives, by virtue of being told or written at a significant remove from the flux of immediate experience, inevitably falsify ‘life itself’?”162 Sartre certainly thought so; he consistently railed against narratives which denied contingency. “Going to the cinema he would see films in which narrative necessity linked all the elements together; walking out into the street he would notice a striking absence of necessity.”163 In a critical review, Sartre provided advice on how novels should be written if they are to avoid the falseness of narrative necessity: “I must not be allowed to suspect that the future actions of the characters have been fixed in advance by heredity, social pressure or any other force. Psychological analysis is fatal; the novelist must present only emotions and

159 Freeman, M. op. cit. p20.
160 ibid. p22.
161 Item three on the list of reasons why narratives are ubiquitous and important in human life, and also in the sketch of Ricoeur’s concept of prefiguration
162 Freeman, M. op. cit., p21.
unpredictable actions.”164 Anyone who composes a narrative has to take a position on causation, as we shall see when we examine the stories of those who contributed to the research project.

A further difficulty facing us all as authoring beings and as authored beings, and therefore a further difficulty for narrative theory, is that we are all products of our community, our culture, our society, and our family - as is the language that we use. As Levinson says, “The parameters of social identity do not simply precede us, they actually produce us as particular kinds of people.”165 The more strongly we are aware of being in a sense ‘social products’, the more credence we should give to the problem articulated by Freeman: “If, in fact, both lives and the stories people tell about them are ‘socially constructed’ and if more generally one cannot ever really step beyond the discursive order inherent in one’s own culture, how does one ever manage to go on to do something new and different?”166 That question will be given a prominent position in the analysis of life and career narratives that constitutes Part Two of the dissertation, and in the discussion of Chapter Four: Social Theory and Social Identity: Bourdieu, for it is in that chapter that this author seeks to make intelligible the inseparability of the individual and the social.

The problem of whose story is being lived recurs as the problem of whose story is being told. To tell a story we have to use language, which prompts Freeman to ask: “Is autobiography, the telling of my story, even

163 Hayman, R. op. cit. p49.
164 Interview, Marianne 7.12.38, Ecrits, quoted in Hayman, R. op. cit.
165 Levinson, N. op. cit. p1.
166 Freeman, M. op. cit. p23.
possible? If ‘mine’ is to be understood as that which issues from me alone, then surely not; every word I speak and write and think was on the scene well before I was.”\textsuperscript{167} Gadamer’s work can be seen as supporting and as providing important detail to this doubt. He has made it plain that language is ‘the house of being’: we cannot have awareness of our identity without language, we dwell in language, and we therefore are constituted by the preexisting possibilities for being which are embodied in our community’s language. For Gadamer, “language is not simply a tool that, like many others, human beings put to use. When we take a word in our mouths we are fixed in a direction of thought.”\textsuperscript{168} Being taken in a direction by the words that we speak or write results from what Gadamer calls each word’s “inner dimension of multiplication …. Every word causes the whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole worldview which underlies it to appear.”\textsuperscript{169}

For each of the contributors therefore, we need to be alert to, we need to attend to, the language in which they tell their story – for the language, the words, the phrasing, says much about who they are: not in the sense of how they use that language but in the sense of how it shapes their understanding of who they are, their understanding of what has happened to them, their view of what they have done and of what it would be worth doing next. We cannot fully resolve this difficulty merely by being attentive to language, but we can at least take the shaping influence of language into account and thereby enrich the analysis presented in Part Three.

\textsuperscript{167} ibid. p21.
\textsuperscript{168} Hekman, S. op. cit. p110.
\textsuperscript{169} Gadamer, H-G, op. cit. p458.
The complexities that we have just acknowledged have moved our discussion away from narrative as a ubiquitous part of human life and closer to a consideration of the ways in which narratives and lives are co-constitutive. We are therefore positioned to now give our full attention to narratives as lived, to narrative and identity.
Chapter Three: Narrative Theory and Configured Identity: Ricoeur

To further our understanding of the ways in which narratives and lives are co-constitutive, and to reach a theoretical perspective from which the mutual contouring of identity and career can be seen with perspicacity, this author wishes to propose five criteria which are central to the task of discerning the meaning of identity and which are also central to the hermeneutic task:

1. We need an account of identity that is not tied to the idea of an inborn, transcendent presence which is independent of and resistant to the social world.

2. We need an account that explains how narrative, as the primary form in which experience is made meaningful, shapes and informs identity. That account also needs to show how narrative can be employed in the enterprise of reflecting upon, reviewing, and re-authoring, identity.

3. We need an account that embraces and makes intelligible the social, cultural, and political, elements of human life: textual elements which are linguistic and storied and which enter into the construction of, and mediate the experience of, who we are.

4. We need an account of identity that not only provides for its sociogenesis and for its entanglement in story, but which also allows
room for departure from, even for an acting against, the very social and cultural worlds from which it has emerged.

5. Finally, we need an account of identity which recognises and reflects the existential openness and the attendant responsibility for authorship which characterises the identity of beings-in-becoming: beings who have interpretation rather than essence at their centre.

To meet those five requirements, it is necessary to approach identity from three different but complementary directions. We shall draw upon work that has already been done in narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy, but we will also have to bring that work together into a new constellation if we are to shed fresh light on identity. The rethinking of self and identity which occurs in this chapter and the next two, will contribute to ongoing developments within the field of identity theory, and will provide a key part of the conceptual framework that is being developed for use in the hermeneutic analysis to come in Part Three of this dissertation.

The outcome of that rethinking, put briefly, is that the meaning of identity is threefold and is best grasped through the lenses of configured identity, social identity, and existential identity that will be explained during this and the next two chapters. Identity requires action, so a further part of our project will be an examination of three forms of agency: narrative agency, social agency, and existential agency. In each case, we will attend particularly to the sources of, and the possibilities for, that particular form of agency; and we will be sure to discuss the issues and tasks which are at the foreground of an individual’s concern when he is in the world as a narrative agent, social agent, or existential agent.
Identity and the self

All mention of self has been avoided up to this stage of the dissertation and it is now time to explain that avoidance and to directly confront the self and its problematics, and to explain why our topic is not the mutual contouring of self and career.

The self is mysterious to us: we seem to be intimately familiar with our self, but simultaneously uncertain about what it is. Robert Nozick reflects that uncertainty in his question: “To what does the term ‘I’ refer? It is plausible to think that ‘I’ refers to whatever it is that produced the token utterance containing ‘I’”.170 This is an old question and an old response. The form of the question has traditionally sent thinkers in search of an entity of some sort: “whatever it is that produced the token utterance”. The self characterised by Plato, for example, was an inner, nonmaterial entity, accessible to introspection, and guided by soul.171 One of many concerns that can be raised about this early concept of self - given its relationship to soul - is that contained within it is the idea of a ‘true self’ or a destiny. James Hillman, who often seeks inspiration in the past, writes entertainingly but ultimately unconvincingly in favour of the Platonic myth of Er, a myth predicated upon the idea of a true self: “the soul of each of us is given a unique daimon before we are born, and it has selected an image or pattern that we live on earth. This soul-companion, the daimon, guides us here; in the process of arrival, however, we forget all that took place and believe we come empty into this world. The

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daimon remembers what is in your image and belongs to your pattern, and therefore your daimon is the carrier of your destiny.”\(^{172}\)

Hillman uses this story to account for the sense of calling that some people respond to in fashioning their careers. Picasso saying “I don’t develop; I am”; Ella Fitzgerald choosing to sing at an amateur night when she “had meant to dance”; R. G. Collingwood looking at a copy of Kant’s *Theory of Ethics* at the age of eight and being ‘attacked’ by the feeling that even though he did not understand the contents, they “were somehow my business”: these examples and others are presented and detailed by Hillman to support the explanatory usefulness of the myth of Er. When the daimon’s call is answered, a career is chosen which is right for the person because he or she was born to it. For Hillman, the myth of Er is one of many stories and notions which present the idea that “you and I and every single person is born with a defining image.”\(^{173}\)

Our experiences and images however, are fantastic in their variety, and our impulses are often contradictory. On what grounds could we declare that some impulses or images are true and others not, or that some are reflective of a true self and others not? How can we know the difference between a call from our destiny and a more temporary desire? Why should we believe in an inborn self which is somehow essentially who we are rather than a set of dispositions which have been inculcated through the contingencies of where we happen to have been born and how our early experiences happen to have been configured and interpreted?


\(^{173}\) ibid. p11.
Once the idea of a soul or an essential image which makes each individual the person that he or she is, is questioned or rejected as more misleading and confusing than useful, the search for self turns to the first part of Plato’s view, to the nonmaterial entity which is accessible to introspection. Here we find nothing but difficulty however, for as Hume famously pointed out, “when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble upon some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.” Introspection, in other words, does not enable us to find the self.

In spite of that failure, the notion of the self as internal and inborn has persisted and developed. “As medievalists such as Augustine and Aquinas expanded on the concepts of soul, sensation, and the emotions; as rationalist philosophers such as Descartes and Kant extolled the capacities of pure reason and a priori ideas; as empiricist philosophers such as Locke and Hobbes emphasized the significance of experience in the generation of ideas; and romanticist poets, novelists, and philosophers explored the mysterious terrain of the passions, creative urges, evil inclinations, genius and madness, so have we become a tradition in which the presumption of an inner life – as real and possibly more important than the external, material world – has become firmly fixed.”

Of most significance for the project of this dissertation, is the oppositional duality that Gergen brings out in his historical account of the

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concept of self. If career and identity are mutually contouring as this author contends, then an internal self which is more firmly fixed and possibly more important than the external world, is highly problematic as an explanatory concept. A self which is resistant to and independent of – rather than inseparable from and open to the influence of – workplace experience and social structures and community discourse, cannot be part of a mutual contouring.

Geertz describes the modern, Western concept of the self in a manner that also highlights its embeddedness in a resistant, individualist philosophy. He writes of the self being conceptualised as “a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgement and action, organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background.”176 It is apparent from Geertz’ unpacking of the concept that if we persist with the idea of self as it is widely understood, then we face insuperable difficulty in providing an account of career and identity as mutually contouring, a difficulty which arises from the competing and mutually incompatible notions of dualism and contextualism.

This reason for moving away from the modern concept of self has been powerfully articulated by authors who write from the perspective of postmodernism.177 Sampson sums up one of the most widely noted of

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176 Geertz, C. 1979, op. cit. p229.
177 “Briefly, modernism assumes that individuals are inherently rational. The ability to reason, coupled with close observations of the world ‘out there’, will lead to accurate descriptions of that world. … Postmodernism is marked by a focus on language – that is, a focus on people interacting with one another in the construction of their worlds.” McNamee, S. 1992, “Reconstructing Identity: the Communal Construction of Crisis”, in McNamee, S. and Gergen, K. (Eds) 1992, Therapy as Social Construction, Sage, London, p190.
these concerns by counterposing the idea of the self as a centre of awareness - an idea which is central in Geertz’ characterisation of the modern philosophy of self - with Derrida’s insistence that self-consciousness is always an indirect and mediated experience. “This way of understanding personhood and consciousness permits a key role for social and historical traces to enter and structure the very experience of consciousness and self, even as those traces are unavailable to presence and awareness.”178 Derrida and others such as Foucault and Rorty are doing something positive about the shortcomings inherent in the modern concept of self; they have recognised that if we want the concept of self that is in common usage to alter so that it embraces historical and social construction and mediation, then we have to embark on an active course of redefinition.

For the moment however, the self retains its traditional and modernist connotations. It is therefore more strategic to adopt the concept of identity as our focus rather than the concept of self. Identity is relatively free of the etymology, ideational history, and use in language games that inform our thinking about self, so our thinking about identities can be turned to the discursive practices within which identities are inextricably located, without a need for the ongoing reminders and without the potential misunderstandings that would arise if we chose to work with a redefined

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concept of self. Identity, as a concept, has neither been saturated with the metaphysics of essentialism, nor with the ideology of individualism (although it unavoidably carries some traces of those traditions). As a consequence, we can more readily discuss identity as being already and always in-the-world, compared to the self which is separate from and essentially independent of, the world. Thus, this author will write about identity (rather than self) as mediated by social and historical traces, about identity (rather than self) as being profoundly political in its implications and its origins, about identity (rather than self) as being multiply storied and constructed, about identity as a becoming rather than as an inborn essence, and about the mutual contouring of identity and career.

The advantages of this move can be immediately demonstrated. Michael White, who has written insightful pieces about the use of narrative in his practice as a family therapist, seeks to open up “possibilities for persons to arrive at new alliances with the self, and at new distinctions around abuse and care – to discern, perhaps for the very first time, exploitation from nurture.”\textsuperscript{179} Although he refers to the self here and in many other places, White also regularly refers to identity. He notes, for instance, that people who have been verbally and/or physically abused, and who then turn that negativity back upon themselves, say things such as: “I’m hateful. I deserved the abuse, I had it coming to me. Besides, no-one can be abused unless they let it happen, unless they want it.”\textsuperscript{180} In discussing how we are to understand such statements, White contends that “these persons are engaging in conversations with self and with others that

\textsuperscript{179} White, M. op. cit. p49.
\textsuperscript{180} ibid. p48.
internalize the locus of abuse and, with this, there can be no appreciation of context. Through this process, the fact that they are abused reflects on their identity – is a testimony to their desires and motives, to their purposes in life.”

Identity is spoken of in that passage as different to self, but the difference is not spelt out. Nevertheless it is clear that for White, identity (unlike self, which he correctly associates with the “psychologizing of personal experience”)182 is both private and public, is not only psychological but also storied, social, cultural, and political. White explains how the construction of identity can be found in local relational politics, and given that identity is political rather than metaphysical in its nature, there are possibilities for contesting previous negative and harmful constructions and for remaking identity in ways that are of more benefit to his clients.

By shifting from self to identity, we obtain a powerful benefit: the area of contestation shifts from the transcendent, immaterial psyche to stories, discourses, and the political practices of interpersonal relationships.

Once that shift has been established, White can employ the notion of a ‘migration of identity’183 to capture what is involved for someone who seeks to break from a harmful way of life. For those who have been subject to abuse, the migration is conceived by White not as a psychological task, as a change in the self, but as a practical and political task: a change in circumstances which carries with it reasonably predictable difficulties and doubts.

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181 ibid. p48.
182 ibid. p92.
183 ibid. p99.
Just as someone who undertakes a geographical migration needs a map and needs assistance with luggage and transport, so too someone who undertakes a migration of identity can find that they need a map of the social, linguistic, narrational, and political territory to be traversed, and they need assistance in making their way across that territory. Looked at in this way, the dominant cultural notions that one should be ‘self-reliant’, ‘self-possessed’, and ‘self-actualising’, can be resisted or reframed. “So, in this work, what people have determined to be dependency is reinterpreted. People step into alternative discourses about identity. Whatever ‘dependency’ was, it is no longer some psychological fact of the person’s life that needs to be ‘worked through’, and the practices of self-accusation associated with this recede.”¹⁸⁴ Clearly then, a focus on identity opens up beneficial ways of thinking about who we are and how we came to be that way – ways of thinking that are less accessible when we begin from the traditional concept of the self.

Although he demonstrates the benefits of focusing on identity rather than self, White needs to say more about how those two notions differ. He sometimes shows his ambivalence about the concept of self by placing the word “self” in quotation marks. This move prompts us to recognise that he has misgivings about the term, but we are left uncertain about the details of his misgivings, and uncertain about when it is more appropriate or fruitful to speak of identity and when to speak of self. We are also left uncertain about how to take the concept of identity, given that it is relatively undertheorised, both in White’s work in particular and in the literature in general. Identity needs to be fully seen for what it is before we can understand the mutual contouring that is our topic, so the next

¹⁸⁴ ibid. p105.
section of this chapter will expand on what has already been said. That discussion will contribute a particular focus to identity theory, one which emphasises textuality and narrativity.

**Three Aspects of Identity**

There are three aspects of identity that concern us particularly in this dissertation: narrative identity, social identity, and existential identity. An identity is not an essence or a soul or a destiny or an inborn transcendent entity. It is instead an ever-changing, slow and incomplete, narrative current which ‘answers’ the existential, social, and personal questions which face humans as beings-in-becoming: beings who are without essence and who therefore cannot find solutions to their identity simply through introspection. The personal questions that are answered by a configuration of identity, are concerned with narrative issues about the meaning of what we have done, enjoyed, endured, been witness to or participant in, and also issues about where we are going. These concerns are mimetic: they spring from a desire to find coherence in life by emplotting significant life events and actions in a manner that renders the meaning of our lived experiences, and which does so in a way that enables us to comprehend if not transcend our losses and disappointments and to see and appreciate the character and agency in our victories and achievements. Considerable difficulties are involved, including confusions about which lived experiences count as central to the story and which do not, as well as the difficulty of deciding upon the significance of those events which do count.

The questions that arise in our social lives are about status and position and also about capacity and endeavour. Each of us finds that we are more at home in some social situations than others, and that we feel more
capable in some fields of action than others. Our desire to pursue one endeavor rather than another is intimately linked to our socially inscribed sense of its importance, and that is a desire which can contour our career. The difficulties and confusions that arise for our sense of identity are not so much to do with the social agency that results from the sociogenesis of our dispositions and our capacities, as they are to do with making our way forward when we lose confidence in the importance of our endeavours or when we find ourselves in a social situation in which we do not feel at home. The socially produced aspects of our identity are simultaneously empowering and constraining.

Existential questions arise when our taken-for-granted, socially-inspired narratives which embed assumptions about how to live and work, are no longer taken-for-granted. Who to become as manifested in the narratives of our lives and careers, that we have responsibility for authoring, is the key existential issue. This issue echoes those of configured identity, but the emphasis is more upon the construction of an identity rather than upon making sense of an identity – more about the future than the past. The difficulties are less to do with disentangling untold stories and more to do with choosing what one’s story will say, when there are no certain or preordained grounds upon which we can make that choice. Without an essence at the heart of our being, an essential self that will guide our way, we are beings-in-becoming who are confronted by the difficulties of making our own way forward and making our own decisions about who to be and what to do.

The ‘Existential Moment’ occurs when we recognise that our narrative to date is only contingently authored, that we could make it otherwise, but also that we do not ‘contain’ a narrative that can be used to replace the
accidental and socially authored narrative that we have been following. It is a moment of refiguration, but that does not make it a moment of ease or salvation.

Verstricktsein and Configured Identity

Narrative is central to this account of identity because the elements of narrative as prefigured in culture, society, and family, all work to pattern our imaginations as we live by and within the sense of who we are: the narrative sense of being which is made possible by storied identity. Ricoeur introduces the notion of storied identity when he discusses the way that human beings are entangled in stories. He asks us to consider the manner in which being able to tell our story depends upon making sense of a background of as yet untold stories that we have been living. His analysis is so informative that it is worth presenting in full.

“The accent here is on ‘being entangled’ (verstricktsein), a verb whose passive voice emphasises that the story ‘happens to’ someone before anyone tells it. The entanglement seems more like the ‘prehistory’ of the told story, whose beginning has to be chosen by the narrator. This ‘prehistory’ of the story is what binds it to a larger whole and gives it a ‘background’. This background is made up of the ‘living imbrication’ of every lived story with every other such story. Told stories therefore have to ‘emerge’ from this background. With this emergence also emerges the implied subject. We may thus say, ‘the story stands for the person’. The principal consequence of this existential analysis of human beings as ‘entangled in stories’ is that narrating is a secondary process, that of the
‘story’s becoming known’. Telling, following, understanding stories is simply the continuation of these untold stories.”

If identity is a matter of unravelling the untold stories in which we are tangled, then we each confront the task of configuring a sense of who we are from that sometimes confusingly prefigured material. This is the face of identity that we have been referring to as configured identity. Where individuals may differ – and we shall explore the nature and importance of those differences when we come to look at existential identity – is in the spirit in which, and the degree to which, they recognise and respond to that challenge. It is a feature of our being-in-the-world that (perhaps) most of us are content to dwell without question or concern in the tangle of stories that are our heritage, prefigured stories that are the condition of possibility for our everyday existence as interpreting beings whose interpretations are embodied in practices rather than known.

Configured identity then, is storied and is an achievement rather than a given. Flanagan argues that “The conditions governing personal sameness require not strict identity or absolute sameness but rather that certain relations of psychological continuity and connectedness obtain. We require that there be narrative connectedness from the first-person point of view, that I be able to tell some sort of coherent story about my life.” Narrative connectedness, as a necessary condition for personal identity, requires work: “active authorial work on the agent’s part; by working at integration and working at making one’s plans and projects

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186 I am, of course, making use of Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis of Dasein in this passage.
materialize.”\textsuperscript{188} Carr makes a similar point: “The unity of self, not as an underlying unity but as a life that hangs together, is not a pregiven condition but an achievement.”\textsuperscript{189}

Sometimes difficulty in reaching that achievement can call people into therapy. Ricoeur contends that psychoanalysis can be thought of as the analysis of lived stories rather than the analysis of psyche. “The patient who talks to a psychoanalyst presents bits and pieces of lived stories, of dreams, of ‘primitive scenes’, conflictual episodes. We may rightfully say of such analytic sessions that their goal and effect is for the analysand to draw from these bits and pieces a narrative that will be both more supportable and more intelligible.”\textsuperscript{190} Hillman also argues that therapy, although it may claim to address psyche directly, does so through addressing story. Consequently, he proposes that therapists should approach the stories of their patients as potentially sustaining fictions, which need to be read for their hermetic possibilities. He says of one patient “She had taken her story literally in the clinical language in which it had been told her, a tale of sickness, abuse, wastage of the best years. The story needed to be doctored, not her: it needed reimagining.”\textsuperscript{191} Schaffer is another who represents psychoanalysis in terms of narrative work. He details how Freud demonstrated for the first time that people through dialogue could transform their narratives, could refigure “their hitherto fixed, unconsciously directed constructions of both subjective experience and action in the world; to use words to change lives in a thought-through, insightful manner.”\textsuperscript{192}

\textsuperscript{188} ibid. p66.
\textsuperscript{189} Carr, D. op. cit. p97.
\textsuperscript{190} Ricoeur, P. 1984, \textit{Time and Narrative Vol. 1}, op. cit. p74.
\textsuperscript{191} James Hillman, 1983 op. cit. p17.
\textsuperscript{192} Schaffer R. op. cit. p156.
The therapeutic dialogue has indeed been characterised by Spence as a process of replacing the client’s story with the therapist’s story. On Spence’s critical account of conversations between client and therapist, the therapist “is constantly making decisions about the form and status of the patient’s material. Specific listening conventions help to guide these decisions. If, for example, the analyst assumes that contiguity indicates causality, then he will hear a sequence of disconnected statements as a causal chain; at some time later, he might make an interpretation that would make his assumption explicit.”\textsuperscript{193} As therapy proceeds, this process furnishes the client with an alternative reality: a new story which suggests alternative lines of action which accord with a ‘healthier’ identity.

It is also, we hope, a new story which is more intelligible, more coherent, and more sustaining in its configuration. Therapeutic dialogue is therefore one of the processes by which individuals attempt to move away from \textit{Verstrickstein} and emerge with a sense of narrative connectedness that integrates with our plans and projects – our careers.

\textbf{Narrative Agency and Authorship}

We can conclude then, that whether we attempt the task alone or with help, the achievement of a preferred identity calls upon authorship skills. If we are able to recognise, articulate, critically reflect upon, and if necessary add to or amend, the plots, the stories, and the genres in which we are tangled, then we have the potential to become more like authors in the construction of our identities, more like protagonists in our own lives, and less like characters in the narrative work of an other. This potential

\textsuperscript{193} Spence, D. op. cit. p129.
depends not only upon clarification and emplotment but also upon the
taking of action, for if our authorship is to be fully realised, then we have
to act in ways that reflect and express our preferred sense of story and in
ways that reflect and express the projects, plans, and commitments that
matter to us: the future that we care about and have identified with.

Acting in accordance with the identity that is our story, not only in the
sense of acting in character but also in the sense of working to produce
the outcomes upon which our stories of identity are projected, matters
because identity is not experienced unless it is expressed. Without
expression, our identity can remain in a prefigured, shadowy form – a
form which influences our actions without giving us the resources to
explain those actions. Perry and Doan make a strong and general claim
about the connection between expression and experience when they
write: “If narrative is truly fundamental to the way humans organize and
give meaning to experience (then) an event only becomes an experience
by being narrated”.194 Their point alerts us to the ways in which
sensemaking, through narration, changes the nature of our being-in-the-
world, by the deepening that accompanies emplotment.

Edward Bruner also underscores the importance of expression when he
refers to the manner in which the expression of narratives (though here he
refers to ‘texts’) is “constitutive and shaping, not as abstract texts but in
the activity that actualizes the text. It is in this sense that texts must be
performed to be experienced, and what is constitutive is in the
production.”195 We saw in Chapter Two that narratives, through the

dynamics of emplotment, bring events and actions together into a configuration of relational and temporal significance. When we express a view of our identity through action, we therefore bring a reflection of the configuration – the shape – which lies at the heart of the narrative of our identity, into a set of actions over time that come to constitute who we are. There is therefore both at the collective and at the individual level, a dialogic and fecund link between narrativised identity and expressive action, a link which helps us understand how identity and career (as an expression of identity) can be mutually contouring.

Taking this connection further, Flanagan maintains that having a life worth living is a matter of “having an identity and expressing it,” although it does not have to be narrativised to others. Given that identity and career are mutually contouring, we can now see why it is significant in this research to ask contributors if and how they have found value in the expression of their identity that has occurred during their career (as enacted narrative) to date, and it is significant to ask them to consider how they might add value to that process of enactment as expression in the future. The significance lies in the relationship between narrative, identity, expression, and our wish to have a life worth living and a career worth pursuing.

We have been content, in this section, to explain the notion of storied or configured identity as part of our larger account of identity as an answer to the existential, social, and personal issues of orientation, interpretation, and stance. The authorship tasks that have been referred to in this section

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196 Flanagan, O. op. cit. p4. Consistent with the account of identity that is being developed in this dissertation, Flanagan acknowledges that the expression of an individual identity requires a community.
as the practical challenges of constructing and expressing an identity from prefigured and tangled untold stories, are tasks that deserve more attention. If we are to understand what has occurred in the mutual contouring of the contributors’ lives and careers, then we need to reach a horizon of understanding which provides insight about authorship and re-authorship as ongoing existential responsibilities. Chapters Five and Six will therefore extend upon what has been said here in terms of those issues.

A further need is to build what has been said here about the enactment of identity, and about the authorship task of configuring an identity from prefigured material, into the concept of narrative agency. That task will be delayed however, until we discuss social identity and social agency in the next chapter, for there are important ways in which narrative agency is best conceptualised as a furtherment of social agency, rather than as a precursor to social agency. To finish this chapter however, we need to enlarge the sketch of narrative identity so that it includes not only narrative but also a concept which includes and goes beyond narrative: the concept of text.

Identity and textuality
A consequence of the points already made is that if identity is constructed narratively and in corresponding action, and is primarily locational, then identity is unavoidably and comprehensively textual and political. The discussion in Part Three of this dissertation looks at the narratives provided by the research contributors and will show that it is analytically significant to discern the ways in which our identities are shaped by the
texts that we inhabit\textsuperscript{197} and that it is analytically significant to discern the occasions on which those identities have motivated an acting back upon – a reshaping of – those texts.

By ‘text’, the author means that which can be read: written text and also ways of speaking, available words and the uses to which they are put - their role in social practices. Moreover, social practices and social structures are themselves constitutive of text in the larger sense that is being used. Social practices and social structures embody narratives, some of which are told as part of culture, some of which are not told but are nevertheless understood in prefigured form.\textsuperscript{198} Bourdieu, whose work will be treated in more detail in the next chapter, employs this larger notion of text when he objects to any reading of written texts which “looks for the final explanation of texts either within the texts themselves (the object of analysis, in other words is its own explanation) or within some sort of historical ‘essence’ rather than in the complex network of social relations that make the very existence of the texts possible.”\textsuperscript{199}

Although he discusses schemas rather than narratives, Sewell neatly explains the manner in which social resources and social practices constitute a text that can be read – even if our reading often occurs more as an unaware absorption than as a conscious reflection. “A factory is not


\textsuperscript{198} This claim will be made good in the next chapter: \textit{Social Identity}. 
an inert pile of bricks, wood, and metal. It incorporates or actualizes schemas, and this means that the schemas can be inferred from the material form of the factory. The factory gate, the punching-in station, the design of the assembly line: all of these features of the factory teach and validate the rules of the capitalist labor contract.”200 We can therefore say that buildings, practices, rituals, are “read like texts, to recover the cultural schemas they instantiate.”201

Put in these terms, social and cultural texts provide not only rules for living in a general sense but also possibilities and limits for thinking and acting in ways that come to constitute a socially informed identity. This picture of the textuality of identity not only shows the dependant, mediated nature of identity, it also shows that through cultural and social critique, there are possibilities for the retextualisation and thereby the reconstitution of identity, possibilities which need to be acted upon in concert with critique and re-authoring at the level of individual narrative.

Judgements about identity are informed as much by cultural and social (and therefore linguistic) worlds as by personal experiences. What one culture presents as a feasible career for a woman - management for instance - can be presented as inappropriate, even unnatural, in another culture, and when individual women and men are subscripted by cultural positions on feasibility and appropriateness, they take those enculturated positions into their identities. As Levinson says, “gender is as much a structural dimension of modern life as it is simply a matter of self-

201 ibid. p13.
perception.” Structural dimensions of our social lives are, as already mentioned, narrative dimensions and thereby textual dimensions. Exactly how this is so will be made clear shortly, when we review Bourdieu’s notion of habitus.

Kitzinger has the textual dimension of identity as her theme when she argues that “identities … are profoundly political, both in their origins and in their implications. Members of oppressed and socially marginalized groups have, for a long time, recognized the ways in which the accounts we give of ourselves can serve to reproduce and legitimate the very social order that oppresses us.” A major challenge in relation to understanding identity is therefore that of recognising the resources made available - and those which are not made available - by our society for the construction of an answer to the ‘Who am I?’ question. We can benefit from a critical examination of the terms that are present when we seek to explain our actions and feelings - terms that are present when we seek to retrodictively explain through narrative, the cumulation of actions and feelings over time in life and career - and thereby to construct and express our identities.

Kitzinger engages in that type of examination of discourse in relation to lesbian identity. She contends that the discourse of liberal humanism, as an instance of the social order, only allows lesbians to construct a legitimate identity in terms of romantic love or true happiness rather than in terms of a politically motivated sexual preference, because liberal humanist discourse stresses the essential personhood of the lesbian and

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202 Levinson, N. op. cit. p5.
the relatively trivial nature of her sexual preference. Those lesbians who seek to emphasise their sexual preference as a political choice which is fundamentally constitutive of their identity are dismissed as ‘pseudolesbian’. 204 This example provided by Kitzinger demonstrates the value of being able to critique the discourse in which one’s identity is embedded. If we can find alternative horizons from which to make such critiques, we are able to commence a restorying of who we are, and in some circumstances that may be crucial to a successful navigation of career decisions and difficulties. Indeed, one of the ways of noticing that we can bring to the contributors’ narratives is that of noticing signs of their having questioned the discourse in which their early identities were storied.

Given the significance of discourse to identity construction, Foucault’s work on the history of identity, his aim to “create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects”, 205 his questions about which versions of identity are allowed by the organisation of language, and in particular his demonstration that identity is implicated, through the medium of discourse, in power, are all important to note as we progress through the discussion of identity and career.

Of special interest and relevance for understanding the narratives that contributors have provided for this study, is Foucault’s observation that “confession is organized into modern discourse in such a way that it becomes impossible for an individual to believe that she has developed a

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204 “Lesbianism is a necessary political choice, part of the tactics of our struggle, not a passport to paradise” (Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group, 1981) quoted in Kitzinger, C. op. cit. p94.
‘healthy’ identity without acknowledging troubling hidden secrets about the self. It thus becomes a condition of liberation that deep-felt needs are produced, and are actually experienced as ‘real’ – needs that conform to the prevailing cultural norms.”206 We will be alert to the possibility of finding instances of this belief in the narrative material discussed in Part Three, material that contributors felt it was important to provide if they were to fully reveal who they are in their accounts of life and career. Foucault’s argument places us on an alternative horizon of understanding: a horizon from which ‘confessional’ material can be read as resulting from a particular historical cultural norm rather than from an individual revealing ‘the truth’.

The first part of this author’s position on identity then, is that identity is experienced, is felt, according to the narratives in which the individual expresses and encounters his or her prefigured and configured identity, and our narrative constructions – our authorings – are reflections of the discourse and textuality in which we happen to dwell, the textual situation into which we have been thrown. This position already begins to constellate narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy in a manner that allows for a contribution to identity theory that reaches beyond the subject/object dichotomy and that greatly extends the theory of identity.

Chapter Four: Social Theory and Social Identity: Bourdieu

In the previous chapter we proposed that identity is a configuration of who we are, drawn from the tangled, prefigured stories that we are and have been living, and refigured narratives yet to be acted out. Our discussion emphasised that identity is so deeply infused with narrative that it is fitting to speak of identity as storied. We also recognised that identity is socially authored and is experienced through the mediation of social texts, but the argument now requires an expansion of that reference to social authorship if we are to illuminate the idea of socially storied identity in a way that will contribute strongly to our research into the mutual contouring of identity and career. In this chapter we will explore social identity primarily with an interest in how our unexamined, everyday understandings of who we are, come to be socially authored; and with an interest in how the dispositions and orientations which influence our careers, come to be socially authored. In addition - and of signal importance - we will adopt a view of social agency which integrates with and adds explanatory power to the threefold concept of identity that we are developing during the course of building the conceptual framework of the dissertation.

The identity of a social agent is not only the identity of someone who understands himself and is understood by others in terms of his social roles and social status, but is also the identity of someone who is empowered to act with and against others by social structures. This

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207 Not in the sense of there being a sentient author called ‘society’ who consciously writes us, but in the sense that society is the source of much that shapes our narrative sense of who we are.
definition has been adapted from Sewell, and it is a definition which we will give substance to, primarily by referring to the work of Bourdieu, who was first to reintroduce the agent to social theory. At the essence of Sewell’s definition, and of Bourdieu's theory, is a view of social structure which empowers social agents in the sense that they have the ability (what Bourdieu would call the ‘practical logic’) to apply the schemas which inform social life, and to employ resources (what Bourdieu would call ‘capital’) in ways that give them some degree of control over the social relations in which they are enmeshed. Social agency is therefore necessary to the successful management of career. We will return to this point at the end of the chapter, by which time its significance will have been fully uncovered.

Our goal is to explain the sociogenesis of social agency in a way that concurs with identity’s entanglement in story, and in a way that will later allow us to see how social agency underpins and serves as a necessary precursor to narrative agency, even though the move from one to the other is not automatic or guaranteed. Narrative agency will be seen to depend upon the exercise of a critical awareness of the source of our decisions and directions – an awareness that we can at least partly reach in spite of having been socially authored in ways that led to absorption and embodiment of (and therefore a pre-reflexive awareness of, rather than a consciousness of) how to navigate the social terrain in which our lives and careers are lived out, in earlier years. Just as social agency

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208 The concept of identity broadens and deepens each time we question it from a new perspective.
210 Unless we can produce such an account, we cannot continue to hold that persons are authored by significant others and by their society and culture but also have the potential to be their own authors. That contention is a major premise in our argument that the sort of career management we are investigating, career management which recognises and responds to identity issues, is career management which adopts the narrative perspective and acts upon the possibilities for authoring or for
involves the understanding and exercise of social resources, so too narrative agency involves the understanding and exercise of narrative resources, but a fuller account of narrative agency will have to wait until we reach Chapter Five.

The explanation we are working toward will need to make room for a person’s identity to depart from, even to define itself against, the very social world from which it has come. Our challenge is to show how it makes sense to think that persons, as narrative agents, can take over responsibility for being the authors of their identity. We need to show how people can exercise narrative agency within the stories of life and career that they are authoring. To open the possibilities of personal rather than social authorship of the career storyline, we must first show how social agents reproduce the social structures that they inhabit without being mere puppets of those structures, without being, in Sewell’s words, “cleverly programmed automatons.”

Bourdieu’s writing on social structures and on the reproduction of social structures through the actions of social agents will be central to demonstrating how being socialised - understood as being inscribed with a feel for what is appropriate in social situations – can be made intelligible in a way that goes beyond material determinism. The concept that Bourdieu provides to make space for agency within social reproduction, is habitus. When we combine the notion of habitus with Sewell’s conception of social agency, we can see that being socially authored does not prevent personal authorship, rather, re-authoring our sense of who we are in terms of ‘what I have done, what I am doing, and what I will do’. It is through the narrative interpretations of our actions as social agents that we come to be – to have an identity – in our own eyes and in the eyes of others, so the narrative path of action that constitutes a career is one of the storylines that can say most about who we are. Other key storylines probably centre around family, friendships and romantic relationship, sports, travel, revelations, defining moments. An acceptable list would be the result of a full analysis rather than a set of hunches.

individuals require the personal competence that comes from social competence, as a necessary condition for entering into the horizon of critical understanding that underlies personal authorship and narrative agency. Without the experience of agency that is made possible by our feel for and knowledge of social structures and fields of action, we would lack a basis from which to begin fashioning our own story.

**Habitus, Field, Capital, and Mutual Contouring**

We will focus initially on the connections between habitus and our two current themes of narrative and identity. We will then return in a newly informed way to the problem of how sociogenesis can allow for personal authorship. Simultaneously however, given our desire to thoroughly comprehend habitus and its role in socially storied human life, we will discuss the other two concepts that are central to Bourdieu’s theory: ‘field’ and ‘capital’. Habitus cannot be fully appreciated as an explanatory concept unless its operation is understood in conjunction with those two accompanying concepts, because Bourdieu’s theory relies for its explanatory power upon the dynamic interplay between all three conceptual components.

The interplay of habitus, field, and capital does more than present us with an understanding of how social reproduction can be compatible with the potential for social and narrative agency in our lives and careers. That interplay also, as a keystone in Bourdieu’s metatheory, provides us with a means of comprehending the intrinsically double nature of social reality, and thereby supports the ontological and epistemological position outlined in the Introduction and restated in Chapters One and Two of this dissertation. Bourdieu’s ontological view of social life is a view that transcends dualities. For Bourdieu, “Social life is materially grounded
and conditioned, but material conditions affect behaviour in large part through the mediation of individual beliefs, dispositions, and experiences.”\textsuperscript{212} The mutual contouring of subjectivity and objectivity that constitutes social reality is highly significant for this dissertation on career and identity, because careers are pursued within social reality and it is therefore essential to have an understanding of social reality which underpins, rather than undermines, our inquiry. Bourdieu’s argument against one-sided modes of thought, and his “conceptualization of the relation between material and symbolic properties,”\textsuperscript{213} provide us with concepts which support an understanding of the mutual contouring of identity and career. This is an understanding that does not fall into oppositional dualisms such as work/home, professional narrative/personal narrative, individual/collective, self/other, or determinism/freedom.

\textbf{Habitus}

Bourdieu argues that the social world imposes its presence upon us through the conditioning of embodied dispositions that he calls ‘habitus’. It is through the concepts of habitus, field, and capital, that Bourdieu seeks to explain the social genesis of schemes of thought. “The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce \textit{habitus}, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations

\textsuperscript{213} ibid. p750.}
necessary in order to obtain them.”\textsuperscript{214} So conceived, the concept of habitus presents us as social beings who are rational and autonomous – social agents who are not cleverly programmed automatons - but who nevertheless are predisposed to function in accordance with embodied conditionings. It is these conditionings which enable the structured improvisation that Bourdieu refers to as a ‘feel for the game’.

Bourdieu emphasises the organising logic of habitus in the following passage: “Habitus are generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices – what the worker eats, and especially the way he eats it, the sport he practices and the way he practices it, his political opinions and the way he expresses them are systematically different from the factory owner’s corresponding activities. But habitus are also classificatory schemes, principles of classification, principles of vision and division, different tastes.”\textsuperscript{215} Taste matters because of what it says about social location: taste operates in the symbolic space that serves to mirror and reproduce social space: “a difference, a distinctive property, white or black skin, slenderness or stoutness, Volvo or VW … only becomes a visible … socially pertinent difference if it is perceived by someone who is capable of making the distinction – because, being inscribed in the space in question, he or she is not indifferent and is endowed with categories of perception … with a certain taste, which permits her to make differences.”\textsuperscript{216} So the coordinating functions of habitus can leave us disposed to unwittingly act in ways that – guided by taste - serve the purpose of social reproduction, and (as we shall see later in this section of

\textsuperscript{216} ibid. p9.
the recognition that we have been unwitting – that we have been authored by a force other than our own considerations about right and meaningful behaviour – that can be a liberating factor and a motive to become more the author of our own lives and careers, and less the unaware embodiment of principles of vision that have been organised by the invisible reality of our social space.

Recognition that we have been ‘authored’ by a force other than our own conscious and individual deliberations, is difficult because of the ontology of the habitus: “the schemes of the habitus … function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will.”217 It is not so much that the schemes of the habitus constitute part of what Freud would call the repressed unconscious; rather, habitus is so integral to who a person is, that they can never see the system of dispositions and schemes of thought in their totality. A habitus shows in a person’s bearing or ‘savvy’, as a “spontaneity without consciousness or will.”218 So habitus is seen and felt as effects rather than being available and transparent. There are nevertheless times when a habitus does at least come partly into focus, as we shall see later in this chapter, even if it may never be fully available to consciousness.

Field

The notion of social life as comprised of different games played within social spheres or – more precisely - fields of action, each operating according to its own laws of practical logic, and each producing a habitus

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uniquely suited to operating within it, is the second part of Bourdieu’s theory. A habitus predisposes a person to choose a field, but the field will draw the person with the appropriate habitus to play the game in the field. Bourdieu emphasises that the laws of functioning which govern each social field cannot be reduced to a more fundamental set of laws such as those which govern economic concerns. “At the very foundation of the theory of fields is the observation that the social world is the site of a process of progressive differentiation. … The evolution of societies tends to make universes (which I call fields) emerge which are autonomous and have their own laws.”219 The relevance of fields to careers is that, as Bourdieu argues, a different type of interest motivates those who operate within different fields: “what makes people enter and compete in the scientific field is not the same thing that makes them enter and compete in the economic field. The most striking example is that of the artistic field which is constituted in the nineteenth century by taking the reverse of economic law as its fundamental law.”220 Those who would pursue art for arts’ sake, oppose the notion of ‘pure art’ to the notion of ‘commercial art’, and place the former above the latter. The ‘true artist’ does not subordinate his calling to the external demands of selling to a market.

Two major career issues for all of us therefore, harking back to the notion of ‘motivational bearings’ which was introduced in the previous chapter’s discussion of identity, are firstly whether we are genuinely motivated by the interests which are at the essence of the field in which our career is being played out (am I a ‘true artist’, a ‘real businesswoman’, a ‘political animal’, or something else?); and secondly whether we have a feel for the

220 ibid. p84.
game which is played within that field or instead have to struggle in comparison to those who find it easy to operate according to the fundamental laws of that field, simply because their earlier social location has provided them with dispositions and appreciations that reflect its objective structure. Two examples of how someone can be suited to their career by the nature of their socially authored identity will now be provided.

If we look at Paul Keating (Australian Treasurer 1983 - 1991; Prime Minister 1991 - 1996) from the perspective of social theory, we can see reason to place importance on his family business background: reason which encompasses not only the role of early experience in shaping the tone and plot of personal narrative but also encompasses the role of those experiences in developing a feel for a game – in Keating’s case, the game of political economy. Keating claimed to have an innate sense of what matters in the economic field. Speaking of Rex Connor, a former minister in the Whitlam Government, whose wrong-headed and imprudent pursuit of $8 billion in loan monies from a Pakistani intermediary of no substantial repute was a major factor in the fall of the Whitlam Government, Keating said: “He never quite understood private business and how it felt and operated. I mean, I suppose that’s where I’ve got the jump on a lot of guys in this place – I always have, by and large.”

Keating’s biographer, John Edwards, agrees with this claim about Keating’s ‘feel’ for business and explains that feel by reference to Keating’s father Matt, and his small engineering business: Marlak.

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221 Gough Whitlam was Australian Prime Minister 1972 - 1975, the first Labor Prime Minister in 23 years.
Edwards attributes Keating’s fundamental understanding of markets and prices to his early exposure to them through time spent in and around Marlak. Understanding markets and prices “is the most important insight taught by formal economics courses. Paul Keating has never done such a course in his life but he understood the basic idea. People running small businesses know all about money coming in and going out, about price and profit, the cost of labour, the suddenness of market changes, the need to find a competitive spot and work on it to stay competitive.”223 As Bourdieu would say, Keating knew the fundamental laws of the economic economy, not only as a conscious subject knows in the thematic sense of knowing but also – and perhaps more importantly - as a social agent who knows in the pre-reflective sense of knowing and who could thereby operate at a practical level within that particular field of action.

More than twenty years after the sale of Marlak, Keating could still explain the difference between types of cement mixers, and could clearly remember a visit to the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme224 that he had made with his father on Marlak business. We see here an example of habitus structuring perception and thereby shaping action. When Keating compared his prime ministerial style with that of Gough Whitlam, he said: “Gough was a process man: reform, the Constitution, the federal structure, and those sorts of things. He was also into social, foreign and other areas of policy, whereas my interests were … it was a different view of the world. My job was to try and see what made the structure of the country, what held the structure together, what made it

223 ibid. p37.
224 The Snowy Mountains Scheme was a celebrated feat of engineering that required a massive influx of migrant workers, primarily from Central and Southern Europe, in the 1950s; it was designed to produce electric power from the Snowy River in the mountains of New South Wales.
tick, and how it could tick better.” Keating’s vision of his career and of the country was structured by the invisible structures of his early social location, structures that were constitutive of his early experiences.

A further instance of how habitus, field, and career can come together, is found in the story of Josie Natori, president of the Natori Company, New York. The Natori Company is a fashion house founded in 1978, specialising in lingerie and evening wear, that now has annual revenues of $30 million and employs a staff of 1,000. When interviewed about her career, Natori explained her capacity for business by referring to childhood experiences in the family’s construction firm. “Everyone in my family participates in the business – both men and women. My mother keeps track of the money. That’s why my father calls her ‘the commander’! This is a joke, but it also shows his respect for her. I have always been interested in business. I grew up around it, so I saw how it works.” Not only does Natori instantiate Bourdieu’s social theory as a theory of action, she also instantiates his claim that those players who succeed in a particular field do so because they anticipate and thereby get ahead of the flow of the game.

People who have a feel for the game are able to anticipate moves not only by rational planning and calculation, as does a conscious subject who has to approach the game as object, but also by approaching the game as a social agent who knows the next move in that game because of their feel for how things are done in that particular field of action. We can explain

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225 An interesting metaphor from a man who was renowned for his collection of antique French clocks.
226 Edwards, J. op. cit. p100.
Natori’s success in terms of habitus by saying: “because she has the immanent tendencies of the game in her body, in an incorporated state: she embodies the game.” Natori says of her approach to the game of business: “We’ve never done a business plan; we don’t do formal market research. Everything was done just from a drive to actualize an idea. I really didn’t know what I was getting into when I started this. We just did it.” For Bourdieu, there would be no surprise in Natori’s ability to successfully act on the basis of feeling rather than knowing.

The practical schemes of perception that Bourdieu gathers together under the heading of habitus, constitute “pre-perceptive anticipations, a sort of practical induction based on previous experience (which is) not given to a pure subject, a universal transcendental consciousness. They are the fact of the habitus as a feel for the game. Having the feel for the game is having the game under the skin; it is to master in a practical way the future of the game; it is to have a sense of the history of the game.”

We can go on to say that it is not only the flow of the game that a master player like Natori has a sense of, it is also a sense of what counts within the game, a sense of what counts as capital and of how to accumulate capital.

**Capital**

The concept of capital is used by Bourdieu in an enlarged sense. He moves past the notion of capital as money, real estate, industrial plant and equipment, to include all actually usable resources and powers within the various social fields. The true artist, for instance, operates within a

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229 Enkelis, L. and Olsen, K. op. cit. p12.
symbolic rather than an economic field, and therefore has a greater concern for symbolic than for economic capital. Bourdieu describes and discusses four kinds of capital:231

1. Economic capital, which is usually understood as access to money or its near equivalents such as stocks, buildings and equipment.
2. Cultural capital, which is a form of knowledge that “equips the social agent with empathy toward, appreciation for, or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artifacts.”232
3. Social capital, which consists of resources that are based on connections and group membership.
4. Symbolic capital, which derives from socially legitimate symbols such as university degrees or recognition by major art galleries.

Capital matters to career. The more capital one has within any given social universe, the more power one has within that field, so the notion of capital “entails the capacity to exercise control over one’s own future and that of others.”233 This relationship between economic and symbolic capital, and power over one’s destiny, is central to social agency. As we have already seen, Sewell contends that “part of what it means to conceive of human beings as agents is to conceive of them as empowered by access to resources of one kind or another.”234 A significant research issue for this dissertation therefore concerns the type of capital that the contributors accrued during their careers, and the ways in which they were able to put that capital to use as agents in the story of their lives.

Sociogenesis and Narrative Understandings

Having reviewed the central components of Bourdieu’s theory, we can now turn to the connections between habitus, field, capital, and narrative. Drummond argues that “habitus, field, and capital are infused with narratives. This is so whether the narratives are readily articulated or embedded in a person’s nonconscious memory.” There are ways in which sociogenesis follows not only from the objective structures of the social space into which a child enters (Heidegger would say "the situation into which the child is thrown"), but also from those narratives which members of that social space tell and learn about the nature of life. Dinner table discussion in the Whitlam household, for instance, presented the young Whitlam with stories of legal dramas and with debates about the directions and value of the careers of various Roman senators. We would expect such tales to be shaping of Whitlam’s habitus in a way that was well suited to his future career in the political field.

A field is a site of competition for power and capital and it is also a narrative location. Dominant members of a field tell ‘war stories’ about how to succeed in that field and about what matters in that field, thereby shaping the perceptions of other players. Organisational leaders, for instance, seek to provide their followers with a common way of making sense, a narrative by which they can “frame and define the reality of

235 Drummond, G. op. cit. p107.
236 Gough Whitlam was Australian Prime Minister: 1972-1975.
237 This information comes from a personal conversation with Whitlam, December, 1997, Sydney. The author had the good fortune to be staying in the same apartment block during the Christmas holidays of 1997 - thanks to the loan of an apartment by the sister of a mother of one of the author's daughter's friends (such are the twists of fate!) - as Gough and Margaret Whitlam, and they were generous enough to offer drinks and conversation. Gough needed no encouragement: he talked at length about his views on everything from his own funeral plans to his history of disputes with Catholic Bishops and, of course, the history and fate of his own government during the turmoil of 'the Dismissal'.

others.”238 If a leader has sufficient capital “then that person may choose to impose their habitus/narratives on those who are led rather than negotiate.”239 There could therefore be many times in a person’s career when their sense of identity will be at risk from a dominant narrative which has been imposed on a field of action by those with more power in that field. Given this analysis, career and identity management can be seen to rely partly upon the ability to recognise and contest those narratives which present themselves as a representation of reality but are in fact a disguised representation of another player’s political interests.

The connections between capital and narrative run deep. To possess the symbolic capital associated with a social role such as priest or manager, is to be supported by narratives which make a particular sense of, and ‘argue for’ a particular set of powers being appropriate to, that position. Sewell provides an analysis of the priest’s power in his field, power that depends upon the symbolic capital that is made possible by the act of ordination. “The priest’s power to consecrate the host derives from schema operating at two rather different levels. First, a priest’s training has given him mastery of a wide range of explicit and implicit techniques of knowledge and self-control that enable him to perform satisfactorily as a priest. And second, he has been raised to the dignity of the priesthood by an ordination ceremony that, through the laying on of hands by a bishop, has mobilized the power of apostolic succession and thereby made him capable of an apparently miraculous feat – transforming bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.”240 The power of apostolic

succession relies upon general acceptance of the Catholic narrative; without that underlying narrative as context for the ordination ceremony, the symbolic capital of the priesthood would dissolve.

Similarly, there are narrative understandings amongst organisational members upon which the symbolic capital associated with the position of manager depends. These organisational narratives differ between organisations, so that to be a manager at Digital Equipment Company (UK) Ltd, is to be endowed with power in ways that differ from being a manager at the Westpac Banking Group (Australia). At Digital, staff consider that political machinations dominate organisational processes and the stories which exemplify that view lead to managers being wooed for their political support, but despised behind their backs.241 At Westpac, the dominant narrative leads to senior management being seen as endowed with the almost omniscient power to gain market share and dramatically increase profitability, leading to treatment which handsomely rewards success. “When profits are up, management takes the credit and rewards itself with bonuses or share options. When profits are down, the board of directors replaces top management in the belief that new management will bring improved results.”242 The 1993 recruitment of Robert Joss from the Wells Fargo Bank in the United States is a case in point. Two years after his appointment, Westpac had gone from a $1.6 billion loss to a $3.4 billion profit, and Joss was considered to be the primary cause. One source of career power for individuals therefore, is to have an awareness and understanding of those narratives which dominate the field in which they are working.

Illusio and Prefigured Identity

Habitus is shaping of identity, and of our career orientations, because habitus conditions those dispositions and orientations which influence how we author our lives and careers and, as we have already argued, our primary way of answering the ‘Who am I?’ question is through locating ourselves upon the storylines of life and career and through identifying with the plots and genres of those stories. The conditioning of sociogenesis allows us to function as social agents who enter into a dynamic relationship with the social matrix from which our ‘feel for the game’ was derived, and yet, this is an agency that rests upon an unquestioning acceptance of the life games to which our sociogenesis has made us well adjusted. Bourdieu accounts for this constant, dynamic, but unquestioning relationship between social agents and the social matrix from which they have absorbed their practical logic, by explaining that habitus integrates past experiences and “functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems.”

Identity as a social agent is bound up with the individual and unpredicted application of collective schemas.

As Sewell points out, the generalisability of these intersubjectively available procedures or schemas through analogy, means that the schemas of habitus are ‘virtual’ and are available across a range of similar situations: “To say that schemas are virtual is to say that they cannot be reduced to their existence in any particular practice or any particular

location in space and time: they can be actualized in a potentially broad and unpredetermined range of situations.\textsuperscript{244} In terms of the lives that my contributors had within their families of origin, for instance, we can see from their narratives that there has been an appropriation of what was said by significant others and that as children my contributors read the circumstances of the family and that reading, in its turn, gave rise to a variety of lasting dispositions which can be found in their particular style of solving life-problems. Amongst those dispositions were appreciations of what matters in life and perceptions about feasible career possibilities. In Paul Keating’s\textsuperscript{245} case, to take an example from the biographical literature, the decision to pursue a political career was influenced partly by discovering that he could excite, enthuse, and amuse people so that they sought his views and his company, and also by the fact that politics was “the career that Matt Keating had nudged him towards from his earliest years.”\textsuperscript{246}

So for Keating, politics appeared before him not only as a field of action in which he was likely to be capable, but also as a field of action in which the stakes of the game were stakes that really ‘mattered’. Bourdieu emphasises this hold that social games have on us as social agents, when he argues against those who seek to reduce the importance that we place on non-economic interests to hidden economic interests. He tells us that “Agents well adjusted to the game are possessed by the game and doubtless all the more so the better they master it. For example, one of the privileges associated with the fact of being born in a game is that one can

\textsuperscript{244} Sewell, W. H. Jr. op. cit. p8.
\textsuperscript{245} Another Australian Prime Minister, and again, a Labor Prime Minister: 1991-1996.
\textsuperscript{246} Edwards, J. op. cit. p69.
avoid cynicism since one has a feel for the game.”\textsuperscript{247} Bourdieu refers to this type of investment in a game as \textit{Illusio}; “the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is ‘worth the candle’, or more simply, that playing is worth the effort.”\textsuperscript{248} So strong is the force of \textit{Illusio}, that “ Agents who clash over the ends under consideration can be possessed by those ends. They may be ready to die for those ends, independently of all considerations of specific, lucrative profits, career profits, or other forms of profit. Their relation to the end involved is not at all the conscious calculation of usefulness that utilitarianism lends them, a philosophy that is readily applied to the actions of others.”\textsuperscript{249} Here, then, is the link between habitus, narrative, identity, and career.

As we argued in the previous chapter, our sense of identity is fundamentally bound to what we come to identify through lived experience as being our motivational bearings and we have now established that those bearings depend upon a socially conditioned personal identification with the stakes and the rules of a particular field of action. Habitus is our constellation of dispositions that orientate us to a particular field of action, range of tastes, directions, and preferences – in short, sociogenesis produces us by engendering preoccupations and dispositions, by virtue of which we are well suited to the games and the rules of play that are important to the field of action in which members of our social class are located - and in doing so, sociogenesis produces a sense of identity which reflects our earlier placements in social space and simultaneously constrains our sense of what it is desirable or possible to

\textsuperscript{247} Bourdieu, P. 1998, “Is a Disinterested Act Possible?”, op. cit. p79.
\textsuperscript{248} ibid. p76.
\textsuperscript{249} ibid. p83.
do in our lives and careers to come, which in turn feeds back to the sense of who we are.

So we can now explain career orientation by reference to sociogenesis as shaping of our expectations and aspirations concerning our personal futures, rather than by referring to personality or aptitude tests:

“Apprehended by social scientists as a set of conditional probabilities, it (personal future) is apprehended by members of the class themselves in a cruder but more practically potent form as a shared modal understanding of eventualities as possible or impossible, normal or exceptional, probable or improbable, and hence as a shared evaluation of certain expectations and aspirations as ‘reasonable’ and of others as ‘unreasonable’.”

We can say then that although sociogenesis does not directly author our personal narratives and our career narratives through a set of rules or prescriptions, the dispositions and preoccupations that result from sociogenesis and which Bourdieu gathers together under the concept of habitus, are woven into each individual's narratives of identity.

The identity that we are speaking of here, however, is prefigured and configured. The pre-perceptive anticipations that fall under the concept of habitus, provide us with a practical sense of the history and the future of the social games that we are attuned to play as a result of sociogenesis and the Illusio that it engenders, and Ricoeur explains our prefigured understandings in similar terms, although he does so within the context of narrative theory, not social theory. Ricoeur argues that the pre-comprehension of our situations, a pre-comprehension that we have at the

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level of Mimesis, is a recognition of the temporal structures embedded in everyday activity: "plot is grounded in a preunderstanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character."251 Ricoeur adds to the understanding that we gain from a reading of Bourdieu, by providing the concepts of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration, and thereby he provides us with a way of understanding how it is possible to move beyond the pre-perceptive anticipations of habitus. Bourdieu adds to the understanding that we gain from a reading of Ricouer, by providing the concepts of habitus, capital, and field, which move us deeper into understanding the sources of, and the dynamics of, prefigured identity, and of our capacities to engage with our social world as capable social agents, even when our awareness of what we are doing does not go beyond the pre-comprehension of prefiguration.

**Social agency and authorship**

To re-author is to re-vision, but that capacity is not readily available when our vision is captured by the organising logic of a habitus. In this section of the chapter, we will look further at the captivating nature of a habitus, and at how it is possible to enter a critical space from which a habitus can be considered and to some extent critically evaluated, even if it is also true that we can never be without a habitus. Jill Ker Conway’s autobiography, *The Road From Coorain*, is particularly appropriate to our discussion because Conway clearly presents the sense in which she entered adult life as a social agent with a socially storied identity, and because she also deals with her struggle to become someone who took over the responsibility for authoring her own life against those aspects of

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it which had been socially inscribed but which she nevertheless had come to question or reject. Conway serves as an example of narrative agency which grew out of social agency.

Conway's story takes us from her girlhood on an isolated sheep station in outback New South Wales, to an exclusive private girls' school in Sydney during the 1950s, to study at the University of Sydney, and travels in Europe with her ailing and increasingly demanding mother, to the decision to leave Australia and her mother for postgraduate research in the United States. As Conway lived through the events of her early life, she had to contend with drought, and with the suicide of her father, and with a move from the outback to metropolitan Sydney; and as a young woman, she had to contend not only with an increasingly confusing search for identity and career, but also with the rejection of her application for training as a diplomat because of her gender rather than her ability, and with the unreasonably critical and dependant behaviour of her mother.

When Conway describes the attitudes and behaviour that six years at Abbotsleigh, “one of the most academically demanding of the private schools for girls in Sydney”, had conditioned in her, we are given a sense of the predispositioning power of habitus. As a prefect in Year 12, Conway joined a select group. “Our talk ranged from current events to favourite films and music, our parents and their vagaries, to the question of what we would do after finishing school. We were all economic and social conservatives and mirrored our families in rejoicing that the politically conservative Liberal Country Party coalition had ousted the

Australian Labor Party in 1949, and defeated Labor’s plans to nationalize Australia’s banks.” In this comment and others, Conway makes it clear that she and her friends, as members of the upper middle class, had been and still were being prepared in their attitudes and language use and in their schemes of perception, by their families and by their school, to succeed in fields of social life that were not genuinely open to young women of the working class.

Decision making about the directions that her life would take, required that Conway become not only a social agent in Sewell’s sense of being empowered by her knowledge of and embodiment of social structure, but also someone whose agency was empowered by the critical perspective and the narrative overview that she formed of her life’s trajectory. That second form of empowerment then contributed to her more aware exercise of social agency. Conway’s identity, in other words, shifted from that of a person who was socially storied, to that of a person who understood the ways in which she had been socially storied and was then able to have a greater say in the practical and creative enterprise of configuring the narrative of her life. She was able to transcend her social story without eliminating it from memory, by disempowering that story through criticism, and we shall see in Chapter Five, that this simultaneous appropriation of and transcendence of one's social story, is central to the process of refiguring our storied identity.

Criticism of the social norms that surround us, can constitute a critique of our own sociogenesis. Our usual sure sense of who we are, as an outcome of sociogenesis, can be shaken when our experience of social agency is

253 ibid. p142.
weakened - when we do not have a sure feel for the rules of the game. This reduction in the certainties and capacities that we have been associating with social agency, will turn out to be pivotal in the move from being a social agent who is aware of projects and goals at the level of Illusio, to becoming someone who continues to function as a social agent but who takes a more questioning and critical look at his projects and purposes: someone who thereby takes an active role in authoring not only the moves within a game that his social location has prepared him for, but also takes an active role in authoring (or choosing) the game itself. This section of the chapter thereby serves as a preliminary discussion of a more extensive treatment of the move from prefigured to refigured identity - from character to author - in Chapter Five.

Conway’s difficulties with the shift from a private girls’ school to a government school illustrates the powerful impact that a habitus as disposition and taste can have on us. “I hated it from the moment I walked in the door. I was a snob, and I knew the accents of the students were wrong by the exacting standards we’d had drummed into us at home. Worse still was the unruly behaviour of everyone of every age. Boys pulled my hair when I refused to answer questions I took as rude or impudent; girls stuck out their tongues and used bad language. Teachers lost their tempers and caned pupils in front of the class. Few books were opened as the staff waged a losing battle to establish order.”254 It was only later, as a well-read and well-travelled adult, that Conway could apprehend the attitudes and the behaviour of working class Australians in a positive way. “In fact, had I persevered I would have learnt a great deal … I’d have been obliged to come to terms with the Australian class

254 Conway, J. op. cit. p94.
system, and to see my family’s world from the irreverent and often hilarious perspective of the Australian working class … It was to take me another fifteen years to see the world from my own Australian perspective, rather than from the British definition taught to my kind of colonial.”

Cleary, Conway’s reaction to the children at the government school was a response that had been shaped by her location in social space – a location that until then she had been only dimly aware of.

This part of Conway’s story concurs with Bourdieu's comments on habitus, for he maintains that social locations condition a habitus and that social distances are thereby “predictive of encounters, affinities, sympathies, or even desires. Concretely, this means that people located at the top of the space have little chance of marrying people located toward the bottom, first because they have little chance of physically meeting them (except in what are called ‘bad places’, that is, at the cost of a transgression of the social limits which reflect social distances); secondly because, if they do accidentally meet them on some occasion, they will not get on together, will not really understand each other, will not appeal to one another.”

Certainly, Conway had trouble understanding the behaviour of the government school children that she met, and they did not appeal to her. An apparent complication for Bourdieu’s theory occurs in Conway’s story however, in that the working class shearers who she met as a child did appeal to her, unlike the working class schoolchildren. She says of the shearers on her parents' farm: “I had been friends, one could say special friends, with Shorty, or with Ron Kelly.”

We can account for those earlier friendships, however, by attending more closely

255 ibid. p95.
257 Conway, J. op. cit. p95.
to the notion of social space and thereby turn this apparent counter-example to Bourdieu’s theory into one which supports it.

The shearers, unlike the schoolchildren, were respectful and caring toward Conway – after all, she was the bosses’ daughter. As a consequence, Conway’s experience of their style was tempered by a context which meant that the shearers’ behaviour, although archetypally working class, did not confront or challenge her schemes of thought. She distinguishes between the shearers and the schoolchildren by saying that her friendship with the shearers “was in a simple world where we each knew our respective places. Here, I only knew that the old rules could not possibly apply.” Conway’s discomfort was therefore not only generated by the difference in social class, but also by her uncertainties about a game where she lacked a feel for the rules. At Coorain, the rules of the field of action were primarily defined by her parents rather than the shearers, but at the Sydney high school she attended briefly as an adolescent, the rules were defined and controlled by the children of the working class as the dominant group.

Conway’s case shows that application of Bourdieu’s theory needs to be alert to local configurations of social space. In fact, Bourdieu makes precisely this point when discussing how he would like readers of *Distinction* to approach that book: “My entire scientific enterprise is indeed based on the belief that the deepest logic of the social world can be grasped only if one plunges into the particularity of an empirical reality, historically located and dated, but with the objective of constructing it as a ‘special case of what is possible’, as Bachelard puts it,

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258 ibid. p95.
that is, as an exemplary case in a finite world of possible configurations."\(^{259}\) We can conclude then, that the identity and the social agency which is shaped in sociogenesis is a reflection of a specific, local configuration of social space, and that that identity can lose its efficacy (and we can consequently experience a diminution in our comfort and powers as a social agent) as we move from one social location to another. On this understanding of habitus and its role in the experience and achievement of identity, career management should have recognition as one of its concerns: recognition of the social locations, the fields of action, in which one’s identity as a social agent is best suited.

Habitus, as a socially conditioned orientation, therefore needs to be recognised as part of who we are and as a major ‘author’ of where we are going; but as Conway’s case demonstrates, such recognition is not straightforward. It was only after a university degree, a year in Europe, an emotionally affirming relationship with the American, Alec Stewart, two years of lecturing in history at Sydney University, and many years of emotional blackmail from her mother, that Conway finally gained enough critical distance to recognise how the social structure of her Australia had shaped her schemes of perception. Before finally deciding to leave her troubled and demanding mother, Conway first had to recognise what had been holding her back. “Now I realized, in what amounted to a conversion experience, that I was going to violate the code of my forefathers. I wouldn’t tell myself anymore I was tough enough for any hazard, could endure anything, because, as my father’s old friend had said, ‘she was born in the right country.’ I wasn’t nearly tough enough to stay around in an emotional climate more desolate than any drought I’d

Her socialisation had previously encouraged in Conway a stoicism that had dominated her decision making without her being able to clearly recognise or criticise that stoicism or its effects.

The occasions on which we catch a glimpse of some of our predispositions, are to do with our narratively configured understandings. Given our earlier discussion of the ways in which habitus, field, and capital are infused with narrative, it follows that when we call upon our capacity for hermeneutic composition - composition which displays the relational significance of our actions over time, and the contextual elements from which those actions draw their sense – an opportunity occurs to notice ways in which we have been predisposed to understand and to act. This opportunity exists because even though a habitus cannot be seen in totality, even though a habitus functions below the reach of introspective scrutiny, narrative serves to take our story out of the introspective domain and narrative presents an interpretation not of single events or of the present moment but of many events and actions configured over time through an act of the productive and hermeneutic imagination. Emplotment calls upon this capacity to see our lives from a distance, to see concord in discord, and to see the ‘figure in the carpet’. That figure can take various forms, depending upon what we are looking for and upon what contingency is inviting us to configure or refigure, or is pushing us to notice. In particular, events can bring us to a conscious awareness of some dispositions to think and act in ways that have been serving us poorly or not at all, and that awareness serves as the call to refiguration.

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When we read Conway’s autobiography we see how this can happen. She was able to recognise some of her dominant dispositions, through reflection on her life and in particular through reflection on the experiences of difference and of dissonance: experiences which placed her on alternative horizons of understanding and ruptured some of the attitudes and behaviours that she had previously taken as normal or natural. The narrative accounts of life and career that we present in Part Two and analyse in Part Three, also demonstrate that narrative reflection has the potential to bring some part of a habitus to awareness and make it accessible to the evaluative or critical gaze which is necessary to career choice. When we look back upon our actions, as we are able to do through the review and reflection made possible by narrative configurations, we may see certain of our dispositions manifested in the story that we identify as ‘the story of who I am’, and we may decide that that story – which in one of its aspects is a reflection of how we have been socially authored - is not caring for us in the way that we would like. That decision is a precursor to taking over responsibility for authoring one’s own life and career.

Authorship can of course occur without seeing the dispositions, the classificatory schemes, of habitus for what they are (this is authorship that takes those dispositions as inborn and natural to the author and thereby necessary to a worthwhile life or career) or authorship can proceed from a larger horizon of understanding. That larger horizon would include recognition that some of our dispositions and classificatory schemes have a social genesis, and that is a recognition which turns the possibility of choice about which of our socially inscribed dispositions to accept and which to reject (or at least call into question), into a real option. To recognise where and how you have been socially inscribed, as Conway
managed to do, is to bring a more fully critical intelligence to the task of authorship. As Bourdieu says, sociological analysis “offers some of the most efficacious means of attaining the freedom from social determinisms which is possible only through knowledge of those very determinants.” Such freedom is in fact a recognition that identity is an achievement that is not only a matter of narrative agency which involves an unravelling and a configuration of the untold stories in which we are tangled, but is also a matter of moving from social agency which is dependant upon but unaware of and therefore unquestioning of its sources, to social agency which recognises its own nature. Authors of the sort to be described in the next chapter are reflexive social agents, so in addition to being capable of effective action in various fields of social and organisational endeavour, they have an awareness of the source of that capability, and they have the further capacity (which is also an extension of their agency) to question and perhaps reject some parts of their socially authored identity.

In this chapter we have shown how Bourdieu’s social theory can be used in conjunction with Ricouer’s narrative theory in such a way that each enriches the other’s potential to enlarge our understanding of the mutual contouring of identity and career. The emphasis upon narrative concepts such as plot, theme, and character follows from a consideration of identity which foregrounds the notion of storied identity. Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field, and capital are infused with narrative and do not contradict the notion of storied identity but, when we look at identity through those concepts, we more readily notice the hold that socially storied identity has upon our lives as narrative agents who are also social

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agents. From the narrative perspective, agency is correlated with authorship, and from the social theory perspective, agency is correlated with the power associated with the use of capital that different locations in social space make available to different members of society. Sewell holds that “the agency exercised by persons is collective both in its sources and its mode of exercise. Personal agency is, therefore, laden with collectively produced differences of power.”262 A final research issue to come out of this chapter’s work therefore, is that of how the research contributors have authored their lives and careers in relation to the capital (and therefore the power) available to them, given the social locations from which they began. Habitus and capital, as reflections of social location, will have a contouring effect on career, and the trajectory of career as it leads to changes in social location, will have a contouring effect on habitus and capital.

Chapter Five: Existential Theory and Existential Identity: Heidegger

In the preceding chapters we have introduced two theorists whose work has a powerful resonance with our topic, and whose work has the potential to significantly deepen our understanding of that topic. From Ricoeur, we have taken the concepts of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration, in addition to the notion of verstricktein, or being entangled - concepts which were needed if we were to understand the difficulties of configuring identity. From Bourdieu, we have taken the three concepts of habitus, capital, and field, to gain a non-dualistic understanding of socialisation - an understanding which allows for agency and mutual contouring, and through which we have arrived at an account of social, predisposed identity as identity which empowers us but which also constrains us. In this chapter, we introduce a third major figure: Martin Heidegger.

In Heidegger's case, we shall focus primarily upon his accounts of three ways of being human and of conducting our lives. Firstly, our everyday being-in-the-world (Dasein); secondly, our occasional experiences of not-being-at-home (Unheimlichkeit); and thirdly, authentic temporalising as a way of being in the world in which it is not just particular moments that matter to us, but the totality of our moments: what they add up to. The aim of this chapter is to show that if we approach our topic of identity and career through the thinking of Heidegger, then we will be able to see more clearly how it is possible that individuals can be socially inscribed as Bourdieu has argued, and yet still be free to take responsibility for the authoring of - or in Ricouer's terms, the configuring of - their identities.
and careers. A further aim is to show how this capacity to configure, and responsibility for configuring, our lives and careers, makes sense - without falling back upon a duality of the individual against the social and without relying upon the idea that 'the self' is the source of direction and possibilities in our lives and careers.

For Heidegger, the individual is always already in the world as a social being, and yet he insists that for each of us, our possibilities for being are not limited to the social conventions into which we happen to have been 'thrown' and which have thoroughly and primordially shaped our comportment and our everyday sense of what matters. As beings-in-becoming, we are able to press into possibilities that fall outside the norms of social convention, although we need society and history if there are to be any possibilities for being human at all. Being-in-becoming is a feature of human existence that everyday social life tends to cover over, but ontological incompleteness remains with us as something that can be noticed and taken up rather than denied or ignored, and this is a situation that is more likely to come to the fore when we are called out of our everyday dwelling in the taken-for-granted world of social convention, by the anxiety that unsettles us in episodes of unheimlichkeit - experiences of not-being-at-home.

The immediate challenge for us now is to provide an exposition which makes sense of these ideas and which provides entry to Heidegger's idiosyncratic terminology. The accompanying and more significant challenge is to relate Heidegger's way of thinking about human existence

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263 Heidegger uses this term to emphasise that we take our first understanding of our being from a socially produced referential-whole that we did not choose.
to our topic, and to demonstrate the advances that are made possible by doing so, particularly with regard to understanding the problematics of identity when we confront our existence as beings-in-becoming.

The focus in this chapter will therefore be on the manner in which our existential nature as beings-in-becoming underlies our capacity for narrative agency, which is an extension of the social agency that we discussed in Chapter Four. We will also discuss why choice and choosing, although difficult, is essential to the possibility of living as an existential narrative agent: as an author of one’s own life rather than as a character whose life has been too fully authored by social structures and cultural scripts. The philosophy of Existentialism will thereby be shown to lead us to a third account of identity - an account that confronts us insistently and persuasively with our personal responsibility for constructing a life and career that is worthwhile, by reconsidering the social and cultural sources of our being, and by appropriating those sources as resources for existential agency.

**Dasein, Habitus, and Prefiguration**

Existentialists argue that the questions “Who am I?” and “How should I live?” and by implication therefore, "What career should I pursue?" arise because we are ‘thrown’ into the world, without an essence from which we could confidently derive a set of directions for living. We nevertheless do usually have a sense of who we are and what we should do with our lives and careers, because we have taken over an interpretation of what it is to be a citizen and to have a career, from the community in which we have lived. As we have already seen, persons are socially storied. Heidegger holds an even stronger version, however, of what till now we have been referring to as 'sociogenesis', in that he contends that humans
only begin to exist "as they are socialized into the understanding of what it is to be a human being that is already contained in social practices."^{264}

We shall now spend some time exploring these special notions of existence and of human 'being', through Heidegger's concept of Dasein, and then go on to examine the possibilities for being which lie at the centre of that concept.

The first and most fundamental feature of Dasein - Heidegger's term for 'being-there' (in other words, for being involved in an activity, as distinct from being detached or disinterested) - is that it is not an alternative term for 'consciousness'. Heidegger wants to replace the emphasis upon Cartesian and Husserlian subjectivity (which is transparently available to the subject, either through Cartesian reflection or through Husserlian bracketing), with something more primary - or in his terminology, 'primordial'. "One of our first tasks will be to prove that if we posit an 'I' or subject as that which is primarily given, we shall completely miss the phenomenal content of Dasein."^{265} Dasein is the understanding that is embodied in everyday practices, and those practices do not arise from beliefs, rules, or principles that are subjectively present at the time of action, and they cannot all be clearly spelt out. Dasein, as this manifested rather than explicit and subjective understanding, is "that which is primarily given", and this is an understanding which is neither subjective nor objective but is instead embodied in the practices that make us part of a particular community and its way of being.

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265 Heidegger, M. op. cit. p72.
There are two highly significant points to note here, in relation to the argument that we have been constructing in this dissertation. The first point is that Dasein, as what is primarily given in human experience, is radically different to the traditional self that was discussed and rejected as unsuited to our purposes, in Chapter Three; but Dasein is fully consistent with our goal of seeking to understand identity and career through concepts that incorporate the mediated, involved, and prefigured nature of experience, and which highlight the senses in which our identity is always an issue rather than a given.

The second point is that just as the achievement of configured identity requires us to work with the prefigured understandings in which we are tangled, attempting to disentangle and make them coherent, and just as social identity provides benefits which come from the social capital and feel for the game for which one has been predisposed - and yet social identity also entangles and constrains our sense of what is possible or feasible for us - so too, existential identity is an achievement not a given. An identity which encompasses a recognition of our existential situation, requires a refiguring of the ways in which we are usually involved in life, and an *appropriation* of ways of being human that are available to us thanks to historical and community practices. More will be said about that appropriation, as central to the idea of authentic temporalising and of existential narrative agency, later in this chapter. All three variations on the theme of identity and agency therefore call for a returning to and a rethinking of - rather than a rejection or a leaving behind of - the past and the practices out of which the possibilities for identity and agency originate.
Heidegger says of Dasein\textsuperscript{266} that taking over an interpretation of how to be, from its community, is necessary to its being: “Its ownmost being is such that it has an understanding of that being, and already maintains itself in each case in a certain interpretedness of its being.”\textsuperscript{267} As Dreyfus points out, this self-interpreting way of being is what Heidegger calls \textit{existence}.	extsuperscript{268} Heidegger explains his position by saying "that kind of being towards which Dasein can comport itself in one way or another, and always does comport itself somehow, we call 'existence'.”\textsuperscript{269} For Heidegger then, the term 'existence' does not simply refer to what is 'real'. Trees and tables are real, but only self-interpreting beings exist.

The existential problem that people face is that the acceptable and accepted, socially inscribed interpretations of what and who we are - however comforting they may be at the level of everyday existence - does not always meet our non-everyday need to answer the existential questions of life and career. We will say more about that problem later, under that heading of \textit{Unheimlichkeit}.

Sartre has argued that we prefer to ignore or avoid existential questions because Dasein would like to escape the openness of its identity, by seeing itself as necessarily being a manager or a lecturer or a waiter, and as being no more than what is contained within the boundaries of that particular role, rather than contingently being the occupant of personal and workplace roles. We shall provide an example to illustrate Sartre's position shortly. Firstly though, we must note that Heidegger focuses less

\textsuperscript{266} Dasein is Heidegger's word for "the type of being that is distinctive of human beings", Mulhall, S. 1996, \textit{Heidegger and Being and Time}, Harper and Row, Routledge, London, p14.

\textsuperscript{267} Heidegger, M. 1962 op. cit. p36.

\textsuperscript{268} Dreyfus, H. L. 1994 op. cit. p15.

\textsuperscript{269} Heidegger, M. 1962 op. cit. p32.
upon the desire to escape our openness, and more upon a confusion in our existence (our understanding): "Dasein understands itself primarily and usually in terms of that with which it concerns itself … everydayness takes Dasein as something available to be concerned with - that is, something that gets managed and reckoned up."\textsuperscript{270} We can only 'reckon up' something which has fixed, knowable, settled, object-like characteristics. So if that is how we understand ourselves at the everyday, preontological level, then, as Dreyfus puts it, Dasein's understanding of its own being "necessarily involves a preontological misunderstanding",\textsuperscript{271} a misunderstanding which conceals the unsettledness of our being and of our identity.

Paz has provided us with an existential analysis of Mexican culture, in that Paz accounts for key features of that culture in terms of unsettled attitudes toward being. He begins with the tendency to dissimulate and mimic. Paz argues that Mexicans feel that their mechanisms of defense and self-preservation are not enough, "and therefore we make use of dissimulation, which is almost habitual with us. It does not increase our passivity; on the contrary, it demands an active inventiveness and must reshape itself from one moment to another."\textsuperscript{272} This inventiveness is necessary because the Mexican feels it is necessary to disguise who he really is. "The dissembler pretends to be someone he is not."\textsuperscript{273} Taking his interpretation a step further, Paz points out that "In its most radical forms dissimulation becomes mimicry",\textsuperscript{274} which is a change of appearance rather than a change of nature. Paz says of Mexican dissimulation and

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\textsuperscript{270} Heidegger, M. 1962. op. cit. p335-336.
\textsuperscript{271} Dreyfus, H. L. 1994 op. cit. p25.
\textsuperscript{272} Paz, O. 1990, op. cit. p40.
\textsuperscript{273} ibid. p40.
\textsuperscript{274} ibid. p43.
\end{flushleft}
mimicry that: "the gesticulator resorts to a mask and the rest of us wish to pass unnoticed."\textsuperscript{275}

Paz has, of course, an interpretation of the interpretation of (or more accurately, the attitude towards) being that underlies Mexicanism. He refers us first to the difference between submerged groups and Mexicans. Whereas "servants, slaves or races victimized by an outside power (the North American Negro, for example) struggle against a concrete reality",\textsuperscript{276} Mexicans struggle with imaginary entities, "with vestiges of the past or self-engendered phantasms."\textsuperscript{277} In the struggle which the Mexican's will-to-be carries on against those phantasms, "they are supported by a secret and powerful ally, our fear of being. Everything that makes up the present-day Mexican, as we have seen, can be reduced to this: the Mexican does not want or does not dare to be himself."\textsuperscript{278} We will return to this analysis and its accounting for personal and cultural practices in terms of a fear of being, when we discuss the reflections and narratives of one of the research collaborators for this dissertation: Anthea Williams.

Sartre has also taken up this tendency of Dasein to understand itself as that which it is not, in his concept of "bad faith", illustrated by the overly solicitous waiter. "Let us consider this waiter in the café. His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous.

\textsuperscript{275} ibid. p44.
\textsuperscript{276} ibid. p72.
\textsuperscript{277} ibid. p72.
\textsuperscript{278} ibid. p73.
for the order of the customer. Finally he returns, trying to imitate in his
walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton. … All of his
behaviour seems to us a game. … But what is he playing? He is playing
at being a waiter in a café.” Bad faith therefore consists of presenting
ourselves as, and of understanding ourselves as, being no more than the
social roles that we play.

Just as the waiter can live in bad faith, and thereby avoid personal
responsibility for choosing how to be, so too can we each attempt to fix
our identity in role playing - but we do not always find that playing out
our personal and professional roles in the character prescribed by our
sense of what is appropriate, meets our need for identity. Stone, Patton,
and Heen argue that a difficult conversation, for instance, whether it be
about confronting a friend or asking for a pay rise, is difficult precisely
because it renders the fabric of our settled, role-based, relationship with
the other person, and calls his identity into question, as well as our own.
Some conversations can be overwhelmingly difficult due to the anxiety
they produce in us. “Our anxiety results not just from having to face the
other person, but from having to face ourselves. The conversation has the
potential to disrupt our sense of who we are in the world, or to highlight
what we hope we are but fear we are not.” When our conventional or
everyday sense of who we are is disrupted, Heidegger maintains that we
no longer feel at home in the world.

280 Stone, D. Patton, B. and Heen, S. 1999, Difficult Conversations: how to discuss what matters most,
281 ibid. p112.
**Unheimlichkeit**

In a general sense, the settled, everyday possibilities which serve to guide us during those times when we feel that life and work are going as they should, can fall short of our needs when we encounter disagreement, failure, stress, and the doubts and questions induced by crisis. It is at such times that we recognise that our usual sense of what it is to be human and to have a career is no more than an interpretation which lacks an essential ground. We recognise what we are really doing when we play at being essentially a manager or a lecturer or a waiter: "What I attempt to realize is a being-in-itself of the café waiter, as if it were not … my free choice to get up each morning at five o' clock or to remain in bed, even though it meant getting fired. As if from the very fact that I sustain this role in existence I did not transcend it on every side." Sartre's analysis articulates what each of us sees when we exercise our capacity to stand back from our everyday sense of what we should do with our lives, and confront the way in which that everyday set of conventions is contingently grounded in - embodied in – community practices which can lead us in directions that do not satisfy us personally, and which deny the open, unsettled nature of our being.

Heidegger has argued that it is the experience of anxiety which reveals our fundamental unsettledness, and the covered over groundlessness of our social practices – their being as interpretation – and the openness of choice which is therefore available to us. For the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, anxiety results from the realisation that our existence is “dependent

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282 Sartre, J-P. 1966 op. cit. p103.
upon a public system of significances that it did not produce.”

When this realisation occurs, Dasein recognises its fundamental not-being-at-homeness. “In anxiety one feels “unsettled”. Here the peculiar indefiniteness of that amidst which Dasein finds itself in anxiety comes primarily to expression: the “nothing and nowhere”. But here “unsettledness” (Unheimlichkeit) also means “not-being-at-home”.

Thus, this realisation is also a dreadful disturbance of our confidence in the importance of what we are doing in our lives and careers.

Heidegger declares that when existential anxiety arises, "the involvement-whole of the available and the occurrent discovered within-the-world is, as such, of no consequence; it collapses into itself; the world has the character of completely lacking significance." When we experience Unheimlichkeit therefore, we recognise that we "cannot have a meaningful life simply by taking over and acting upon the concerns provided by society." A meaningful life, and career, requires that we somehow personally appropriate - that we come to own - one of the possibilities for living that are provided by our society. We will say more about how that might be done, shortly.

The significance of existential anxiety in relation to career and identity, lies in its impact on motivation. Dreyfus explains the connection in terms of roles and purposes. “When anxious Dasein is drawn away from the roles and equipment it has taken up, the for-the-sake-of-whichs provided by the one and the whole referential nexus appear as constructs – a

283 Dreyfus, H. L. 1994 op. cit. p177.
285 ibid. p231.
cultural conspiracy to provide the illusion of some ultimate meaning-motivating action. Social action now appears as a game which there is no point in playing since it has no intrinsic meaning.”

Existential anxiety then, shakes us out of the hold that social games can have on our sense of what matters.

In the previous chapter’s discussion of socially storied identity, we took note of Bourdieu’s account of Illusio: “the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is ‘worth the candle’, or more simply, that playing is worth the effort.” When we perceive our career at the everyday level of Dasein, a level of perception in which we are in the grip of Illusio, we make a personal identification with the stakes and the rules of a particular field of action—such as medicine or business—without noticing or being concerned about the extent to which that identification is socially conditioned. Conceiving of an occupation or profession as a game, however, allows us to notice what Gadamer has so elegantly pointed to: the phenomenon whereby a game comes to play us, rather than us playing the game. “Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play.” This losing of ‘self’ results from the mode of being of play: “seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play. Someone who doesn’t take the game seriously is a spoilsport. The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave toward play as if toward an object.” An object is something external to us, whereas when we play we must be in the game, and the ‘in’ that we are speaking of here is Heidegger’s sense of ‘in’. This is not a spatial ‘in’, this is the

287 ibid. p180.
288 Bourdieu, P. 1998 op. cit. p76.
290 ibid. p102.
‘in’ of involvement. So it is on those occasions when we feel uninvolved in our occupation or profession that we are most likely to become aware that we could be playing a different game if we chose, if we had reason to.

The relevance of *Unheimlichkeit* for career anxiety therefore lies in the recognition that we have no predestined career path but must nevertheless find grounds upon which to make career choices and grounds upon which to choose one style of being a journalist or a bricklayer or an accountant or a manager, rather than another. In addition, there is a need to mark one of those possible ways of being out as distinctly one's own. The contention of this dissertation of course, is that it is through our narrative sense of identity that we have a chance to work out those grounds in a manner that resonates more deeply with our temporal grasp of who we are – more deeply than an unquestioning and unaware adoption of convention as the guide for our career choices, and thereby to personally appropriate that choice and live it out as our own. Both of the research collaborators will be shown, in Parts Two and Three, to have done just that. Although Harry and Anthea are both educators, each of them is an educator in a fashion that reflects their personal preoccupations, and their personal and social histories, rather than being an educator in any conventional sense.

**Being-in-Becoming**

Cochran,\textsuperscript{291} whose views were discussed in Chapter One, has shown how - at the level of technique - we can articulate our prefigured narratives and perhaps use them to fashion (to configure) future career narratives.

\textsuperscript{291} Cochran, L. 1997 op. cit.
His suggestions invite clients to consider their lives and careers to date, from the perspective of various reflective exercises which centre on the idea of a life line and its key incidents, the chapters of one’s life and what they should be titled, the most appropriate title for one’s story as a whole, the meaning of one’s successes, and the ongoing role of one’s family drama. Cochran suggests that a career counsellor can take someone’s responses to such exercises and use them to write a future narrative for that person, in the form of a report on strengths, work needs, vulnerabilities, and purpose. In the previous chapter, when we explored the turning-point for Jill Kerr-Conway in terms of how she found a way forward which did not rely solely upon her social storied identity, we in effect saw an application of Cochran’s approach – although Kerr-Conway did not intentionally proceed from his concepts.

The question that follows, however, is “What, at the level of being, makes it possible for us to exercise our understanding in the manner suggested by Cochran?” From the Existentialist perspective, the capacity to stand back and identify the story that we are enacting and choose whether to continue it or to re-author it, springs from the nature of our being. We are creatures for whom being and time are co-constitutive. When we seek to make sense of ourselves or to give an account of who we are, we must refer not only to what we have done in and with our lives to date (in other words, attempt to configure an identity from the prefigured stories that we have lived), but must also refer to what we intend to do with our life in future. "No complete account can be given of a human being without reference to what he is in the process of becoming - without reference, that is, to the projects and intentions which he is on the way to realizing,
and in terms of which sense is made of his present condition." Heidegger argues that our everyday involvements, and the type of understanding which is thereby primarily given to us, is essentially temporal. His position is summed up in the following passage, which is significant enough to present in full:

"We have defined Dasein's being as 'care'. The ontological sense of 'care' is temporality. We have shown that temporality constitutes the disclosedness of the 'there', and we have shown how it does so. In disclosedness of the 'there' the world is disclosed along with it. The unity of significance - that is, the ontological make-up of the world - must then likewise be grounded in temporality. The existential-temporal condition for the possibility of the world lies in the fact that temporality, as an ecstatical unity, has something like a horizon … The horizon of temporality as a whole determines that on the basis of which factically existing entities are essentially disclosed."

In referring to "the horizon of temporality", Heidegger is not referring to time as something measured by clocks, but to the lived experience of time - the experience of existing within the flow of past, present, and future.

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292 Cooper, D. 1990 op. cit. p3.
293 Heidegger, M. 1962 op. cit. p416.
The experience of time is the experience of a concatenation - a gathered-togetherness of past, present, and future. Collins and Selina,\(^{294}\) in their introduction to the philosophy of Heidegger, make an illuminating comparison between Heidegger's statements about the lived experience of time, and Husserl's account of how we experience a melody. "A melody can be thought as a whole, complete from beginning to end, even on the first hearing."\(^{295}\) To 'know' a melody therefore, we have to simultaneously retain past notes in memory, attend to each present note as it sounds, and protend (listen ahead) as we construct expectations of what might follow. Heidegger would contend that the same simultaneous gathering together of time occurs in all of our everyday, involved, experiencing in the world.

If we now consider this idea in relation to the work of Ricoeur, we can compare the gathering together of past, present, and future musical notes, as a concatenation of a melody, with a configuration of a story. Ricoeur uses the concept of configuration in a strikingly similar manner to the way that Husserl and Heidegger used the concept of concatenation. For Ricoeur, the configurational act "consists of 'grasping together' the detailed actions of what I have called the story's incidents. It draws from this manifold of events the unity of one temporal whole."\(^{296}\) Heidegger did not emphasise narrative in *Being and Time*, but the parallels between his account of 'existence' and temporality on the one hand, and Ricoeur's account of configuration and emplotment on the other hand, allow us to say that the unity of significance in our experience - a unity that was a central concern for Heidegger - comes primarily from the narrative form of our understanding: prefigured narrative at the everyday practical level.

\(^{295}\) ibid. p77.
of understanding as doing, and configured narrative at the reflective level of understanding as telling. Narrative configuration brings together the incidents that we live through over time, just as melodic concatenation brings together the notes that we hear over time. Because Heidegger showed how being and time are conjoined, and because Ricoeur showed how time and narrative are conjoined, we can now see how being and narrative are conjoined, in a way that justifies describing persons as beings-in-becoming.

The events and incidents of our lives are encountered as successive, separate occurrences, but can also be experienced as episodes in an ongoing configuration of past, present, and future - that is, they can be experienced as moments in an ongoing narrative, just as the separate, successive notes of a melody can be experienced as melody through the concatenation of retention, attention, and protention. It is narrative and its drawing together of events into temporal wholes, that allows for the experience of identity as a persistence of coherent meaning over time. To be identical now with the child that you were twenty years ago is not possible, so identity is not so much to do with facts of literal identity, as it is to do with being able to tell the story of how you come to be so different now from what you once were. The story of what happened to you to make you who you are, is the configuration of life events that constitutes literary rather than literal identity, and that is the sort of identity that matters to you if you want an identity that makes sense.

We have now reached a position from which we can more clearly understand the claim that we are beings-in-becoming, and can more clearly understand the source of our capacity to stand back and configure the story that we are enacting. From a Hedeggerian perspective, the
capacity for narrative configuration is inherent in our existence as beings who experience time as a concatenation of past, present, and future - a concatenation which is tantamount to a prefiguration of experience in narrative form. This is an existence which is always incomplete because the story is unfinished - we are beings-in-becoming who are able to turn away from our temporal horizon, or confront it in what Heidegger calls 'authentic temporalising'.

Authentic Temporalising and Historiography

As beings-in-becoming, we can take - or hide from - responsibility for authoring our lives in terms that define what and who we are. Heidegger uses the terms 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' to distinguish between taking responsibility and avoiding it. "We have defined the idea of existence as ... an understanding ability to be, for which its own being is an issue. But this ability to be, as one which is in each case mine, is free either for authenticity or for inauthenticity or for a mode in which neither of these has been differentiated." 297 So we are authentic when we own up to our responsibility for choosing how to live and what to make of our life as a whole, and we are inauthentic when we disown that responsibility and simply slide unquestioningly into one of the public identities that society makes available.

The disowned or inauthentic mode of being is one in which we passively accept the social role that we grew up thinking that we were ‘destined’ for. There are strong resemblances between this idea and Bourdieu's account of habitus as an orientation to a range of tastes, apprehensions, and preferences which produce a sense of identity that is reflective of

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earlier placements in social space. Being authentic is not, however, a matter of jettisoning one's social genesis and floating freely away. Although the social world limits our possibilities, Heidegger would not have us see social limits as limitations. Mulhall points out that, for Heidegger, "one cannot conceive of any mode of existence without (social limits)." Our choices about how to live are therefore anchored in, and made possible by, social reality.

There are three ways in which this anchoring holds us, according to Mulhall. Firstly, social context can make it difficult or even impossible to live according to certain choices that we might otherwise make. Mulhall gives the example of someone whose preferred manner of enacting a career choice, cannot be lived out because of organisational context: "the conscientious carpenter may find herself working in a factory which entirely ignores the conception of good work by which she wishes to live." Secondly, no one can take on a social role without possessing the necessary talents or the necessary educational background. Here, we are sharply reminded of Bourdieu's comments concerning social capital, and the embodied 'feel for the game' which some people possess, depending upon their original experiences within the social world. Thirdly, "the range of existential possibilities upon which someone can project is determined by their social context. I could no more understand myself as a carpenter in a culture that lacked any conception of working with wood, than I can understand myself as a Samurai warrior in late Twentieth Century Europe." Once again, there is a parallel between this point and Bourdieu's concept of fields of action, each of which operate according to

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298 Mulhall, S. 1996 op. cit. p84.
299 ibid. p83.
300 ibid. p84.
their own laws of practical logic, and make appropriate actions possible and understandable.

We have now explained how authenticity is anchored in and by the referential-whole of social practices and embedded interpretations, but more needs to be said about the nature of authenticity. If being authentic does not mean a radical departure from the way that other members of our society live, what does it mean? Authenticity, as characterised by Heidegger, means seeing one's life and one's situation differently - in particular, authenticity is constituted by a gestalt switch in perspective (what Heidegger calls *Augenblick*: the glance of an eye) which affects one's future actions as well as the interpretations of one's past. \(^{301}\) At the heart of this gestalt switch, or refuguration, is the recognition that the commitments one has made to any particular lifestyle or career, are based upon nothing other than the community-wide interpretations of how to be human; and in the equally unsettling recognition that our stories end in death.

Given that recognition, Heidegger maintains that we are authentic when we remain open to changes in circumstances and open to changes in commitments. Rather than *await* our death, we are authentic when we recognise its inevitability and *forerun* our death: "Forerunning discloses to existence that its uttermost possibility lies in giving itself up, and thus it shatters all one's tenaciousness to whatever existence one has reached."\(^{302}\) To 'forerun' seems to mean 'to bear in mind' or 'to live in accordance with the implications of' one's end.

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\(^{302}\) Heidegger, M. 1962 op. cit. p308.
A consequence of *Augenblick*, then, is that confronting the omnipresent possibility of death "forces Dasein to acknowledge that what matters to it about its existence is not just the specific moments that make it, but the totality of those moments."\(^{303}\) When the totality of our moments matter, at every moment, then we are living in a different manner: not *in* time but *as* time. Heidegger calls this the authentic mode of temporalising and we note how strikingly his view concurs with Ricoeur's view that time itself "becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence."\(^{304}\) In other words, an authentic approach to our lives calls for a narrativisation of them, one which refuges earlier understandings of our life, so that we constantly attend to our contingency and our finiteness by considering the implications of our present actions for the person we want to become.

This refuguration or *Augenblick* causes us to focus upon what we have done and what we are doing, and what we could do next in relation to the continuance of that story, rather than upon our subjectivity. To approach who we are and how we live, in this narrational fashion, leads to what Guignon terms 'manifestationism' - a way of thinking and acting that accords with Heidegger's views on authentic temporalising. We have already noted that narrative understandings of who we are require reflection upon what we have done, are doing, and intend to do, and that to reflect upon these matters is not the same as turning our attention inwards. Guignon characterises the standard inward-looking view of

\(^{303}\) Mulhall, S. 1996 op. cit. p119.

human agency as holding that a person’s actions are “outer expressions or signs of some causally effective inner states – the agent’s beliefs and desires, for instance. We can understand a person as an agent then, only by reading backward from the outer behaviour to the inner impetus.”

On the manifestationist view of human existence, however, what we do with our lives and careers, over time, is more fundamental to who we are, than any inner state.

“On a manifestationist view …. what we do is a presentation of who we are, not just a signifier which represents some inner reality.” To understand who we are then, the direction in which we should look is the entire story of our actions over time, rather than toward some internal ‘self’ which might contain the essence of who we are. Identity transcends any individual moment of consciousness and consists instead of a reflective synthesis of our actions over time. Guignon emphasises Heidegger’s notion of finitude and of being-in-becoming, to make a similar point when he says that “who a person is is defined by the entire story of his or her life – the total ‘emerging into presence’ which is ‘stretched along between birth and death’.”

So the manifestationist view of human existence accords with narrative theory and with Existentialist accounts of being. It also replaces our thinking about self-knowledge as something that can be gained directly from introspection of a transparent consciousness, with the notion of seeking to understand what our actions mean about our identity when

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306 ibid. p132.
307 ibid. p132.
looked at over time. The manifestationist philosophical position, which follows from a recognition of the claims of Existentialism, thereby places us in the role of readers of our own lives, rather than in the omniscient role of the self-regarding, introspective Cartesian who imagines himself to have privileged, direct access to his ‘self’. Not only does manifestationism present us with the need to read, interpret, and understand who we are indirectly, by reference to what we have done, are doing, and intend to do – it also removes us from the idea that we can be a good, or an interesting, or an intelligent person on the basis of our inner states, regardless of (or in spite of) our actions over time.\textsuperscript{308}

Consequently, the manifestationist view of human existence makes us responsible for our becoming through the projects that we attempt and complete, through the story that we author by our actions. If we are to exercise that responsibility in an authentic manner, in good faith, then we have to act in recognition of our personal and our communal history.

Guignon employs Heidegger’s notion of ‘authentic historiography’ in relation to the task of authorship: “As authentically historical, Dasein pulls itself away from the dispersal and inconstancy of the “they” and appropriates the possibilities it inherits in order to accomplish something for the future. This conception of authentic existence displays both the embeddedness and the future-directedness of an authentic life.”\textsuperscript{309} To authentically accept our future-directedness is to resist our tendency to fall into the busyness and turbulence of everyday life as all-encompassing

\textsuperscript{308} This is a position which rejects, for instance, the common saying that although a particular man might behave in ways that are aggressive and thoughtless, he nevertheless should not be judged by reference to that behaviour, for behind it he ‘has a heart of gold’.

\textsuperscript{309} Guignon, C. 1993 op. cit. p139.
of what our lives are about, and instead to take hold of our existence in a coherent, integrated way: to become a narrative agent.

A narrative agent exercises his capacity to work toward a life which exists as a coherent story, a life which is influenced by its sense of having an ending. Endings are of overwhelming importance to narrative meaning, for as Brooks points out, “we are able to read present moments – in literature and, by extension, in life – as endowed with narrative meaning only because we read them in anticipation of the structuring power of those endings that will retrospectively give them the order and significance of plot.”\(^{310}\) For Heidegger, a coherent story does not only take account of death as putting a stop to one’s story, and of career or life episodes as having endings, it also involves the taking over of Dasein’s historical embeddedness. “To be authentic is to find guidance for the conduct of one’s own life in terms of the lives of models or exemplars drawn from history. Or putting this into the narrativist mode, we might say that authentic Dasein achieves self-focusing by articulating its existence in terms of the guidelines laid out by certain paradigmatic stories circulating in our cultural world.”\(^{311}\) To accept our historical embeddedness, then, as part of authentic temporalising, is to recognise that we rely on the communal past as a source of ways for articulating our lives in a coherent, integrated fashion.

A further idea of what authentic historiography involves, can be found in the way that Heidegger draws upon Nietzsche’s three distinct kinds of historiography. Nietzsche distinguished between monumental

\(^{310}\) Brooks, P. 1984 op. cit. p94.
historiography, antiquarian historiography, and critical historiography. Monumental historiography shows us what was once possible: “it projects an image of what history can and should accomplish in order to make sense of what should be done in the present.”\textsuperscript{312} Antiquarian historiography relates to the past with a sense of reverence or loyalty; and critical historiography takes us away from the conventions of the present by showing us alternative ways of living. In terms of the research conducted for this inquiry, we can now list three additional questions which result from accepting the relevance of authentic historiography to the existential storying of life and career:

1. How has this contributor to the research referred to his or her personal or communal past for ideas about what is possible?
2. How has this person demonstrated a reverence for his or her personal or communal past in the storying of his or her life and career?
3. In what ways has this person adopted a critical stance toward conventional aspects of life and career, based upon their understanding of their personal or communal past?

**Existential Agency and Authorship**

We have seen that the basis for authentic temporalising and thereby the basis for an authentic configuration of identity, must look toward communal and personal history as well as looking toward the future. Identity which is configured in this fashion, comes from a knowing commitment to what one is doing; and not from living in terms of the ways of being into which one just happens to have been thrown. The crucial issue has to do with time, or more precisely, with the manner in

which a culture or an individual acknowledges not only that its past happened to it, but also that its past is unavoidably part of who it is. Mulhall takes a similar view of the importance that Heidegger gives to bringing past, present, and future together in an authentic life. "There can be no authentic appropriation of the future without an authentic appropriation of the past as determinative of the present, and determinative in specific ways. Dasein must acknowledge the past as something not under its control but nevertheless constitutive of who it is, and so as something it must acknowledge if it is to become - to genuinely exist as - who it is."313

313 Mulhall, S. 1996 op. cit. p150.
The knowing commitment which is enabling of a refigured or Existential identity, seeks to repeat or recover the personal or communal past, rather than repress or ignore that past in an attempt to be lost in the present.\textsuperscript{314} Heidegger says of those who are inauthentic: “busily losing himself in the present object of his concern, he loses his time in it too.”\textsuperscript{315} The key point that Mulhall makes in his discussion of Heidegger here, is that when we repress or forget the past, and lose ourselves in the present, we lose any possibility of relating to the present in and as a moment of vision, a moment of \textit{augenblick} – a vision which grasps the resources of the present as a context for existential choice, as the scene for a penetrating repetition of the past that might liberate real but hidden possibilities for the future.\textsuperscript{316}

An example of this historiographal approach to lives and careers can be found in Charles Dickens’ \textit{Great Expectations}. The protagonist, Pip, does spend most of his time attempting to repress and deny his past as a poor orphan who is mysteriously linked to the help that he once provided to an escaped convict. It is exactly that turning away from the unwanted aspects of his past which keeps Pip locked into a false vision of his present and his future. Brooks has argued that the need to re-understand the past has been a theme of Nineteenth Century literature.\textsuperscript{317} “The stories of Raphael and Pip, perhaps even that of Julien Sorel, and of so many other young protagonists of the nineteenth century novel, while ostensibly a striving forward and upward, a progress, may also be, perhaps more

\textsuperscript{314} ibid. p55.
\textsuperscript{315} Heidegger, M. 1962 op. cit. p49.
\textsuperscript{316} Mulhall, S. 1996 op. cit. p187.
\textsuperscript{317} Even though his primary concern is to develop a connection between Freudian theory and literary plots.
profoundly, the narrative of an attempted homecoming: of the effort to reach an assertion of origin through ending, to find the same in the different, the time before in the time after.”  

The need to acknowledge the significance of the communal and personal past in the working out of our lives and careers is perhaps best summed up in Brooks’ analysis of *Great Expectations*: an analysis which gives central place to Pip’s constant returns to the village and to Satis House. “Each return suggests that Pip’s official plots, which seem to speak of progress, ascent, and the satisfaction of desire, are in fact subject to a process of repetition of the 'as yet unmastered past', the true determinant of life’s direction.”

Pip’s story begins with a radical uncertainty about his identity: an uncertainty which continues from his early confusions about his name to his confusions about and misunderstandings of who his benefactor was, and includes uncertainty and unsettledness concerning his social place, his rightful ambitions, and his character. It is only when Pip learns that his money comes from Magwitch, the uneducated and ‘uncouth’ criminal – not from Miss Havisham of Satis House – that Pip reaches an existential moment in which he can choose to redeem himself and his past through re-understanding who he is and through confronting and addressing his prior ingratitude and his insistent sense of guilt. The cognitive and existential revision that comes from the discovery of his true benefactor is an *augenblich* in Pip’s vision of his life – and it leads to a refiguration that constitutes a moral revision.

Our preoccupation with certain past events, often returned to and appearing as repetitions or themes in our life, are arguably the driving

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318 Brooks, P. 1984 op. cit. p110.
319 ibid. p125.
force in our stories. Preoccupations, along with critical reflection and awareness, are what make meaningful, personal storying of identity possible. Brooks would seem to support this claim as he asserts that “Narrative … must ever present itself as a repetition of events that have already happened, and within this postulate of a generalized repetition it must make use of specific, perceptible repetitions in order to create plot, that is, to show us a significant interconnection of events.”\textsuperscript{320} Without the returns to what preoccupies us, the significance of events in our life as narrative is diminished; their meaning is less clear to us, less apparent. This ‘making apparent’ of significance results partly from the dynamic ambiguity of repetition. “An event gains meaning by its repetition, which is both the recall of an earlier moment and a variation of it: the concept of repetition hovers ambiguously between the idea of reproduction and that of change, forward and backward movement.”\textsuperscript{321} So, just as Heidegger insists that authentic Dasein depends upon an active acknowledgement of both its past and its future, as a basis for both recall and variation, so too Brooks argues that plot depends upon metonymy, “the figure of contiguity and combination”, \textsuperscript{322} for its power to convey meaning.

In Existentialist terms, metonymy is active in our lives and careers when authentic Dasein appropriates the possibilities it inherits in order to accomplish something for the future. The emphasis conveyed by the concept of ‘appropriation’ is an emphasis on variation and change, on moving forward (on being-in-becoming) just as much as it is on recall and reproduction. This is why Heidegger’s “conception of authentic existence displays both the embeddedness and future-directedness of an authentic life”: \textsuperscript{323} both are necessary aspects of the Existentialist

\textsuperscript{320} ibid. p99.
commitment to live in ways that recognise repetition’s meaning-producing ambiguity.

Sartre provides us with an example of an attempt to consciously author a life and career based upon strong personal preoccupations. His was an authoring which looked simultaneously forward and backward in its repetitions. He was fervently anti-bourgeois, and in his drive to be free of social determinants, Sartre worked to create a personally storied identity which manifested a total rejection of bourgeois values and social conventions. Hayman’s biography of Sartre allows us to make the following list (which does not attempt to be exhaustive, only illustrative) of ongoing preoccupations in Sartre’s life; preoccupations which had a shaping influence on his personal and professional ‘careers’:

- As a boy, and on many later occasions in his life, Sartre felt rejected by everyone, by life itself. He worried about his ugliness; he felt certain he was unlovable.324
- Like Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre’s childhood experiences of family and bourgeois conventionality imbued him with a lifelong hatred of the life he was intended to emulate.325
- At an early age, Sartre began to pursue the feeling of being free, and began to engage in disciplines aimed at strengthening his willpower. This was a pursuit that he would continue throughout his life.326

321 ibid. p100.
322 ibid. p91.
324 Hayman, R. 1986 op. cit. p34.
325 ibid. p35.
326 ibid. p40.
• As an adolescent, he formed a notion of ‘moral health’ which could only be attained by rejecting all social constraints; a notion that informed much of his later writing and doing.\(^{327}\)

• Unlike Heidegger, who emphasised the need to acknowledge our historical progenitors, Sartre was continually obsessed with self-generation and consistently denied the sources of his ideas.

Sartre’s life is only one example of the manner in which personal preoccupations can influence the choices and direction-taking that lie at the centre of a person’s authorship of his own identity. Our research aims at finding and understanding examples in the lives and careers of people whose work has not brought them the fame of a Sartre, and who thereby may present more of a challenge for the interpretive framework that we have been developing. A further interpretive issue for the analysis of my collaborators’ stories, therefore, has to do with how their stories can be read as examples of the ways that preoccupations can influence the authoring of lives and careers. Given the arguments of this chapter, it is appropriate to include the following two questions in the analysis of their interviews:

1. What preoccupations have been the driving force in their lives and careers – preoccupations which led to the construction of identities that took their own paths rather than the path of social trajectory?
2. What seem to have been the key turning-point moments of choice in the construction of their personally storied identities?

We can conclude then, that Heidegger contrasts a mode of being in time which seeks to lose awareness of time as past, present, and future, with an

\(^{327}\) ibid. p58.
awareness that relates to the present within the context of seeking to take over possibilities from the past in relation to a consciously chosen future. This is an awareness that returns us to Chapter Three, and to the concept of configured identity. Authentic temporalising is therefore identical in its formal structure, with the achievement of configuring a coherent narrative of who we are, from the stories in which our identity is prefigured and entangled. The difference that matters is that whereas the attempt to configure an identity from the stories in which we are tangled is an attempt to make sense of how we have been living, the attempt to configure an identity from the possible ways of living that are made available by our community and its history, is an attempt to author the story of how we will live – it is more forward looking in its concern, even though it must not neglect the importance of the past. The emphasis is upon what we are wanting to become rather than upon what we have been.

From the perspective of narrative theory, the basis for choosing how our stories will go, lies in our ongoing, sometimes unrecognised (and therefore needing to be read and understood in terms of how they are manifest in our actions over time), personal preoccupations: the interests or worries or fascinations around which our attention and motivation circle again and again. Seen from this perspective, a career is not only an occupation but also and more importantly, an acting out of our preoccupations. We could say that our preoccupations turn out to be what our stories of life and career are about.
Combining Narrative Theory, Social Theory, and Existential Philosophy

Heidegger’s work on the human way of being-in-the-world shows how we are predisposed to see ourselves as settled and determined and consequently disposed to misunderstand what we are, but a shortcoming of Heidegger’s theory in relation to our project is that when we accept his analysis and thereby see beyond our everyday misunderstandings of our being, and consequently attempt to take up our responsibility as existential agents (responsibility for the totality of our actions over time), we require a narrative grasp of our lives as a whole and we require insights into the nature of narrative composition: the nature of emplotment. Heidegger does not provide a theory of narrative, in spite of his emphasis upon the importance of taking an authentic approach to time, for his lifelong concern was with the question of being.

Fortunately, Ricoeur’s theory of narrative does provide us with an understanding of how we may attempt to employ our capacity for mimesis to move from a prefigured, entangled sense of our identity and career, toward a coherent, configured sense of our identity and career. If we combine Ricoeur’s thinking about emplotment with Heidegger’s thinking about responsibility for our lives over time, then we have advanced upon what would be possible if we only approached identity and career in terms of each theorist in turn: each theorist taken separately rather than in combination with the other.

The combination that is being proposed here reflects not only our interest in identity and career and the demands of understanding its mutual contouring, but also reflects the underlying parallels between the thinking of Heidegger and Ricoeur. We saw in Chapter Five that Ricoeur uses the
concept of configuration in a strikingly similar manner to the way that
Husserl and Heidegger use the concept of concatenation. For Ricoeur, the
configurational act "consists of 'grasping together' the detailed actions of
… the story's incidents. It draws from this manifold of events the unity of
one temporal whole."

Although Heidegger did not emphasise narrative in *Being and Time*, the parallels between his account of 'existence' as a
temporal grasp on the one hand, and Ricoeur's account of configuration
and emplotment on the other hand, allow us to say that the unity of
significance in our experience - a unity that was a central concern for
Heidegger - comes primarily from the narrative form of our
understanding: prefigured narrative at the everyday practical level of
understanding as doing, and configured narrative at the reflective level of
understanding as telling.

We made the point earlier, that narrative configuration brings together the
incidents that we live through over time, just as melodic concatenation
brings together the notes that we hear over time. Because Heidegger has
shown how being and time are conjoined, and because Ricoeur has shown
how time and narrative are conjoined, we can now see how being and
narrative are conjoined.

The movement toward a configured identity is, however, a movement
which relies as much upon action as it does upon emplotment, and action
in the organisational and social world confronts us with issues of power,
which neither Ricoeur nor Hiedegger specifically addressed. Bourdieu’s
social theory is a theory of power. Bourdieu explains our predispositions

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to act in ways that reproduce social structures, and accounts for our capacity to successfully compete in particular fields of action. As we have seen, he provides that account in terms of the dynamic between habitus, field, and capital. We therefore add significantly to our conceptual framework if we combine Bourdieu’s theory of power with Heidegger’s theory of existence and Ricoeur’s theory of narrative. This combination enriches and extends upon Bourdieu’s account of power as an outcome of the dynamic within a social field between habitus, capital, and social agency. We can now see a social field as not only being a site of competition for capital and power, but also as simultaneously being an existential clearing in which how we should work and live constantly confronts us as an issue, and also as simultaneously being a tangle of narratives which operate within and upon narrative agents who seek to configure a coherent story of who they are.

Taken on its own, Bourdieu’s social theory does not account for the narratives which pervade every facet of our lives, nor does it guide us through the concept of authorship in relation to our existential responsibility for what we make of our lives. So we have obtained a dramatic improvement in our capacity to understand the mutual contouring of identity and career, as a result of combining the theories of Ricoeur, Bourdieu, and Heidegger because we have thereby brought being, narrative, and power into the same conceptual orbit, and have consequently reached a multi-dimensional understanding of our research topic.

An additional and equally significant feature of the combined theory is that it equips us to beyond Modernist, objectivist dualisms. We decided in Chapter Three that we would not work with the notion of the Modernist ‘self’ in this dissertation, because the self as conceived within the
rationalist, Cartesian tradition, is a site of dualities. In theory it could sit down and plan a career with a clear view of its ambitions, capacities, and motivations – complete with goals, objectives, strategies and tactics – for the self of Modernism is transparent to itself rather than being entangled, inscribed, and inextricably involved: it is separate from, but therefore divided from, its situation. The self of Modernism would have no difficulties or uncertainties about its identity, for its identity is thought to be distinct from and separate from time, and distinct from and separate from the organisational and narrative environment that surrounds it. The Modernist self could treat identity and career as two separate issues, even as two independent and opposed aspects of its life: “a time for my work and a time for myself” could be one of its guiding aphorisms.

The combination of narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy goes beyond that dualism because it emphasises the dynamic interrelationship between the subjective and the objective, between a person and his situation, and it presents us as always being involved, entangled, and inscribed. Unlike the confident, goal-directed subject of Modernism, who is free to author his life and career without restraint or uncertainty, the people whose lives and careers were explored in this dissertation, were constrained by confusions, predispositions, and recurring uncertainties. The combined theory embraces the interpenetration of the subjective and the objective in each of the three aspects of identity that we have argued are necessary to an understanding of identity and career as mutually contouring and, as a result, we reach an understanding which illuminates more of the complexity of, and more of the abiding difficulties of, identity and career than is possible when identity and career are approached through the empiricist and individualist assumptions of Modernism.
At this stage we have discussed each of our key theorists in relation to our topic, and we have explained their combination. This is a combination which can be taken further however, for at the moment the combination unites the three dimensions of identity in a mutually reinforcing way, but does not sufficiently place them within a tightly and coherently integrated conception. The next chapter will combine the dimensions of identity in a fashion that not only brings them together but also integrates them, and career will turn out to be the key to reaching that final point.
Chapter Six: Overview of the Conceptual Framework

The Combination of Narrative Theory, Social Theory, and Existential Philosophy

The major conceptual advance provided by this dissertation lies in its deepening and broadening of how we are able to think about identity and its contouring of and by career, as a result of combining key insights and concepts from Ricoeur, Bourdieu, and Heidegger. We have highlighted and foregrounded narrative, social agency, and being, as three fundamentally significant aspects of identity, and we have combined those three aspects because each reinforces the other two, but we are yet to fully integrate those three aspects of our combined theory. The potential for those three aspects to be unified, integrated, and realised lies in career. Through career as an enactment of how the world makes sense to us as a narrative, we are able to pursue a coherence of understanding and action that makes sense of who we are and who we have been and who we want to become, as we exercise social agency within organisational contexts, in ways that embody what we stand for and which thereby bring existential definition to our identity. Career presents us with a major opportunity to bring identity into being over time, through narratively significant social action.

This point captures the conceptual advance of the dissertation. Who we are, in terms of identity rather than self, is a matter of what we claim to stand for – and our claims about what we stand for have substance (our identity becomes more than a set of verbal claims), when our actions over
time embody the principles, concerns, issues, and values that preoccupy us because they matter to us. That embodiment will occur either as a result of a pre-reflective and non-deliberative understanding of what matters to us being reflected in our actions (leaking into what we do), or as a result of a critically aware working out of what we want to make of ourselves and why (an awareness that is then deliberately and consistently used to guide career-related decisions and actions) - or as some combination of those two extremes.

Our focus upon identity rather than self has been motivated by our objection to the notion of the self as bounded and unmediated, as being set against a social background rather than as being contoured by and mediated by, and co-constitutive with, a social background. There have been two points of departure from Modernist thinking about the self, as compared to postmodernist thinking about identity, in this dissertation. Firstly, whereas the Modernist would not look for echoes or inscriptions of social location in the individual, the account that we have rendered here, in terms of habitus and Dasein, makes the individual without social inscription, an impossibility, and fills individual consciousness with social and historical traces. Whereas a Modernist would agree with Holland that vocational choices are expressive acts that reflect “the person’s motivation, knowledge, personality, and ability”,329 on our account, vocational choices also and primarily reflect socially inscribed dispositions and apprehensions.

Secondly, whereas the Modernist would urge a new start, a leaving behind, or a rising above the misfortunes of personal history and the signs

of early social location, the account that we have provided here, in terms of *Unheimlichkeit* and authentic historiography, urges the individual to work toward an identity which includes and refigures the past as part of a narrative that constitutes a refigured, storied identity, rather than remaining in the world as a prefigured, undifferentiated identity.

So the major objective of career counselling should not be construed as helping people to choose an occupation or profession based upon who they seem to be psychologically and essentially, but instead should be reconstrued and focused upon the potential that career has to bring our narrative understandings, our social agency, and our existential responsibility into a nexus of opportunity for building an identity. On this way of thinking, career counselling (and our career-related decisions and actions) should have as its central concern, the narrative, social, and existential nature of identity and its potential for expression and construction through career.

To explain and elaborate this position further, nine of the many concepts that we have discussed in combining Ricoeur, Bourdieu, and Heidegger, will now be arranged into a matrix with rows and columns. As we provide headings for the columns, we categorise the dimensions of identity, and as we provide headings for the rows, we integrate and merge the dimensions of identity through their potential for realisation within the context of career. Building the matrix also encourages us to reflect upon the similarities that justify placing concepts in one column rather than another, and through that process we take our understanding of identity, in terms of the combined theory, still further. In summary then, this matrix-building process is illuminative because it interrelates the component dimensions of identity that we have been discussing.
sequentially up to this point, and because it displays relationships
between the concepts that had not been emphasised until this author
combined Ricouer, Bourdieu, and Heidegger, within the unifying,
linking, and integrating context of career.

![Figure One: Dimensions of Identity Related to Career-relevant Actions
and to Career-relevant Awareness](chart)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Social Agency</th>
<th>Being-in-the-world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncritical Career Awareness</td>
<td>Prefiguration and <em>Verstricktsein</em></td>
<td>Habitus</td>
<td><em>Dasein</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Actions</td>
<td>Configuration and Authoring</td>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Authentic Temporalising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Career Awareness</td>
<td>Refiguration and Re-authoring</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td><em>Unheimlichkeit</em> and <em>Augenblick</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before we begin reading this matrix, it must be stressed that Ricoeur, Bourdieu, and Heidegger, did not write with any combinatory scheme such as this in mind, and the matrix consequently involves a considerable stretching and forcing of their concepts. It should therefore be approached not as a claim to accurately represent correspondences or equivalences between these concepts, but as a way into thinking more deeply about our interest in identity and career as mutually contouring.
Central to the meaning of this matrix is the issue of how individuals make career-related decisions. The matrix design accords with the author's view that our career actions can be informed by a critical awareness of what we want to achieve and who we want to become - or by an uncritical awareness of those same issues, or by some intermediate approach which contains elements of both those possibilities. There is no intention here to propose an oppositional dualism between uncritical career awareness and critical career awareness. It is quite possible, indeed it is probably usual, for someone to be critically aware of some aspects of their career and identity at the same time that they are uncritically aware of some other aspects. In other words, we can be both – rather than being either one or the other – and we can be both because consciousness is simultaneously pre-reflective and reflective. The difference between an uncritical and a critical awareness can be seen in terms of the three dimensions of identity, and exploring that difference will enable us to see how the integration of narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy enriches each of their key concepts, and thereby enriches our understanding of identity and career as mutual contouring.

Firstly, in terms of narrative identity, an uncritical awareness of who we are and who we want to become, is a prefigured awareness - a narrative that could be told if we took the trouble to configure it: to articulate its plot and thereby to explicitly relate events as they occur over time in terms of their relationship to each other and to the unfolding direction of our life's course. As Ricoeur points out, however, our prefigured stories are not easily untangled: configuration is an achievement, not a given, and much of the time we operate from within a dimly-lit, prefigured sense of our own narrative. This is a sense of having a life and a career without being able to explain how they contour each other and without being able
to clarify what we want to do, in terms of how our future could gain meaning and purpose from our past.

A refigured awareness contrasts with the shadowy, prefigured sense of one's narrative, in that it is an awareness which has configured the events of our lives and careers in such a way that their meaning is accessible to our understanding. Refigured awareness of narrative identity depends upon an untangling of the untold stories that we have been living, which amounts to the task of configuring a sense of who we are from that sometimes confusingly prefigured material. Most importantly, this refigured awareness may require criticism of and contestation of earlier notions of who we are, and may therefore sometimes amount to a re-authoring of identity. As a consequence, the critical awareness that underlies refiguration and re-authoring, includes the capacity to forge new narratives and therefore new ways of acting in the world and new ways of managing one's career.

In terms of social identity and social agency, an uncritical awareness of what we want to achieve and who we want to become through the lived narrative of our career, corresponds with the socially inscribed sense of what matters, a sense that is part of the conditioning and predispositions of a habitus. That sense is captured by Bourdieu in his concept of Illusio, and it is a sense of being in no doubt that the stakes of a particular social game are worth struggling to win, without necessarily being able to articulate why those stakes matter so much. Career actions occur within a social or organisational field of endeavour, to which people with appropriate habitus are drawn. Each field has its particular rules of play, and our pre-reflective actions within that field are informed by Illusio and by the embodied feel for the game that results
from a habitus. Sociogenesis produces not only the capacity for pre-reflective social action, but also a sense of identity which reflects our earlier placements in social space and which simultaneously constrains our sense of what it is desirable or possible to do in our lives and careers. Nevertheless, it is possible to question those inscribed constraints, and to think and act as a reflective, critically aware social agent. When we do so, we act from a conscious awareness of the rules of play and from a conscious decision about what matters to us in terms of our identity, as we work toward career-related success (which is partly defined in terms of who we want to become).

Success within a social field requires the acquisition of and the employment of capital. The more capital (economic, cultural, social, or symbolic) one has within a given social universe, the more power one has within that field, and therefore the more capacity to exercise control over one's own future. Bourdieu does not relate his concept of capital to either the category of uncritical awareness or the category of critical awareness, but the argument being put just now attains more structural coherence if we adopt the position that those who take a critically aware approach to the exercise of their social agency, are likely to be more consciously aware of the sorts of capital that are available to players within a particular field, and to use that awareness to their advantage.

We gain conceptually by combining Bourdieu with Ricoeur, because we are thereby better able to recognise that our prefigured narratives are at least partly an outcome of sociogenesis, but also that the Illusio of a habitus is infused with the narratives that are told as part of the family cultures, organisational cultures, and larger cultures that we inhabit. So we come to see that it is not only personal narratives that may need to be
untangled if we are to take a more consciously authorial approach to our own lives and careers - it is also social narratives and a socially inscribed set of convictions about what is important, that may need to be recognised and reconsidered.

Prefiguration and *Illusio* are concepts that resonate with the feeling of being-at-home-in-the-world that Heidegger captured in his account of everyday human existence as Dasein. This is a feeling that comes when we are so engaged in a task that we are absorbed by it, so involved that we do not question what we are doing - and Heidegger maintains that this is our primordial, our most fundamental, feeling or way of being. Career actions that are taken when we take our lives for granted, are actions that reflect our falling into the social conventions of what a life and career can be, rather than reflecting a resolute taking of responsibility for who to become. By combining Heidegger with Bourdieu and Ricouer, we are able to see that the issue of whether our career actions are informed by a critical or an uncritical awareness, is an issue not only of narrative coherence and social agency, but is also an issue of being: are we to live our lives by unthinkingly taking what we have been given as appropriate career options by our society, or are we to become what we ourselves have consciously chosen?

It is through the experiences of *Unheimlichkeit* and *Augenblick* that we can become critically aware of those issues that are central to our existential identity. When we lose the feeling of being at home in our world, when the significance of being an academic or a bank clerk falls away from us, we recognise that we cannot have a meaningful life simply by taking over and acting upon the concerns provided by society. The refigured understanding of our lives (which is an *Augenblick*) opens our
career-related decisions and actions to changes in circumstances and to the acknowledgment that what matters to our being, is not just the specific moments that make up our lives, but the totality of those moments. This existential form of critical awareness therefore returns us to the importance of narrative understanding which takes the form of authorship: responsibility for who one becomes over time, through one's career-related decisions and actions. Careers which are 'managed' in this fashion, are careers which reflect the authentic temporalising that is central to Heidegger's account of existential identity.

We can say then, that the opportunity for enhancing an identity, which is available through career, is dependant upon our awareness of:

- our existence as being-in-becoming,
- the centrality of, and the efficacy of, our socially inscribed dispositions,
- the themes and preoccupations that can be found in our story thus far,
- mimesis as a creative act which enables us to reach for a sense of concordance rather than discordance in our lives and careers as narrative,
- the cultural and historical figures from whose example we can choose to fashion our own story.

**Career, Identity, and Narrative Connectedness**

The foregoing critical elements enable us to think of career management as the fashioning of identity over time, through enacted narrative, and if we think of the plot for a career narrative as that of a quest (as was suggested in Chapter Two), then we are in a position to understand career management issues through that metaphor and its ways of focusing attention. In terms of the combined theory that we have been developing
in earlier chapters, the quest of a career is to arrive at narrative connectedness by working on the materialisation of career-related plans and projects which reflect our deepest and most abiding preoccupations, and thereby to manifest and achieve an identity which is configured in the light of an ongoing process of mimesis. This is a narrative connectedness which takes up personal themes and historical trajectories and unfinished stories, and fashions a coherent and focused career as story from that material.

Career stories which are in progress are not only told but also enacted. A key point from our earlier observations about the conjunction of narrative and social agency, is that the authoring of a career involves the configuring of events into plot, and the actions which bring that plot to fruition in the world. Action produces reaction, so when - as narrative agents - we engage in an action-based authoring or a re-authoring of our identity or our career, we are likely to encounter not only issues of worth and direction, but also issues of power and politics, and the difficulties associated with obstacles and resistance.

Consequently, this author’s position on the nexus of power, action, and the authoring of identity through career management, is that reflexive social agency and the power that it makes possible, is essential for the work of narrative agency and for the authoring work associated with career management. The need for various forms of capital and power holds because without expression – as we saw in Chapter Three - agency fails to register as part of the experience of identity. If narrative agency is to be experienced, it must operate in conjunction with social agency and social agency, if it is to support personally storied identity, must operate in conjunction with narrative agency. When identity is not supported by
agency, we are a lesser version of what we could be and our career is less likely to move in the direction of our attempts at authoring or re-authoring.

**Re-authoring and Re-reading**

This position requires a brief extension, before we move on to list the hermeneutic issues that follow from it. This will be an extension which elaborates upon the idea of re-authoring as pertinent to career management. The literature of narrative therapy centres on the concept of re-authoring,\(^\text{330}\) which is about straightening the interpretation of, and the future trajectory of, a story in which the patient or client as protagonist has previously been scripted with a negative identity. In relation to career management, re-authoring is a powerful and useful idea, because career management can require a re-authoring of who we are becoming, and a shift toward a more preferred identity. There cannot be re-authoring however, unless there is also re-reading, for how a person reads their story so far, is crucial to their sense of what seems possible for them in the story to come,\(^\text{331}\) and is therefore crucial to their capacity for narrative agency, as well as crucial to any re-authoring movement toward a preferred sense of identity or a preferred career trajectory.


\(^{331}\) Hillman, J. 1983 op. cit.
The narrative therapy literature also highlights issues of reading, and of relational politics, and emphasises the need for a contestation of dysfunctional identities. White’s approach to narrative therapy, for instance, emphasises the need to contest unhelpful identities and to contest the narrative understandings which support those identities.\(^\text{332}\)

Contestation, as the political act of a narrative agent, influences the social and personal processes of authoring, and the processes of being authored, and the processes involved in reappropriating control over identity and career. It is not only with our workplace colleagues that contestation can be necessary, it is also the ways in which we personally read our lives and careers as story that can be in need of contestation.

Stories are resistant to single interpretations, and yet it is the ‘one right view of what has happened to me’ approach to reading their own stories, which troubled people are perhaps most troubled by,\(^\text{333}\) and that is the style of reading which is most likely to leave people stuck in a career trajectory to which they are not suited. This is an approach to reading which denies the nature of interpretation as perspectival and as informed by context, and as influenced by the interests of those who shaped the context.\(^\text{334}\)

We make single-minded interpretations when we insist upon a literal reading of ‘the facts of my life’ rather than being able to read our life and career through an understanding which recognises mimesis as a creative act of the imagination. Emplotment, as Ricoeur pointed out, is creative and requires an imaginative configuring of events in such a way that their meaning appears and is accessible to understanding. We also need to note that imagination brings more than creativity to mimesis: the

\(^{332}\) White, M. 1995 op. cit.
\(^{333}\) Hillman, J. 1983 op. cit.
imagination’s prefiguring and refiguring of life and career is mediated by language, culture, history, social location, and the hidden interests of others.

Given all that has been said in earlier chapters about the social, cultural, and historical – in other words, the contextual - nature of our being-in-the-world, an awareness of the impact of context on how we think, imagine, and read, should loosen the hold that literalism can have on how we read our lives, and thereby improve our capacity for narrative agency and career management. Recent work in literary criticism has introduced the notion that being trained to read is not so much about learning how to uncover the real intentions of the author, but instead is about learning how to read the context in which the literature was produced and the context in which the reader is placed. “Fiction has a context: any exploration of fiction, indeed any interpretation of fiction, should somehow include a recognition of that context, and perhaps ultimately a critique of that context.”335 In terms of a new book, for instance, even the publicity surrounding its release, and the style of the cover, constitutes a context that can persuade the reader to take the book in a certain way by setting up positive expectations. In terms of a person’s career, his social location, habitus, personal preoccupations, and sense of identity all constitute parts of a context that can lead him to read his career as positive and open or as negative and closed, and therefore to make career management decisions on the basis of that reading.

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Just as literary criticism “should be reflexive, should throw light upon the reading context as well as the text itself,”\textsuperscript{336} so too narrative agents should be reflexive, should read the contexts which have influenced their style of reading their own stories. This point returns us to \textit{The Road From Coorain} as an illustrative example. A key turning-point for Conway occurred when she recognised the social strictures that had been informing the way in which she read her situation with, and her responsibilities to, her mother. She was able to decide to leave her mother and work in the United States, in spite of her mother’s powerful need for her, only after she realised that her culture-as-context had inscribed a stoic sense of duty that she now rejected. “Now I realized, in what amounted to a conversion experience, that I was going to violate the code of my forefathers. I wouldn’t tell myself anymore I was tough enough for any hazard, could endure anything because, as my father’s old friend has said, “she was born in the right country.” I wasn’t nearly tough enough to stay around in an emotional climate more desolate than any drought I’d ever seen.”\textsuperscript{337} Gaining some distance from her culture is what enabled Conway to take a critical stance toward it, and to then interpret her situation differently.

Narrative agents are empowered when they learn how to move beyond the current interpretation of their life and career, by examining the social settings and metanarratives which provided context for the initial readings of their lives. Critical examination and questioning of context should therefore precede a re-reading of our individual lives and careers as stories. This final point has implications for the analysis of the research

\textsuperscript{336} ibid. p173.
\textsuperscript{337} Conway, J. K. 1993 op. cit. p232.
interviews, as does the overall conceptual framework that has been
developed. It is the task of the next section in this chapter to spell out
those implications and to list the key concepts that will be employed in
that analysis.

**Concepts and Sensemaking**

This account of how sensemaking can occur through the application of
theoretical concepts to particular cases, will foreshadow some of the key
issues discussed in Chapter Seven: *Methodology and Method*, because
those issues cannot be held back. They are necessary to the link that
needs to be made here between theory and its application, if we are to
draw illuminative conclusions from the three theories that have thus far
been explored and brought together in relation to our topic of career
management.

The combined theory provides us with a set of concepts that, taken in
combination, serve as ways of seeing into – ways of understanding – the
mutual contouring of identity and career. Those concepts will be revisited
in the next section, and they will be recalled and referred back to when, in
Part Three, we are seeking to understand the contributors’ accounts of
their lives and careers in terms of narrative theory, social theory, and
existential theory. The combined theory serves as a new horizon of
understanding in that “to acquire a horizon means that one learns to look
beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to
see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion.”338 The
combination of narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory,
when applied to the mutual contouring of identity and career, enables us

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to see that contouring within the larger whole which is constituted by the central concepts of those theories, and makes a major contribution to theory for purposes of identity and career.

Analytical understanding occurs when we apply theories and their concepts to examples: it is in those moments that we demonstrate the type of understandings that are made possible as a result of the framework of concepts that has been put together here, and that demonstration is a central goal of this research project. Gadamer has explained that there is no understanding without application. “A law does not exist in order to be understood historically, but to be concretized in its legal validity by being interpreted. Similarly, the gospel does not exist in order to be understood as merely literal historical documents but to be taken in such a way that it exercises its saving effect. This implies that the text, whether law or gospel, if it is to be understood properly – i.e. according to the claim it makes – must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application.”  

Similarly, narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory do not exist as merely interesting ideas. If those theories are to be understood according to the claims they make for illumination, then they must be applied in illuminating ways to the concrete situations of individual people.

It is through the consideration of questions that we are led to applications and understandings. Weik has written extensively about sensemaking in organisations, and observes that when we make sense of a theory, or of a career, or of an experience, we do not do so by singling out the meaning

339 ibid. p309.
which is ‘attached’ to the theory or career or experience. “Instead, the meaning is in the kind of attention that is directed to this experience.”  

The kind of attention we bring to a theory, career, or experience is directed by the questions we choose to consider about the object of our attention.

Gadamer spells out the connections between sensemaking, direction, and questions, in the following formulation: “the essence of the question is to have sense. Now sense involves a kind of direction. Hence the sense of the question is the only direction from which the answer can be given if it is to make sense. A question places what is questioned in a particular perspective. When a question arises, it breaks open the being of the object, as it were.” So the questions that will be asked in Part Three bring the theories that we have been exploring, and the mutual contouring of identity and career, into the open perspective of indeterminacy, an indeterminacy which leads back to meaning and understanding when we think not only of question but also of answer.

Gadamer tells us that the sense of an answer lies in the direction required by the sense of the question to which it serves as answer. We can put his observations into a relation with our concerns about identity and career by recalling that both of those objects of inquiry can be understood as text. Identity is constituted by the narrative text of life as story, and career is constituted by the narrative text of actions and accidents that have led to where the narrator is today. To understand these texts and their mutual contouring is our challenge, and Gadamer argues that “We can

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understand a text only when we have understood the question to which it is an answer.”342 In the case of career, part of our argument has been that the text of a career is an answer to the questions of identity, and in the case of identity, part of our argument has been that the text of an identity is an answer to the existential, social, and narrative questions of location, history, and direction.

Here then, is the importance of questions which apply theory to practice. They take us behind and beyond what is said in the research interviews, and they take us behind and beyond what is said by the contributors’ narratives of life and career. The meaning of particular answers to interview questions, and the meaning of the interviews taken as a whole, will be shown to exceed what is said by the contributors. It is through the work of asking questions that we open up the possibilities of meaning and thereby break open the being of the interviews. To seriously pursue an understanding of the mutual contouring of identity and career it is essential that we go beyond what has been said by the contributors because, as Gadamer puts it, “understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else’s meaning.”343 In our case, understanding will be reached through an application of theory and through a questioning of the interview material as text, particularly by asking what personal and social questions the contributors’ lives and careers as narratives are answering.

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342 ibid. p370.
343 ibid. p375.
**Key Concepts Revisited**

Concepts that have been discussed in earlier chapters will now be restated\textsuperscript{344} and in that sense defined. This review of concepts will show how closely we have interwoven the three theories in the conceptual framework that has been developed, and how that interweaving has strengthened the illuminative power of each concept, given its part in the larger horizon of understanding which is constituted by that framework. The main purpose however, is to pause in the flow of argument and provide a review which consolidates some of the points that have been made earlier, before we move on to new territory.

1. **Emplotment**: when we place life and career events into a meaningful constellation, we call upon the human capacity for emplotment. Plots are implicit in our everyday understandings of action, and exist in either prefigured or configured form. Once configured, plots can be refigured and thereby the events which they cover, come to be re-understood. The human capacity for emplotment is the capacity to create concordance out of discordance – to make sense of our identities and careers - through a mimetic composition of events over time. The act of mimesis is not a direct copying from the world, but is instead an act of the imagination which makes the intelligible spring from the accidental.

The concept of emplotment raises a host of issues, including the following ways of wondering about the edited case studies:

\textsuperscript{344} This will involve some repetition of comments already made when these concepts were first discussed, but rather than seeing that repetition as burdensome or unnecessary, it can be seen as an exercise in helpful, stylistic redundancy – redundancy which is aimed at consolidation and clarity.
What emplotment decisions might this contributor have made about the genre of his or her narrative, and what influence might those decisions have had upon the choice of events from this person’s life and career that he has selected as significant in his accounts of who he is and what he has done?

What reasons may this contributor have had for selecting this particular view of what his life and career have come to – reasons which perhaps reflect his already established sense of identity - given that the choice of ending becomes the organising principle of the narrative?

What type of life and career events may have been left out or played down as a result of beginning from that ending: events which constitute what White\textsuperscript{345} calls ‘unique outcomes’ or ‘exceptions to the dominant story’ that only become visible when a person critically reflects upon his history, and which are essential to the rendering of alternative stories?

As part of this person’s prefigured sense of identity and career, what decisions have been made about causes and effects: decisions which perhaps spring more from mimesis as a creative act of the imagination than from the events themselves?

Given that mimesis is mediated by language and culture\textsuperscript{346} (which provides the range of acceptable discourse), what can be established

\textsuperscript{345} White, M. 1995 op. cit. p26.

\textsuperscript{346} Gergen, K. J. 1998, “Narrative Identity and Historical Consciousness : a Social Constructionist Account”, http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/kgergen1/text3.html, 30/8/99: “The sense of a self possessing the faculty for rational and objective deliberation, for example, can importantly be traced to the texts (and conversations) of 17th and 18th Century educated society. An appreciation of the individual’s capacity for genius and inspiration, the recognition of deep passions, and the suspicion of deep disturbance were made possible largely by the discourses (both arts and letters) of the 19th Century Romanticists. Further, these concepts of the person – as rational, passionate, inspired, and the like – are embedded within broader narratives. They are not simply names for existing entities, but discursive creations requiring extensive narration.” p10.
about the repertoire of storylines and the range of vocabulary available to this person when he came to the prefigured understanding of his life and career which underlies his current way of authoring and telling his identity and career?

2. **Identity**: an identity is an answer to narrative, social, and existential concerns about location and orientation, concerns which arise from being-in-the-world. We are concerned about finding, understanding, and asserting a location in familial and social space. We also seek a location in time – not abstract mathematical time, but lived time, lifetime. We want to know and understand where we are in our life. Just as importantly, we want to decide and to prove where we stand on a range of value issues, and to have a firm sense of where we stand in terms of what matters to us: to be clear about our motivational bearings.

In terms of narrative theory, we want to be able to tell our story: to locate who we are in the sense of what we have done, enjoyed, endured, been witness to or participant in, and in the sense of where we seem to be going. Ideally, that story or collection of stories will have a sense of coherence, and of verisimilitude, and will render the meaning of our lived experiences in a way that allows us to comprehend if not transcend our losses and disappointments.

Narrative is central to this account of identity because the elements of narrative as prefigured in culture, society, and family, all work to pattern our imaginations as we live by and within the narrative sense of being which is made possible by storied identity.
Identity then, is storied and is an achievement rather than a given. Identities are achieved not only narratively but also politically – they are profoundly political, both in their origins and in their implications. Our narrative constructions – our authorings – which shape our identity, are reflections of the political struggles and the discourse and the textuality in which we are placed and within which we must accept, or attempt to re-fashion, our identity.

Given these thoughts about identity, we could wonder about the interviewees' attempts to achieve identity, in terms of the following questions:

- What does this person’s narrative account of life and career say about their identity in terms of their stand on values, and in terms of their motivational bearings?

- What does this person’s narrative account of life and career say about their identity in terms of where they have been and where they seem to be going (their storied location)?

- In what ways are these accounts of identity coherent and in what ways do they fall short of coherence?

- How do these narrative accounts make sense of the contributor’s losses and disappointments?

- What issues of power - what political issues - have been confronted by this person in the authoring of their identity over time?
3. Habitus: Bourdieu argues that the social world imposes its presence upon us through the conditioning of embodied dispositions that he calls ‘habitus’. It is these conditionings which enable the structured improvisation that Bourdieu refers to as a ‘feel for the game’. In terms of the lives that my contributors had within their families of origin, for instance, we will see from their narratives that there has been an appropriation of what was said by significant others and that as children my contributors read the circumstances and social location of their family and that reading, in its turn, gave rise to a variety of lasting dispositions which can be found in their particular style of solving life-problems. Amongst those dispositions were appreciations of what matters in life and perceptions about feasible career possibilities.

A further aspect of habitus is that it functions “below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will.”347 So a habitus is seen and felt in its effects rather than being available and transparent. There are nevertheless times when a habitus does at least come partly into focus, even if it may never be fully available to consciousness. These occasions when we catch a glimpse of a habitus are to do with our narratively configured understandings. When we call upon our capacity for hermeneutic composition - composition which displays the relational significance of our actions over time, and the contextual elements from which those actions draw their sense – we can catch glimpses of our habitus.

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347 Bourdieu, P. 1989 op. cit. p466.
In summary then, a habitus orients us to a range of tastes, directions, and preferences – it captures us by engendering preoccupations - and in doing so it produces a sense of identity which reflects our earlier placements in social space and simultaneously constrains our sense of what it is desirable or possible to do in our lives and careers to come, which in turn feeds back to the sense of who we are. Habitus, as a socially conditioned orientation, therefore needs to be recognised as part of who we are and as a major ‘author’ of where we are going.

The concept of habitus provides us with at least four possible ways of questioning the research material:

- What congruence seems to hold between the unspoken rules of the ‘game’ in which this person’s career is being played out, and his ‘feel for the game’ (his habitus)?
- In what social location did this person become a social agent, and what reflections of that location are to be found in his tastes, his preoccupations, his sense of what is possible in terms of his career, his sense of what counts in terms of the career ‘game’ that he is ‘playing’, and his sense of identity?
- In what ways have the contributors been predisposed by family circumstances to solve career problems in particular styles: styles which can be accounted for by employing the concept of habitus?
- Have there been moments of rupture in this person’s life and career, moments when he had access to an understanding of his habitus, rather than being always immersed in his habitus; and if so, what has enabled that access?
4. **Capital**: The concept of capital is used by Bourdieu in an enlarged sense. He moves past the notion of capital as money, real estate, industrial plant and equipment, to include all actually usable resources and powers within the various social fields. The true artist, for instance, operates within a symbolic rather than an economic field, and therefore has a greater concern for symbolic than for economic capital. Bourdieu describes and discusses four kinds of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic.

Capital matters to career. The more capital one has within any given social universe, the more power one has within that field, so the notion of capital “entails the capacity to exercise control over one’s own future and that of others.”¹⁴⁸ This relationship between economic and symbolic capital, and power over one’s destiny, is central to social agency.

The connections between capital and narrative run deep. To possess the symbolic capital associated with a social role such as priest or manager or academic, is to be supported by narratives which make a particular sense of, and ‘argue for’ a particular set of powers being appropriate to, that position. One source of career power for individuals therefore, is to have an awareness and understanding of those narratives which dominate the field in which they are working, and the capacity to call upon them for support – perhaps even, on some occasions, to attempt a re-authoring of those narratives.

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Bearing the concept of capital in mind, we could ask:

- Which types of capital have these contributors had access to, and how have they used it?
- What have these contributors done during the course of their careers to enlarge their stock of capital?
- What narrative understandings of themselves and their situations have my contributors been able to employ as capital in their career quests?

5. **Field:** Social theory shows us that individual consciousness is always mediated by context: by social and historical traces which structure experience. These social and historical traces are embedded in the discursive practices of our thought and talk and thereby exist as context which can unnoticeably shape our being in ways that are sometimes helpful, sometimes not. Social location, inscribed as dispositions to feel and act and apprehend in particular ways, is far more than context as background – it is context as constitutional ground of personal and communal identity.

Dispositions to feel, act, and apprehend the world in particular ways are, according to Bourdieu, inscribed in a fashion that provides us with a feel for the social games that are played in particular fields of social action. Each field operates according to its own laws of social logic, and just as a habitus predisposes a person to choose the field in which he is suited, so too a field will draw a person with the appropriate habitus – and associated *Illusio* – to play the games of that field. The concept of field prompts us to question how the research collaborators are motivated by the issues and stakes which are at the essence of the field in which their careers are being played out. We are also
prompted to wonder whether they have a feel for the game which is
played within that field or instead have to struggle in comparison to
those who find it easy to operate according to the fundamental laws of
that field, simply because their earlier social location has provided
them with dispositions and appreciations that reflect its objective
structure.

6. **Social Agency**: The identity of a social agent is the identity of
someone who is empowered to act with and against others by social
structures. This definition has been taken from Sewell,\(^{349}\) whose
theory of structure and transformation was referred to in Chapter Four.
At the essence of Sewell’s position is a view of social structure which
shows how it empowers social agents in the sense that they are
provided with the ability (in Bourdieu’s terms, the ‘practical logic’) to
apply the schemas which inform social life, and to employ resources
(in Bourdieu’s terms, the ‘capital’) in ways that give them some
degree of control over the social relations in which they are enmeshed.
Social agency is therefore necessary to the successful management of
career.

Given this understanding of social agency, we could ask:

- In what ways do the stories of contributors suggest control over the
  social relations in which they have been enmeshed; and in what ways
do those stories suggest gaps in their control?
- What indications are there that these contributors have exercised
  social agency in the management of their careers and in the authoring
  of their identities?

\(^{349}\) Sewell, W. H. Jr. op. cit.
7. **Narrative agency**: a narrative agent is someone who consciously and responsibly exercises his capacity to work toward authoring his life and career as coherent stories.

We have added analytical power to the concept of narrative agency by thinking about its features in terms of the combination of narrative, social, and existential theory. From the perspective of the narrative metaphor, agency and identity are correlated with authorship, and from the social theory perspective, agency and identity are correlated with the power that comes from the use of capital that different locations in social space make available to members of society. Identity therefore depends upon narrative agency and social agency: a narrative agency which unravels and perhaps reconfigures the untold stories in which we are tangled, and a social agency that is aware of, and able to critically evaluate, its sources: a social agency which recognises its own nature.

If we think of the research collaborators as narrative agents then, we could ask:

- What conscious attempts have been made by this contributor to bring coherence to his life and career as story?
- On what sort of occasions has this contributor felt and responded to his responsibility for constructing a coherent life and career?
- As a narrative agent, what awareness does this contributor seem to have of the themes, preoccupations, and socially inscribed dispositions, which are manifest in his life and career?
8. **Authentic Historiography**: For Heidegger, “To be authentic is to find guidance for the conduct of one’s own life in terms of the lives of models or exemplars drawn from history.”\(^{350}\) To accept our historical embeddedness, then, is to recognise that we rely on the communal past as a source of ways for articulating our lives in a coherent, integrated fashion. Heidegger drew upon Nietzsche’s three distinct kinds of historiography: monumental historiography, antiquarian historiography, and critical historiography, for his account of authentic historiography.

In terms of authentic historiography, we may wonder:

- How has this contributor to the research referred to his or her personal or communal past for ideas about what is possible?
- How has this person demonstrated a reverence for his or her personal or communal past in the storying of his or her life and career?
- In what ways has this person adopted a critical stance toward conventional aspects of life and career, based upon their understanding of their personal or communal past?

9. **Preoccupation**: the basis for our authoring of identity and career as narrative agents, lies partly in our ongoing, sometimes unrecognised (and therefore needing to be read and understood in terms of how they are manifest in our actions over time), personal preoccupations: the interests or worries or fascinations around which our attention and motivation circle again and again. Seen from this perspective, a career is not so much an occupation as it is an acting out of our

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preoccupations. We could say that our preoccupations turn out to be what our story of life and career is about.

Our preoccupations, often returned to and appearing as repetitions or themes in our life, are arguably the driving force in our stories. Preoccupations, along with critical reflection and awareness, are what make meaningful, personal storytelling of identity possible. Without returning often to what preoccupies us, the significance of events in our life as narrative is diminished; their meaning is less clear to us, less apparent. So it would make sense to approach the stories of the two research collaborators, or indeed anyone’s stories, by asking:

- What preoccupations have been the driving force in the lives and careers of the research contributors—preoccupations which led to the construction of identities that took their own paths rather than the path of social trajectory?
- For each of these contributors, what seem to have been the key turning-point moments of choice in the construction of personally storied identities?
- For each contributor, what do their preoccupations suggest in terms of the idea that our preoccupations tell us what our lives and careers as stories are about?

**Identity: Entangled, Inscribed, and Involved**

Having discussed the combined theory in terms of its integration of narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy, and having reviewed its central concepts, we can make one final comment on its value. Above all, the combined theory provides us with a view of ourselves that places our identity inextricably within social,
organisational, and personal situations. We are always understanding ourselves from within a social situation and through the linguistic and narrative resources of that situation. As a consequence, the responsibility for choosing one’s career can be – given Heidegger’s account of *Dasein* – misunderstood or overlooked due to our tendency to unthinkingly understand ourselves in terms of the social norms that surround us. Heidegger provides an explanation of how the experience of *Unheimlichkeit* can shake us out of such ‘everyday’ complacency, but he does not suggest that the result can be a life that has entirely extricated itself from the social world and its resources, for such a life would have to rely only upon the supposed resources of the self.

Similarly, the combined theory directs our attention to the task of configuring a coherent narrative from the untold, prefigured stories in which we are entangled. Although Ricoeur discusses how concord can come from discord through the mimetic act of emplotment, he does not suggest that we can – or that we should try to – reach a point where entanglement in lived but untold stories is no longer a facet of who we are. We cannot avoid being a part of other people’s stories and we cannot avoid the unexpected contingencies which so often complicate, or call for a recasting of, the personal narratives of life and career that we have been trying to author.

A further feature of the combined theory, a feature that falls within the theme of interpenetration and co-constitution that we have been highlighting, is that when Bourdieu discusses the predispositions of habitus, although he remarks that awareness of the social forces that shape us is a liberating awareness, he does not suggest that we can ever become separate from or no longer infused with a habitus. The fields of
action in which we have a ‘feel for the game’ will continue to attract us, just as the various types of capital that we and others possess will continue to be employed as fundamental to the exercise of our, and of their, social agency.

The combined theory therefore encompasses the complexities and difficulties of the relationship between identity and career, because the combined theory recognises and articulates the manner in which we struggle to be free of – and yet are always dependant upon – our narrative entanglements, our social and historical traces, and our falling into the world of everyday practices and settled understandings. We are irresolvably problematic, so the contouring relationship between our identities and our careers is irresolvably problematic, and it is the combined theory that enables us to see and at least partly understand the complexities of that mutual contouring.

This chapter has brought together the three theories and associated concepts that have predominated in our development of a theoretically informed horizon of understanding. Rather than a single, easily stated conclusion, we have arrived at a point of view which can only be explained in ways which acknowledge its complexity. Having reached this stage, we are now ready to further our understanding of narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory (as they have been explained and discussed in Part One) – and to deepen our understanding of identity and career as mutually contouring - by applying theory to example in Part Two. Firstly, however, we need to consider the methodological implications of our theory building.
Chapter Seven: Methodology and Research Design

Methodology is defined by Minichiello et al as “a rule-governed procedure aiding or guaranteeing scientific discovery. Methodological issues are to do with the logic of inquiry – how are we to discover and validate what we think exists?” Minichiello et al also point to the importance of the “inter-relationship between theory and method … the choice of method is influenced by the assumptions that the researcher makes about science, people, and the social world. In turn, the method used will influence what the researcher will see.” A further comment they make is that “evaluation of the quality and usefulness of a study should be placed within the context of the author’s purpose.” Each of those observations will now be taken up and discussed, because as a set of remarks about the nature of methodology and method, they provide a launching place for, and an effective structure for, the chapter.

An obvious but challenging way to respond to the comments of Minichiello et al, is to present an account of the inter-relationship between this author’s purpose, his epistemology, and the logic of his inquiry. That account will justify the chosen methodology of in-depth interviewing as conversation: a methodology which is personal, unstructured, intersubjective, interactive, and contextual – a methodology which embraces emotion as well as reason, and which is aimed at the co-authoring of shared narrative understandings. Clearly, this approach

352 ibid. p6.
353 ibid. p10.
departs significantly from the idea of methodology referred to above: methodology as a rule-governed procedure that aids or guarantees scientific discovery.

The author’s purpose
If the quality and usefulness of this study is to be evaluated within the context of the author’s purpose, and if the choice of methodology is to be judged as appropriate or inappropriate in terms of the author’s purpose and the aspects being studied, then it is important to provide as clear and detailed a statement of that purpose as is possible.

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that illuminative insights into identity and career as mutually contouring are made available by understanding particular case study examples of mutual contouring from the horizon of narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory as integrated and combined in Part One of this dissertation. This is a horizon from which the storied, socially inscribed, and yet personally constructed nature of identity comes clearly into view. To meet that purpose it is necessary to work through a three step process, which:
1. Combines elements of narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory in a way that foregrounds their relevance to understanding the mutual contouring of identity and career.
2. Obtains first-person accounts of life stories and career stories which reveal how the contributors have understood their identities and careers as mutually contouring.
3. Applies the theoretical framework developed in step one, to the stories obtained in step two, to arrive at insights which go beyond those provided by the research contributors and which demonstrate the
power of that theoretical framework to illuminate individual cases of identity and career as mutually contouring.

One immediate feature of this statement of purpose is that it does not mention scientific discovery, unless we choose to speak of narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory as ‘human sciences’. Even if we did make that choice, however, our purpose would still depart from the standard notion of discovery in the natural sciences, because, as Gadamer argues, the kind of insight and truth that can be found in the human sciences “does not involve the discovery of general laws, but entails understanding a phenomenon in its unique and historical concreteness.” Consequently, the author’s purpose requires a methodology which is ideographic (aimed at “understanding human behaviour and social realities, not quantifying them”) rather than nomothetic (aimed at theoretical generalisations drawn from systematic experimentation).

Another important feature of this purpose is that only the second step of the process that we must work through in order to achieve it, involves method in the sense of “techniques for collecting data” and even here, the notion of ‘data’ is inappropriate to our purpose, given its connotations of uninterpreted, measurable, decontextualised, brute fact. Research which is fitting for this author’s purpose requires method not as data collection, but as an approach to another person which is likely to elicit a considered, reflective, meaningful narrative, hence the choice of in-depth

355 Minichiello, V. Aroni, R. Timewell, E. and Alexander, L. op. cit. 156.
356 ibid. p155.
357 ibid. p104.
interviewing for methodology, and the choice of techniques which borrow from the domains of semi-structured interviewing\textsuperscript{358} and biographical method\textsuperscript{359}.

Steps one and three will be taken according firstly to the standards of academic argument, analysis, and synthesis in the case of step one, and secondly according to the concept of hermeneutics as proposed by Gadamer,\textsuperscript{360} in the case of step three. The hermeneutic approach to understanding through application is explained not only here but was also discussed in Chapter Six, and the methods used to build a conceptual framework from narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory, are explained at the beginnings of Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

**Epistemology**

This dissertation has a hermeneutic concern with understanding and its companion experience, insight – a concern which sets the inquiry apart from those that have an empiricist concern with knowledge and its companion result, certainty. Whereas empirical studies need to address epistemological issues of validity and reliability, this hermeneutic study needs to address ontological issues of interpretation and illumination. The mode of understanding that Gadamer calls “the hermeneutic experience” presupposes the historicity of our being-in-the-world and, as such, “the concept of understanding is not a methodological but an ontological


\textsuperscript{360} Gadamer, H-G op. cit.
problem.”361 There is no intention to establish an unnecessary duality here, since – in spite of the contrasts that are being made - the concern with knowledge and the concern with understanding are both concerns with truth: contrasts arise because in each case a different face of truth is revealed. Gadamer breaks truth free from the single face shown by measurement and objectivity, simply by asking: “Is it right to reserve the concept of truth for conceptual knowledge? Must we not also admit that the work of art possesses truth?”362 The truth possessed by a work of art is reached through aesthetic experience, and the truth of a person, or a person’s story, is reached by the hermeneutic experience that is an experience of understanding.

Denzin argues in relation to autobiographical truth, for instance, that we can benefit from recognising a variety of standards of truth: sincerity, subjective truth, historical truth, and fictional truth.363 “The sincere autobiographer is assumed to be willing to tell the subjective truth about his or her life. A historically truthful statement would be one that accords with empirical data on an event or experience. An aesthetic truth is evidenced when the autobiography is an aesthetic success. Presumably such a work conforms to the canons of the autobiographical genre and reports the writer’s life as the public wants to hear it reported. A fictional truth occurs when it is argued that the ‘real’ truth is to be contained in ‘pure fiction’.364 Rather than pursue these differing notions of truth in autobiography, we will note them as relevant to the general point that truth can be found in more places than data and experimentation, and note

361 Heckman, S. J. op. cit. p99. Gadamer explicitly rejects the connection between truth and method, arguing that “what makes human sciences into sciences can be understood more easily from the tradition of Bildung than from the concept of method in modern science.” Gadamer, H-G op. cit. p23.
362 Gadamer, H-G op. cit. p43.
that although our purpose – in step two – appears to be the collection of autobiographies or the authoring of biographies, in fact it is neither. Our purpose in step two is to obtain narrative accounts of life and career that can be employed in the edited case studies presented in step three. More will be said about the difference between autobiographies, biographies, and edited case studies, in the next section of this chapter, as we look in detail at the methodology which is appropriate to step two.

We can now sum up this author’s position on epistemology and its relationship with methodology, by comparing the two approaches to truth that we have been discussing. The natural scientist comes to know a truth about, for instance, the causal relationship between light intensity and pupil dilation in humans, by varying the intensity of light and measuring the subject’s change in pupil dilation. To understand a truth about that same human as a person however, we need a methodology which responds to the concepts that make up the notion of personhood: a methodology which is appropriate to persons as authors of the stories that they live by, persons who create and act upon meaning rather than subjects who are caused to react to stimuli. Pupil dilation can be explained; persons and their stories can be understood.

**The chosen methodology**

Unstructured in-depth interviewing which takes the form of conversation and which has edited case study accounts of life and career as its outcome, is the chosen methodology for this study. The logic of inquiry embedded in that choice has to do with the connection between the intended outcomes of this study and the nature of conversation. The

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364 ibid. p23.
intended outcomes reflect the overall purpose of the research, and the methodology reflects the assumptions about science and persons that have just been stated in the previous section – assumptions from which it follows that conversation is the ideal medium in which the researcher and his contributors can develop shared understandings and co-authored narrative accounts of the contributors’ lives and careers – accounts to which the theoretical framework referred to earlier as ‘step one’, will be applied to produce the edited case studies of the dissertation.

An edited case study of a person’s life and career as mutually contouring, has two features that distinguish it as suitable for the purposes of this research project. Firstly, a case study differs from a case history which has as its goal the elicitation of the fullest possible story for its own sake. The case study utilises narratives of life and career for theoretical purposes: “You start with a theory or analytic abstraction and use the life history to illustrate or verify.” Secondly, an edited life history (case study) differs from a complete or comprehensive life history, and from a topical life history, in that comments and analysis by the researcher are interspersed with the contributor’s narrative. “These three types of life history are differentiated in terms of the aims of the research process and what the researcher is looking for or trying to illustrate; and the degree of intrusion made by the researcher in the production of the final document.”

Rather than see the researcher’s comments and analysis as

365 ‘Life’ is used here in the sense explained in the Introduction. A person’s life as the story of what he has done, enjoyed, endured, and achieved, and what he hopes to do, enjoy, perhaps endure and achieve, is the story of who he is and therefore speaks of his identity. The important concept of identity will be fully explored and detailed in Chapter Four, but enough has been said here and in the Introduction to make the case that ‘life and career as mutually contouring’ can legitimately be read as ‘identity and career as mutually contouring’.


367 ibid. p155.

368 ibid. p156.
‘intrusion’, as Minichiello et al seem to, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the case studies of this dissertation are made more revealing and insightful by the addition of the researcher’s theoretically informed analysis, and that they reflect the co-authoring of narrative which is made possible by conversation and which allows for the development of intersubjective understandings.

Seeing the person of the researcher reflected in the results of biographical work – rather than being an intrusive disruption to the flow of, or to the authenticity of, the other person’s story – is to be expected, and is not a shortcoming of those results. Smith asks us to note “the importance of insight and creativity on the part of the biographer in the studying, constructing, and writing of lives or parts of lives.”369 Although the edited case studies are not strictly speaking either biography or autobiography, they do contain elements of both,370 so they are unavoidably suffused with choice, interpretation, perspective, and the creative act of mimesis on the part of both the researcher and his collaborators. These particular aspects of authorship were fully explored in Chapter Three, under the headings of emplotment; prefiguration, configuration, refiguration; and difficulties with mimesis and verisimilitude.

370 The edited case studies of life and career history closely resemble the version of life history described by Smith: “Life histories, at least as we developed them in this instance from long, two to seven hour, interviews, are briefer, more focused biographies, mostly told from the teachers’ own perspectives.” Smith, L. 1994 op. cit. p287.

Another relevant comment about the edited case studies, this time in terms of how they differ from traditional autobiography, comes from Mininchiello: life history “can be regarded as distinct from traditional autobiographies because it is recognised that in the more conventional autobiography, what we read is what the author wants us to know. In the sociological version, what we read is mediated by the researcher’s interaction with the person during the telling of the story, the coding, analysis, and interpretation of it.” Minichiello, V. Aroni, R. Timewell, E. and Alexander, L. op. cit. p147.
Precisely which issues concerning the writing of biography or autobiography are relevant to our methodology, depends upon the purpose of holding conversations with the research collaborators about their lives and careers. The purpose of the conversations was to obtain material for the edited case studies, it was not to find - in a research collaborator’s life story - “materials for the testing and development of scientific hypotheses about human behaviour,” which is the purpose of what Denzin calls the “classic, objective approach” to biography, so we are not primarily concerned with issues of documentation and verification. Instead, the purpose of the research conversations approximates a hybrid of two of Denzin’s categories: the “subject-produced autobiography” and the “attempt to make sense of an individual’s life.” The subject-produced autobiography “uses the subject’s life history as a vehicle for sociological theory,” and the attempt to make sense of an individual’s life examines what Denzin calls “pivotal meaning structures”: it studies how pivotal events have come to occupy a central place in the construction of a person’s life. For the purposes of this dissertation, we do use life and career stories as a vehicle in relation to theory – not however, to “reason from the particular to the general,” (as in Denzin’s ‘subject-produced autobiography’) but to illustrate the illuminative potential of the combined Heidegger/Ricoeur/Bourdieu Theory that has been presented in Part One; and we do seek to understand how pivotal events came to occupy a central place in the lives and careers of the research collaborators – not

371 Denzin, N. op. cit. p52.
372 ibid. p52.
373 ibid. p59.
374 ibid. p66.
375 ibid. p61.
376 ibid. p66.
377 ibid. p61.
only however, to discover how those people represented their lives and careers to themselves, (as in Denzin’s ‘attempt to make sense of an individual’s life’) but also to demonstrate additional insights that are made available by a hermeneutic questioning of the collaborators’ narratives as texts – a questioning that is informed by the combination of Narrative Theory, Social Theory, and Existential Philosophy.

Having outlined the chosen methodology, we now need to examine some specific issues of research design that are associated with that choice.

**Research design issue one: choice of collaborators**

Whereas a methodological issue has to do with the overall logic of the inquiry, an issue of research design has to do with a particular aspect of the inquiry: in this case, the choice of collaborators.

Two people were interviewed by the author, in-depth, during twenty sessions that lasted between two and five hours, over a minimum period of three months in the case of each person. The choice of interviewee was not based upon any concerns about finding a representative sample of some ‘type’ of person. No claims are made in this dissertation about entitlement to generalise across a population from the research findings, but claims are made about understanding and insight\(^{378}\) in relation to the identities and the careers of the two people who collaborated with the author to construct narrative accounts of their lives and careers.

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\(^{378}\) “The sociological life history aims to understand the ways in which a particular individual creates, makes sense of, and interprets his or her life.” Minichiello, V. Aroni, R. Timewell, E. and Alexander, L. 1990, *In-Depth Interviewing: researching people*, Longman Chesire, Melbourne, p147.
Kvale\textsuperscript{379} discusses the question of “How many interview subjects do I need?” and answers that the number of subjects depends upon the study’s purpose. “If the goal is to predict the outcome of a national election, a representative sample of about 1,000 subjects is normally required, so qualitative interviews would be out of the question. If the purpose is to understand the world as experienced by one specific person, this one subject is sufficient.”\textsuperscript{380} This study was not designed to uncover causal laws, nor to make predictions or test hypotheses.

Instead of representativeness being the guiding criterion for choice of interviewee, collaborators were chosen according to the researcher’s sense of their willingness to participate in the study, their interest in exploring issues of identity and career, their capacity for reflection and insight, and the likelihood that their stories would have sufficient depth and complexity to require analysis in terms of the theoretical framework developed in Part One. Not surprisingly, the application of this criterion turns out to depend in an essential way upon the person of the researcher. In discussing a biographer’s choice of subject, Smith makes a comment that is pertinent to this aspect of the research method: “if one wants to perhaps make oneself a bit uneasy, follow John Edsel as he reflects ‘in a world full of subjects … we may indeed ask why a modern biographer fixes his attention on certain faces and turns his back on others.’ The biographer’s personality – motives, fears, unconscious conflicts, and yearnings – reaches out to responsive, if not similar, territory in the person to be subject.”\textsuperscript{381} That observation accounts for some strong – at times even unnerving – similarities that emerged between the identities

\textsuperscript{379} Kvale, S. op. cit.
\textsuperscript{380} ibid. p102.
\textsuperscript{381} Smith, L. 1994 op. cit. p289.
and careers of the collaborators, and the identity and career of the researcher.

Although the narrative, social, and existential identities of the research collaborators is revealed as fully as possible in the edited case studies, so much detail of a personal and sensitive nature was provided by the collaborators, that they were both given a guarantee of anonymity. Their real names are not used, and the details of the organisations for which they work and the projects that they are currently working on, have been altered. The characteristics of those projects have not been altered however, because of what the projects they have chosen to occupy themselves with, reveal about the preoccupations of each person.

**Research design issue two: questions and questioning**

In conversation, the collaborators were asked about:

- How they understood and accounted for their autobiographical identity and their career identity.
- Ways in which their careers followed the trajectory of class or gender or family or culture, and ways in which their careers departed from those trajectories.
- The times of greatest significance in life and in career.
- What it was like during those times when their career seemed right for them.
- What it was like during those times when their career seemed wrong for them.
- What enabled or led to turning points or epiphanies in autobiography and career, and the impact of those turning points upon identity.
• What each person thought their life and career to date seemed to say about them.
• Ways in which their career to date has enabled – or impeded – a valued expression of, and construction of, identity.
• How each person thought their twin stories of life and career might best be continued.

These questions were not asked in an unvarying order across collaborators, nor were they the only questions asked. The order in which the questions were asked depended upon the context of the discussion, and each individual discussion took its own course, as genuine conversations do. Nevertheless, as Kvale points out, “an interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose. It goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach.”³⁸² So the collaborators were asked questions that took the conversation back to the research purpose whenever the conversation began to lose touch with that purpose, and the collaborators were carefully listened to as the researcher worked with them to co-author their narratives. That careful listening had behind it, the desire to move the prefigured³⁸³ understandings of the collaborators into a configured form that revealed the moments of mutual contouring of identity and career.

To listen and converse with that desire in mind, was to have the edited case studies as final reports in mind from the beginning of the research project, including the research conversations. Kvale suggests that “an

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³⁸² Kvale, S. op. cit. p6.
³⁸³ The concepts of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration are discussed in full in Chapter Four. They are taken from: Ricoeur, P. 1984, *Time and Narrative Vol. 1* op. cit.
interview project be directed from the start toward the final report; (and) that the researcher keep in mind throughout the stages of the investigation the original vision of the story he or she wants to tell the readers.”

When each part of a project has a significance in relation to a larger whole, we can say that the overall process shows an awareness of the hermeneutic circle, which will be discussed in the next section.

**Research design issue three: the hermeneutic circle**

Given that our research purpose is intimately bound together with the manner in which people understand their identities and careers through interpreting them as narratives, and given that the second step in our research process calls for the co-authoring of narratives and is therefore a step that cannot be taken without constant attention to the developing sense of the stories as they are being configured, the essentially circular nature of hermeneutics has to be recognised and responded to during the research work. Minichiello et al explain that “the individual parts of a text cannot be given definitive meaning by themselves, although we can allow them provisional meaning while we go ahead with the interpretation of the whole from which they come.”

In accordance with this hermeneutic precept, as part of the research method, events and points of view that were provided by the collaborators in early conversations, were understood provisionally and later reconsidered and re-understood, as more of their stories emerged.

By approaching the case studies in this way, the researcher also built an awareness of the hermeneutic circle as part of the nature of narratives,

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384 Kvale, S. op. cit. p256.
385 Heidegger, M. op. cit.
386 Minichiello, V. Aroni, R. Timewell, E. and Alexander, L. op. cit. p51
into his method. Plot reveals the significance of earlier events in relation to later events, and allows for an emergent understanding of character as revealed by actions over time. One of the puzzles that follow from this dimension of narrative, is that we can be uncertain about which facts are pertinent to a story until we have decided how the story will turn out – but, paradoxically, the decision of how the story will turn out depends in part upon knowing which facts are pertinent to the story. Freeman sums up this issue in his comment that “while on the one hand … beginning leads to end, there is also a sense in which end leads to beginning, the outcome in question serving as the organizing principle around which the story is told.”\textsuperscript{387} This issue was also discussed in Chapter Two, under the heading of \textit{difficulties with mimesis and verisimilitude}.

\textbf{Research design issue four: the plurality of interpretations}

Awareness of the hermeneutic circle leads on to awareness of a related issue. Just as different narrators can select different events as pertinent to an account of ‘the same’ life, if each narrator begins from a different sense of the outcomes of that person’s life, so too different interpreters may arrive at different interpretations of the same interview. Kvale accounts for the plurality of interpretations by following Gadamer’s point that “an interpreter’s presuppositions enter into the questions he or she poses to a text. These questions codetermine what meanings can be found in the text.”\textsuperscript{388} So the questions that an interpreter begins with, and the presuppositions that underlie those questions, are crucial to the understandings that the interpreter finishes with: the interview as text

\textsuperscript{387} Freeman, M. op. cit. p22.
\textsuperscript{388} Kvale, S. op. cit. p211.
does not offer one correct and objective meaning. That point is central to the design of this research project.

Hermeneutic research adheres to canons of practice which take account of the plurality of interpretations and the reasons for the plurality. Kvale advises that the researcher should “try to become conscious of how certain formulations of a question to a text already determine which forms of answer are possible. Such a consciousness of presuppositions is necessary when using the interview as a research method, because the interviewee and the interpreter will unavoidably codetermine the results. What matters here is being as aware as possible about one’s own presuppositions and mode of influence and attempt to take them into account in the interpretation.” Kvale’s advice can be seen in the design of this study and in the way that the design was implemented. The author was aware that he would take presuppositions about persons and their narrative understandings into any interviews on identity and career, and he was aware of a personal style that, if emphasised, can put people at ease and engender trust.

Instead of beginning the research with a set of interviews and then reflecting upon their implications for theory, as if interviews could be conducted in a way that somehow emptied the process of theory, the author chose to begin the research with a sustained exploration of theory and with the development of a theoretically informed horizon of understanding – an exploration that lasted over four years and that built upon and dramatically sharpened and strengthened his initial, vague presuppositions. When the interview process began, he was therefore as

389 ibid. 49.
aware as academic practice and intellectual discipline could make him, of the presuppositions behind his purpose, behind the framing of his questions, behind his approach to conversations, and he was as aware as he could become, of his interpretations-in-action as the interview conversations proceeded: both during each interview, and between interviews.

The explicit intention of developing a theoretical frame for interpreting the interview conversations about identity and career, is an intention to clarify and articulate the context of interpretation. Kvale contrasts theoretical contexts of interpretation with “self-understanding” contexts and “critical commonsense” contexts. He comments that interpretations based upon a theoretical context “are likely to go beyond the subject’s self-understanding and also to exceed a commonsense understanding, such as when incorporating a psychoanalytic theory of the individual or a Marxist theory of society.” To demonstrate the possibilities for going beyond commonsense in our understanding of the mutual contouring of identity and career, is the exact purpose of this study.

**Research design issue five: structured or semi-structured interviewing**

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because of the breadth and depth of responses that they make possible in comparison with structured interviews, and because, as Fontana and Frey argue, a structured interviewing style “elicits rational responses but it overlooks or

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390 ibid. p214.
391 ibid. p215.
inadequately assesses the emotional dimension.”392 The emotional
dimension had to be embraced by the research because research
collaborators were asked to access pivotal life and career events,
decisions, and turning points, and material of that nature not only carries
emotional weight, it is often best remembered and realised through
emotion.

A further reason for the choice of semi-structured interviews conducted
as conversations is that they allow the researcher to commit “what
structured interviewers would see as two capital offences”:393 to answer
questions asked by the collaborators, and to let his personal feelings
influence him during the conversations (and to let the research
collaborators see that their narrative accounts of life and career
sometimes had an emotional impact). To interact during an interview as
conversation is, as Fontana and Frey put it, at “the very essence of
unstructured interviewing – the establishment of a human-to-human
relation with the respondent and the desire to understand rather than to
explain.”394 The desire to understand calls for a method which elicits
open and considered responses, and a method which establishes rapport
between the conversational partners.

Clearly, there can be only limited rapport where there are barriers
between the two people in conversation. An inability to attend to what the
other person was saying, because of an inappropriately formal, structured,
interview procedure, would have created an unhelpful – perhaps

393 ibid. p366.
394 ibid. p366.
insurmountable – barrier between the researcher and his collaborators. There is no doubt then, given the author’s purposes and his views on interpretation and truth, that the methodology of in-depth, semi-structured interviewing, conducted in the form of conversations, was an appropriate choice for this study.
PART TWO: NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY AND CAREER
**Introduction to the narratives**

Several times in the earlier parts of this dissertation, the unavoidability - indeed desirability - of the author's voice entering into the stories, has been discussed. It quickly became apparent during the writing of these narratives that co-authoring was occurring, and the narratives are therefore partly products of this author although they are primarily products of the research collaborators.

My understandings and presence is in each story, so I shall write in first person in this part of the dissertation, rather than pretend a distant, 'scientific' objectivity. These conversations say much about me and my stories of life and career, and who I am turned out to be almost as much at issue, and as much discussed, in the co-authoring, as the identities of my research collaborators. It was only as I began to write the narratives and edit the case studies at the end of each day, that I discovered how deeply there was a third person in the stories, and that it was me. I do not give my story a separate chapter title, and I do not systematically or thoroughly address the telling of my story, but I do explain the impact that what I was hearing had upon me, through the use of footnotes which connect parts of my story with those of my collaborators.

The edited case studies, as a consequence of my participation and my reflections, and my direct comments to the reader, are multi-layered. As my conversation partners were talking, I was of course thinking and reacting, and I shall make some of those thoughts and reactions part of each edited case study. My thoughts and reactions, as they occurred at the time, add a reflective and thematic layer to the reports of conversation, a layer which goes beyond the collaborators' own understandings. That
move places me in an unusual position: not the comfortable heights of the omniscient narrator, but midway between narrator and character, midway between researcher and participant, and as honest and open as possible about my subjectivity as present and operative in the production of what follows. The goal is to be a researcher without the disguise or pretence of objective impersonality. I hope that it is also a move which places the reader in an unusual position: able to listen in on the conversations as an invisible presence, and yet occasionally addressed directly concerning theory and interpretation, because the reader was present or at least foreseen, as I spoke with my collaborators and as I edited their narratives into the case study format.

I shall begin each case with a brief story which sets out to present the essence of that person’s history, and which thereby provides an overview that assists in the reading of the interviews and analysis that follows. The conversations are presented in a form that highlights the co-authoring, the application of theory to each case, and the manner in which each person initially presented their narrative understandings of life and career. That format assists us in seeing the configuring of story as the conversations unfold, and to see the ways in which the conceptual framework of Part One adds to and illuminates each person’s account.

It will quickly become apparent from a reading of the edited case study material, that the collaborators approached the process of talking about their lives and careers, not by presenting an already configured, clear, consistent and coherent narrative, but by telling many short stories around different issues and events – and the stories they told in later interviews tended to re-tell stories they had told in earlier interviews. It would not be an exaggeration to say that their configurations first required a
disentanglement, and that this process was iterative and repetitive, but thereby all the more revealing.
Chapter Eight: The Story of Harry Bennett:

Who is Harry Bennett? That question is so significant in Harry's life, that it has become part of who he is and thereby the question constitutes part of the answer to itself: Harry Bennett is someone who has an abiding uncertainty concerning his identity. Identity issues have exercised considerable power over Harry's sense of what are appropriate career directions for someone in his problematic situation. He is currently a lecturer in the School of Marketing at 'Southern University', working mostly in the Masters Level Program, but constantly tempted by offers to move elsewhere. To define Harry in terms of his current occupation and social location and career issues, would clearly be insufficient. Harry is the first and only Koori academic in the field of Marketing, and his Kooriness is more than a point of difference between Harry and other members of staff – it is a lens which refracts light in such a way that Harry sees his career in terms of how it accords with and how it runs counter to, his Koori identity. We therefore need to go much deeper into the bases of Harry’s uncertainties (and into the sources of his certainties) about who he is, if we are to come closer to who he is.

Harry was born in 1954, in Broadmeadows (a working class suburb of Melbourne), to a white mother and a Koori father. Although the family had little money, Harry’s mother was from a wealthy background, and she insisted that the boy attend a private school in Essendon. This insistence and the accompanying drain on family finances, contributed to an ongoing conflict within the marriage – a conflict that often became
violent when Harry’s father drank. Partly as a consequence of that conflict, Harry was sent to a boarding school in Grade Two.

When he was only twelve, and still at boarding school, Harry’s mother was found dead in a paddock, and the initial suspicion was that she had been murdered. Suspicion, in fact, fell upon his father who was taken away by police for a long interview. It was later established however, that she had most likely suffered from a severe bout of epilepsy and fell to the ground, hitting her head on a rock.

Harry’s father kept his Koori identity a secret from most other people, including his children, along with the fact that he had been a member of what has come to be known in Australia as ‘the Stolen Generation’.395 When Harry discovered that part of who he is – and that did not happen until he was an adult – he also discovered an identity that he chooses to emphasise and to look for when making decisions about his life and career.

As we talked together over the early months of the year 2000, Harry was embroiled in a contemporary drama of his own: the collapse of his second marriage and the challenges involved in moving out of home and reconfiguring his identity in a way that made emotional and narrational sense of that change. He often brought a sense of sadness or concern to

395 During the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the Australian Government implemented a program which removed part-aboriginal children from their families and placed them into foster homes or orphanages. The official reasons concerned the welfare of the children, but the Aboriginal community considers this program to have been aimed at assimilation and at the destruction of the indigenous culture. In the 1990s, many stolen children who are now adult have taken the Federal Government to court seeking compensation for their despair and ongoing sense of loss, and the taking away of the children has become a central part of the Aboriginal campaign to have the Australian Prime Minister officially apologise for the past wrongs that have been perpetrated upon the Aboriginal people: the ‘Sorry’ Campaign.
our meetings, as a result of what was happening in his life, and as a result of how he understands what has happened in his life.

Harry's identity has been challenged, and has shifted dramatically over time, by family revelations as well as by career developments. I began my conversations with Harry on February 1, 2000, by asking him to give his sense of where his career is at the moment, but Harry chose to talk first about the past: a past that has been circumscribed by family issues yet often lived through without family. Perhaps his decision to answer from the past rather than the present, was partly a result of Harry's knowing some of the theory upon which this research project is predicated, partly a result of his sense of how narrative plots should be constructed, and partly from the power of his past in his present. As Brooks reminds us, the unmastered past will determine our life's direction until we make coherent sense of it.396

"As you know, I got locked away in a boarding school at grade two - the school uniform was my only clothing. It was a place of severe discipline, run by nuns, with daily prayers. Everything was ordered and had its time. I seem to have reacted against that in many ways. I'm certainly not Catholic anymore, and I've got no patience for discipline as a solution.

Every time I go to Cobram with the Masters Students, I'm spooked by the place. Some of my uncles are on the walls, and I get a hint of what it must have been like for them, when I think back to my time at the boarding school. At least I knew I'd be going home.
Harry asserts here that I knew about his time in boarding school, but I did not, so this opening statement caught me by surprise. It certainly interested me that he chose to begin his story of who he is, in this fashion, because the way that we begin our stories can be indicative of the ending that we have at least a prefigured sense of. Beginnings are therefore too significant to let pass without analysis and interpretation.

What I did know before that conversation was that Southern University runs various residential workshops for its Masters students at a centre called Clythewood, in Cobram, and that Harry is troubled by working there because it used to be a children's home, and there are old photographs of the children on the walls.

Harry has told various other staff members that several of his uncles are captured in those photographs, and that he feels haunted by the place. These are uncles who, as Koori children, were stolen from their parents and placed in White care. There is an emotionally powerful mirroring and repetition then, in the similarities and variations between the story that Harry tells others about his reactions to Clythewood, and the story of his life that Harry was beginning to tell me. Repetition is a key device in our prefigured and configured narratives: it gathers significance for storied life events, and thereby helps meet our hermeneutic desire for meaning.397

396 Brooks, P. op. cit. p125.
397 In Chapter Six, we noted Brooks’ comment that "An event gains meaning by its repetition, which is both the recall of an earlier moment and a variation of it: the concept of repetition hovers ambiguously between the idea of reproduction and that of change, forward and backward movement." Brooks, P. op. cit. p100.
398 A further reaction that I had to Harry's opening comments, and a further sense of the narrative significance that comes from repetition and similarity, rested upon the fact that I too, had spent time in homes for boys, at the end of my childhood; so I had just discovered an uncanny parallel between this aspect of Harry's life and my own. I shared that part of my story with Harry, during the conversation.
I asked Harry to tell me more about the boarding school, but he went immediately to an incident that relates to his career choice.

*In grade six, the nun who usually took our class was suddenly taken sick and I was asked to teach the class. I had an auntie who was a teacher, so it was just natural that I went into teaching. This was a key moment for me, although I only felt that dimly at the time. At Uni, I chose Education and have been a teacher of some sort ever since.*

I see gaps in stories as ways into deeper understanding, so I said: "You had an aunt who was a teacher, but you also had many other relatives who were not. So why do you say it was ‘just natural that I went into teaching’?"

"I see it as spiritual. When I was eventually linked up with my aboriginal community, I discovered that my relatives were all educators. Yet we grew up apart. There is a long tradition of education as part of what it means to be a Koori. Education of each generation about the land, about kinship, and about the spirits."
Geoffrey Blainey claims that an aboriginal male worked for six hours and spent the rest of the day educating.

So the logic in Harry’s answer about why it was natural for him to become a teacher relies upon his interpretation of being Koori. There is a large gap here between Harry’s way of choosing a career, and the psychological tests of aptitude and ability that were discussed in Chapter One. Harry’s approach to career choice was far closer to Cochran’s point about the way that the drama of an occupation can appeal to our deepest narrative view of how life makes sense. Cochran gives the example of a timber mill worker who may complain about how hard and dangerous the work is, but nevertheless identifies with the drama of going into the world and taking physical risks to put bread on the table for his family, because that lifestyle is traditional in his area of the world.

To go deeper into Harry’s interpretation of being Koori, I needed to go further into his story, which is also to acknowledge the circular nature of the hermeneutic endeavour. As I argued in Chapter Seven, the hermeneutic circle is unavoidable but not thereby unmanageable or undesirable. Hermeneutic truth does not come altogether and in discrete units: it emerges over time as early comments are understood provisionally and then reconsidered and re-understood in the light of later comments and further information.

I pursued Harry's linking of his fate with his Koori heritage, by asking a question in the form of a statement: "But if we think in terms of genetics, you aren't full-blood Koori."

399 Cochran, L. op. cit.
Aboriginal people don't normally think in those terms but define aboriginality in spiritual terms. My grandfather (on my father's side) was full Koori, and my father half. Since linking up with the Koori community, I’ve had a number of quite dramatic spiritual experiences, and I can see now, when I look back at the first part of my life, that the Koori spirit was there all along, protecting me and guiding me.

I could not yet countenance Harry as a spiritual person. His presentation in everyday life is relaxed and sometimes self-effacing. He also intentionally deflates other people’s reliance on status, theory, or self-importance. Harry does this through a quiet but persistent use of humour, and I think it is the humour in particular which made it difficult for me to see him as spiritual, because I associate spirituality with seriousness, intensity, and transcendence. I therefore continued to pursue the issue of inheritance and identity in terms which side-stepped the spiritual dimension of Harry’s thinking, by asking: "Why do you wish to be recognised as an aboriginal person?"

I guess waking up one day and finding that I'm a blackfella. I've always had an insecurity, a sense of something missing, a feeling that I didn't belong. On discovering my heritage, the penny dropped, and that's why I see things that way.

I'd just come out of a staff meeting (at this stage of his life, Harry was a 27 year-old high school teacher at Broadmeadows) and joked to someone who said "I love your black sense of humour." Then an hour later I got the phone call. It was a call from a woman who said that she thought she might be my auntie, and she invited me to come and visit her and her
family at the Framlingham Mission. When I turned up and she showed me the photos of dad and even some of me as a kid, I was just blown away that he had had this secret life. Also my father had died and feeling that the name was going to die. And anger at my father for not sharing that he was stolen generation - he pretended to everyone that he was a white orphan, but regularly visited the mission.

When my dad was taken away, he was under the care of his auntie, which underpins the larger family concept in Koori culture. Hanging now in the new Melbourne Museum that’s just opened, is a photo of dad, three years before I was born, standing on Framlingham Mission in Warrnambool. He’d gone back to visit his relatives, regularly – he was a closet Koori.

When I told my mum’s sister on the phone the other night, that dad’s picture was in the Museum, she said he wouldn’t like that, that he’d asked her to keep his Koori identity a secret, but I think that was just a persona that he put up to the white community – I think he carried fears and operated out of a real sense of denial.

In 1968 when Lionel Bennett won, we watched it on the old black and white Astor TV, sitting on the vinyl couch in Broady, and dad never said "He's my first cousin." And I can't ask him why because we only found out after he died. It was a measure of how suppressed he was.

White people embrace Lionel Bennett and remember where they were when he was in the ring with Fighting Harada. Times have changed from

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400 Lionel Bennett was a bantamweight boxer, and a Koori, who defeated the Japanese champion, Fighting Harada, in Tokyo, to win the World Title. It was a hugely publicised and celebrated event in Australia.
when dad was a Koori in a white workplace. At the time of Lionel’s victory, I think that dad did not think it was safe to be Koori. In 1967, when I was in Year Seven at school, the year mum died, that was also the year that Aboriginal people became citizens in Australia. At that time, it still would have had a detrimental effect on dad’s career as a customs officer to be known as a Koori.

So, what about you, now?

That differs from me because I use my profession to further the case and I fly the Koori flag whenever I can and proudly, wherever I go. He was forced to conceal it and I’m terribly, horribly angry about that; although I’m also very sad about it and I understand it.

People ask me why I put so much effort into the Aboriginal community, and to a degree it’s cost me my second marriage and my family. The reason is that I’m using my white skills and my white education for productive revenge. It seems to me that this is something that had to happen to me.

When I was a young high school teacher, after dad had died, elders were trying to find me. They knew that I existed. I’m someone, as indigenous, who’s come back to make a large impact. I’m the only indigenous in a Marketing Department.

So you have turned what could be seen as a negative episode in your life story into a positive career.
Yes, but I'm angry for my father. I've sat on rocks with elders who have recreated what he must have gone through. To be taken away, and then to have to hide who you really are and to deny what has happened to you.

When I first began to talk with the elders, I found that there I was, with three academic degrees but realised with the Kooris that I'm so ignorant. I was extremely ambitious in my career until this happened - trying to fill that gap, that gap of feeling that something was wrong.

When I first started out, I taught mainly in Broadmeadows, with some missionary zeal. Now, to move here with the Business Masters students, the suits, I'm in constant denial.

There is a need for comment on this passage. 'That gap' which drove Harry's ambition is, in my view, a gap of identity which is a gap of meaning; and I therefore contend that he was unknowingly driven less by ambition – even early in his career - than he was by a desire for narrative sense. Brooks writes about what he calls 'hermeneutic desire': the longing to come to the end of the plot so that retrospective sense can be made of all that has happened prior in the story, and all the gaps in meaning can be filled in. We want not only to see how things turn out for the protagonist, but also to feel the satisfaction that comes when the way that things turn out makes coherence from incoherence, or as Aristotle put it when speaking of mimetics, when concord comes out of discord.

In Part One of this dissertation, I argued that identity is an answer to the narrative, social, and existential questions of location and direction:

401 Brooks, P op. cit.
where our lives are, where they have come from, and where they are going. Harry had to contend throughout his childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood, with false answers to those questions, with confusion and misinformation - with a gap in the plot of his life. His sense of where he had come from was felt to be misinformed, and that feeling of narrative incoherence at the personal level of not-being-at-home-in-the-world served to heighten his hermeneutic desire - a desire that was dramatically and unforgettably met by a telephone call from unknown Koori relatives who knew of his existence and had been looking for him, just as he simultaneously and unknowingly had been looking for them. Little wonder then, that Harry now interprets his career in education as a mission, as a calling.

Nor is it surprising that at his current career stage, lecturing to business students in their 'suits and their ties',¹⁰² Harry is troubled by the feeling that he is denying who he is. His career is in question, because it now intersects with (and in some ways collides with), rather than runs parallel to, his identity.¹⁰³

I wanted to take up the issue of Harry's feelings about lecturing in the Master's Course rather than teaching disadvantaged secondary students at

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¹⁰² Harry's use of that phrase was not a conscious allusion to Dylan, and yet Dylan's anger and disdain for those 'businessmen' who exploit the poor and the uneducated, expressed in those same words, does suggest one reason for Harry's dis-ease with his current career situation as a lecturer in the Faculty of Business - a reason that may have figured somewhere in his 'choice' of words:

"And all the criminals in their suits and their ties, Are free to drink martinis, and to watch the sun rise, While Rubin sits like Buddha in his ten foot cell, An innocent man in a living hell."

Bob Dylan, *The Hurricane.*

¹⁰³ What Harry does in his role as Marketing lecturer cannot be divorced from who he is. "On a manifestationist view ... what we do is a presentation of who we are, not just a signifier which represents some internal reality." Guignon, C. 1993, "History and Commitment in the Early Heidegger" op. cit. p132.
Broadmeadows. In the period between the first interview and the second, Harry had set up an 'equity intake' for the Masters Course: a group of Koori students, and students with a disability, who were able to enrol in the course without paying fees. Harry had 'recruited' these students, and would have a liaison role during their studies. I therefore began not by raising the problematics of the Masters Course that he had alluded to at the end of our last conversation, but by asking about his feelings concerning this new development: "You mainly talk about this new role in a light-hearted way, but are there other things going on for you?"

Some trepidation is one of the things that is going on. I came here to escape blackfellow politics, so this equity group will nudge my comfort zone – it’s a very political group of people who are heavily involved in aboriginal affairs. On the positive side, in three years there could be nine to ten Masters of Marketing in the indigenous community, a first in the history of this country. Something that could transform the community and the state because they have the best of aboriginal politics and now Western knowledge.

I’m also concerned because the course will be a tool not just for empowerment but also for assimilation. So that's a philosophical conflict - I don’t want Master Jacky Jackys. I'll be telling them that they have to be better than, not equal to.

Harry's comments here are not only about the equity group: they are also comments about the outlook that has been engendered by his story, and

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404 A ‘Jacky Jacky’ is an Aboriginal who has gone over to the White side. ‘Jacky Jacky’ was the term used for Aboriginals who helped the police in their pursuit of other Aboriginals. And today, members of the Koori community refer to the police as ‘the Jacks’.
comments about concerns around his own identity. I suspected that he does not want to be a Marketing Jacky Jacky, that he wants to be better than, not equal to, and that this is a wanting that has more to do with establishing a coherent and hermeneutically satisfying sense of identity than it has to do with achievement in the sense of a career that leads to high income and organisational power. I decided to probe his thinking around the idea of empowerment. What does he mean here? Does he mean that he is wanting to overturn something?

*I guess I look at my community and I see the treatment they still get, and I see gross racism, even if it’s mainly subliminal - the chains are now on their heart. I fall prey to that too. Consulting for ATSIC and not invoicing them.*

*I guess I want to overturn - I might be seeing education from a black side - for us white education is not liberating: it ostracises us from our community and I have to sit with this paradox. It's easier for me to educate whites because I don't care what they do with the information.*

*I don’t want blacks to lose their cultural integrity, ie. their ability to view the world from a black perspective.*

Of course this claim to there being a black perspective immediately interested me. In the theory chapters I write about social location and the ways of seeing that social location inscribes individuals with. What, though, did Harry mean by the notion of 'a black perspective'? I chose to take a challenging approach to that question, by putting to Harry the

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405 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission.
proposition that I have read the claim that the Aboriginal outlook is more communal than the white, but that when I look at the reality, as mediated by television and the press, what I see is drink and discord, not communality. So what might he mean by this notion of a 'black perspective', and in particular by the implication that it is of special value to its members?

The black perspective is communal and it’s spiritual. In the early ‘90’s, a couple of years after my discovery of my Koori identity, I was at an Aboriginal conference in Adelaide and I noticed this woman staring at me from a distance.

She came to me and said that she had to talk to me, and that she could see spirits around my person. I passed it off as a bit of a joke, and she says “No, there are four people around you at all times: two spirits – a man and a woman – ancestors protecting you as you return to the community; an Egyptian who is teaching you leadership, and a native American chief. You’re about to go to America and put the Aboriginal issue on an international stage.

The following Monday I was called in by Henry Bartlett who is a key figure in the Koori community, and by a senior member of the Education Department, to the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association, and they asked me to take on the role of principal at KODE, the Koori Open Door Education school; and in the conversation, they said that part of the job would be to go to an international conference in America in six months time. You bet I remembered what that woman had said to me about putting the Aboriginal issue on an international stage!
My return to the community has been very smooth in comparison to other people who have had to struggle to prove themselves before being accepted. And I see that also as supporting what she said about ancestors protecting me as I return.

My Western mind grapples with the concept but I can’t dismiss my indigenous spirituality. She also said that “You’ve come back to the community for a purpose. Your time away from the community has been for a purpose.” I presume that I’ll be led to discover what that purpose is.

I’ve had such a smooth entry. I was elected to VAEA\textsuperscript{406} within a couple of years. And although I’m eternally grateful for being accepted, I recognise that there’s damage in the aboriginal community, and it upsets me tremendously. There’s front end trauma and rear end trauma. At the rear end there’s domestic violence and substance abuse. At the front end there’s people who are black on the outside but white on the inside - people who have lost touch with their spirituality.

But still the community and the perspective is there. I was in Echuca at the weekend. I wandered into a co-op and I plugged right into the blackfella paradigm.

This part of Harry's story was still not making sense for me. I did have a clearer sense of what he meant when he talked about the Koori culture and about himself, as being spiritual, but I still did not feel clear about why he valued a traumatised culture. In Gadamer's terms, I was not

\textsuperscript{406} The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association.
feeling the truth of Harry's position. If Kooris had been damaged, and if the resulting culture was dysfunctional, then where is the reason to respect that culture rather than work to amend it? I took up Harry's use of 'paradigm' and asked him if he thought anything had been wrong with Galileo's attack upon the Catholic paradigm. Harry has been raised as a Catholic, in a Catholic boarding school, and at one stage of his career, had been a principal of a Catholic school - and yet he now rejects the Catholic way. If that paradigm could be attacked or rejected, why not the Koori paradigm - the blackfella perspective?

*I guess it links back to my past. Being from Broady but educated with grazier's sons at a boarding school. I make it a point not to lose those roots.*

Again, I felt discomfort with this answer. I too am from working class roots, but I do not make it a point to refresh my sense of them every time I get a chance. In fact, I make it a point to look away from them, or to look at them from a critical perspective. As I argued in the chapters on theory, narrative agency involves seeing your story from the horizon of understanding that criticism can provide, rather than reading who you are and what your obligations are and what your pathway should be, from within an unquestioned social narrative. So I continued to pursue this issue with Harry. Why did he make it a point not to lose those 'Broady' roots?

*Because it took me so long to find them, and because I've been to the mountain and it's not that flash. I'd detest owning a Mercedes. There*

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407 Broadmeadows, one of Melbourne's most notorious working-class suburbs.
would be a conflict between my core values if I bought an apartment on South Bank.

And then I had what I was looking for: an understanding of the difference between Harry's valuing of his past and my rejection of my past. It is not so much his Broady roots that he took so long to find; it is his Koori roots, and they are what he was referring to, more so than the working class horizon of Broadmeadows - but Harry does associate the one with the other, and I think that he values working class culture primarily because he values Koori culture, and he sees overlaps between working class Australian, and Koori, culture. This is a thought, moreover, which calls upon narrative theory for its insight.

In our need for personal narrative coherence, we turn to the story as a whole and look within that story for the sources of strength in our identity. In my story, leaving the beliefs and behaviours of my family played a major role in deciding to work and to gain an education and to live an ordered, balanced life.\textsuperscript{408} That was a leaving which now strengthens my sense of who I am, even though there are times when I wish that I could be proud of the family and the culture from which I come.

\textsuperscript{408} I clearly remember reading Aristotle's discussion of the golden mean when I was sixteen, as I stood on a rainy, dark and cold Ringwood railway platform at 11pm, waiting to give the guard on the upcoming train a trolley load of parcels to take to Flinders Street. I was a Station Assistant; I had only the first two years of high school but I was reading philosophy and about to start evening classes to catch up to the other boys my age whose lives had taken more direct paths forward; I worked shifts and saved money and paid board and each day I moved further away from my family's short-term, irresponsible, drunken, sorry-for-themselves, way of being-in-the-world. I had seen it, lived it and lived with it, and almost hated it.

I identified myself as the boy who was not going to be so stupid.
Harry's story was radically different, in spite of the similarities. For Harry, the more pressing question - and remember, Gadamer argues that our stories are answers to our questions - was not how to escape discomfort and poverty: the more pressing question concerned who he was and where he came from. His most compelling task, his preoccupation, had been to account for the feeling of being different, the feeling that something dramatic and significant had always been missing from his life and from his understanding. So when he found an answer to that question, it was an epiphanous moment and of course he now has concerns whenever it seems he is in danger of betraying his Koori heritage and his Koori identity. Whenever, that is, his occupation clashes with his preoccupation.

I now wanted to go further back in the story of Harry's life, to deepen my understanding of the preoccupations that drove his concerns and his actions. I asked him to tell me more about his childhood.

*I was placed in a boarding school in grade two. Dad was Koori, but never said so. Mum was from Melbourne and white: her family had been moneyed - my greatgrandmother lived in Malvern, around the corner from Menzies.409 Billy Snedden410 used to pick her up and take her to vote. She was a Melbourne socialite - I've seen press cuttings.*

*There's a story in my family of how my greatgrandmother entertained the officers from a Japanese war ship. One of the officers fell in love with my*
grandmother, who was then a 17 year-old, and he told her that he would look after her when they returned.

But that never happened. Instead, she married a Western suburbs boy, a drinker, a footballer who tried out for Richmond.

There is a paradox there.

My greatgrandmother took me into Menzies’ house and I met him, when I was a preschooler. Yet I was living in the Housing Commission with mum. We lived at Jacana, which is part of Broadmeadows.

But from Grade Two onwards, I was in boarding school in Cobram. I was sent there because of dysfunction in the family. There was domestic violence - dad hitting mum, and the problem of mum's epilepsy. Mixed into that situation, was dad's stolen identity, and mum's attempt to live a heritage from another part of town.

There was much for me to comment on and interpret here. Again there are remarkable parallels between events in Harry's life and my own, and thinking about Harry's story and working to understand his story, causes me to rethink and in some ways to re-understand my own story.411

411 'Dad hitting mum' was a painfully real part of my early story, a part which challenged my ability to see myself as doing the right thing - How can a son stand by while his mother is bashed, even if he is only five or six years old? The need to act, combined with the impossibility of acting, creates a reading of oneself as powerless: a reading which may well inhibit later attempts at social and narrative agency.

Both Harry and I have been affected by that childhood reading of our identities and yet, for reasons that neither of us can explain, we both have also been able to move beyond that sense of who we are. My guess is that we have been able to place narrational forces - the drive to create a meaningful story for ourselves - ahead of psychological forces, at least in this area of our lives.
My interest was also taken however, by a strong parallel in the situations of Harry's grandmother, and his mother. Both chose to marry men from 'the wrong side of the tracks' (and although Harry's grandmother did not marry a sailor, she was courted by one - it is as if the daughter has copied the pattern of the mother's desire). I asked Harry, "How do you explain your mother's dichotomous approach to life? She went to fine private schools, her grandmother lived in a mansion, yet she chose to marry someone from an opposite social location"?

Dad was a sailor when mum met him. He served in Korea, then worked in the Post Office, and in Customs. I guess there were lots of reasons why she married him, and I think one was that her mother had done something similar.

This point about his mother and grandmother led me to suggest that Harry also had a strong theme of dichotomy in his life. He readily agreed.

A series of them:
Growing up in the Northern Suburbs of Melbourne but being educated at boarding school with the sons of wealthy graziers from the Western Districts.
Having to be aware of and having to deal with, the prejudices of both groups.
Class dichotomies: my grandmother's arrogance and elitism, my father the sailor.
And the dichotomies of black and white.
I suppose that it's come to be very important to me that I can cross the bridge between both sides. I can be true to my values from both places. But that didn't come until my Koori identity emerged.

Prior to that, I learnt to act in both groups - I remember teaching myself how to swear, living in Broady, living around punters who'd been relocated from the bulldozed South Melbourne slums. I was about four years old.

But in Prep, mum put me in Essendon Grammar. She pressured dad to earn more money, because her family had always had private education.

Imagine a Prep boy walking half a mile to a station and travelling ten stops to the school. That's how it was until a wino tried to abduct me. Because of that incident and tensions at home - dad becoming more dysfunctional and more violent - I was taken out of Essendon Grammar and sent off to a boarding school in grade two.

These comments are highly significant. Harry says that he can now be true to values from both sides, but prior to the emergence of his Koori identity, he had to learn to 'act' appropriately in both groups: with the punters from Broadmeadows and also with the sons of Melbourne's upper middle class, and then later with the graziers' sons from the rich Western District of Victoria.

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412 When Harry's mother was found dead in a field, the police interviewed his father as a suspect, based upon his history of violence. Eventually the decision was that she had suffered from an epileptic seizure and had fallen on a rock, crushing her skull. Harry now describes himself as being primarily a pacifist.
To understand Harry's need to learn how to 'act' in different social groups, we can turn to the social theory of Bourdieu, as presented and discussed in Chapter Four; and to understand the significance of the emergence of his Koori identity, we can turn to Existentialist theory, and in particular to the notion of authentic historiography.

On Bourdieu's account of habitus, our dispositions to act are embodied, out-of-awareness reflections of our early social locations. We do not initially set out to learn how to act in ways that are appropriate to those locations; rather, we develop a 'feel for the game'. But in Harry's case, his social location was not stable. He was moved between the polarities of wealth and poverty, privilege and struggle. The usual processes of socialisation could not take hold and he was therefore obliged to consciously, thematically, focus upon how to act - and if our behaviour is thematic rather than pre-reflective, it is experienced as 'acting' rather than as being. This way of understanding Harry's situation, also gives me an understanding of why, as an adult, Harry is unusually adept at perceiving the sociopolitical nuances of organisational life, and why he is able to use that awareness to his advantage. It is not so much a 'feel for the game' that Harry brings to educational institutions and governmental committees, as a learnt ability to read the games that organisational players engage in - sometimes better than those who operate primarily from knowing how to behave without consciously knowing what they know.

The lack of certainty and the absence of feeling that he was at-home-in-the-world (a lack which is usually filled by habitus) would also account for Harry's early feelings that 'something was missing'. When he discovered his Koori identity, Harry entered into a realisation of what had been missing not only from his understanding of his identity but also
missing from the day-to-day enactment of his identity. Harry can now be true to both of the sides from which he has come, and true in a sense that goes beyond his early days of 'acting' because, although his feel for the game of each side is not embodied at the depths that I associate with Bourdieu's account of habitus, he is nevertheless able to take - and to act upon - an historiographical understanding of his identity, and of his Koori identity in particular.

Harry has made a study of Koori history, and he seeks to be true to it in all three of the senses described by Heidegger: monumental, antiquarian, and critical. He looks at Koori history for models of life based upon what were once living possibilities for his people; he also looks at that history with a concern for remembering the historical Koori values that he should be loyal to; and he looks to Koori history as an alternative horizon of understanding from the present: an horizon from which the present can be criticised. Harry often expresses concern, for instance, about what he considers to have been the “colonisation of the curriculum” in our primary and secondary schools - a colonisation which involves a misrepresentation of the Koori identity. This desire to live out his sense of identity in a fashion which meets with Heidegger's account of authentic historiography, leads Harry into uncertainty about what for others would be a straightforward and unquestioning entry into the corporate world, and to uncertainty about the enactment of his identity within the context of the Masters in Marketing Course.

Given the understanding of Harry's particular interweaving of narrative and social agency - of identity and career - that has been presented, I decided that it was time to explore his thinking about power and its uses. Bourdieu argues that social agents employ varying forms of capital in
their pursuit of success. In Harry's case, I wondered how his Koori identity provided power. I asked him to talk about some of the ways in which he has power in his career.

*That's a good one. A strong early lesson taught me something about myself and power. About three years out of Dip Ed, I was a principal, and I thought that having my name and title on the door was all I needed. Subsequent revolutions showed me how overrated formal position power is. My powers come more from positions of non-authority. Every time I've tried to use formal power, I've been pathetic.*

Why?

*I like to be seen as fair, even though that perhaps represents insecurity. I've been a victim of people in power making wrong and unfair decisions, so my Achilles Heel in regard to making management decisions is an insistence on fairness and a refusal to use a forcing style.*

How though, do you have power?

*As a loose cannon - being able to break rules, I get want I want. Last night for instance, at that committee meeting I was telling you about, I got what I wanted. The 15 recommendations that went to Sue Smith from that report were what I wanted. I drove the six most controversial of them, and that required disempowering opposition from the Aboriginal community and from others.*

And in what way were you breaking the rules?
There are Aboriginal protocols of consultation that should have been followed but weren't. From the non-Koori side, the Committee was meant to be constituted by Deans, but I'm not. I was the only non-Dean academic present, a maverick, because as a Dean I would have been more constrained by Southern University mechanisms.

Still thinking about the power issue, Harry, if you look back on your career achievements, what do you think has enabled them?

That bridging concept that I mentioned the other time. Being able to bridge the difference between graziers and Broady boys, between being an academic and being a Koori. That's a source of power, bridging the two groups, being able to read their needs and wants, and then acting politically. Managing the wants and needs of the different groups tends to lower their defences.

Harry then began to talk about not being able to manage the conflicting needs and wants within his marriage. That part of the conversation is too personal to include here, but I can say that he considers that his wife’s discomfort with his Kooriness and all that it entails, has been a major difficulty for them both. So identity enters into all the territories that we inhabit, and it does not cease to matter, no matter where we are.

Now I wanted to directly tackle the issue of identity and career. I began by asking Harry: "In what ways have you found it possible to express your identity in your work?"
Well, as I've said, I went through a major identity realignment. Up till then, I guess my career as an educator was linked to my upbringing in schools - I grew up in a school, and I fell into education.

After the realignment, I was amazed to discover that my indigenous family was also highly involved in education. Tracking into my culture, I could see that my style of teaching is linked to an indigenous philosophy of education.

That philosophy permeates everything I do. I see that philosophy as superior to others. In the last three years at Southern University, for instance, I've been invited by two students to their weddings. How many academics does that happen to? The indigenous philosophy of education is based on relationships and on the interchangeability of the teacher with the learner.

I can see how your career as an educator has definitely enabled expression of a central aspect of your Koori identity, but have there also been ways in which your career has got in the way of your identity and its expression?

When I was running the Aboriginal school, there were kids who were my blood relations going home to third world conditions while I had a 65k salary, an air-conditioned office, and a departmental car. On true Koori values, my role in society should have been placed no higher than theirs. I was embarrassed by the contrast in how we lived and in how we were rewarded for who we were. I found myself asking how fair dinkum I was about being Aboriginal.
I can see how that question would have imposed itself upon you then, but why do you find your current situation less problematic?

*Because my job now is not operating in the Aboriginal world. In my first six months here at Southern University, I found it hard to be in a non-aboriginal place.*

*I see myself in the tradition of my nation - guerillas. I'm in the camp of the enemy trying to open the door from the inside, and I guess the success of the Aboriginal group in the Masters Course is proof that that can work.*

*But I don't want to be stereotyped as the token black in the place.*

This is where we chose to finish the series of conversations. It is a fine place to finish, because we are left with such a clear statement of Harry's dilemma in terms of the mutual contouring of identity and career. He wants to be known as Koori, but does not want to be a token black. Harry sees both the honour in his position, and the danger that his public identity could come to lose its meaning if it is used by the university as part of a façade. That misuse of his public identity would threaten his private sense of identity, and the threat consists of being treated in such a fashion that he comes to read himself as an Marketing Jacky Jacky, rather than an educator in the Koori tradition and a guerilla for his people.
Chapter Nine: the Story of Anthea Williams

As we talked through this series of conversations, Anthea was embroiled in a drama concerning the politics of organisational life, and the development and implementation of the educational program that she had designed. She often found it difficult to extract her mood from that of the struggle she was engaged in, in order to enter fully into our discussions. One of my strategies therefore, was to provide Anthea with time and space to vent her current frustrations, and then link the accompanying issues to the longer-term issues and themes that I was primarily wanting to have her reflect upon.

Anthea was born in England, the second of five children: three brothers and two sisters. The family migrated to Australia when she was nine, and her father found work as a waterside worker in South Australia. He has played a major role in the shaping of her outlook, and perhaps also her temperament. She speaks of his advice about how to cope with things and about what matters most in life, as “a philosophy”.

Her organisational career began in retailing, switched to human resource management, then to industrial relations, and now she is an educator who is particularly concerned to develop and deliver programs that provide open entry to education for those who are already in the workplace but who have lacked educational opportunities. That concern is one of the themes of her identity, as is a concern for justice at the local, interpersonal level. A third theme manifests itself as a disposition to walk...
away from what she does not like: a cheerful belief in being able to start again somewhere better. Overlying those three themes however, is a complicating factor: a desire to conceal her private identity when in public, organisational life, and to present an image that deflects attention from, rather than directs attention to, the historical person behind the professional façade.

Anthea’s career has been characterised by a seeming aimlessness on the surface and a series of themes to do with justice and independence, already mentioned, which function below the surface and which have provided an unseen but felt direction and set of aims. She left school at fourteen and since then has consistently rejected any attempts by teachers or academics to misuse their power and belittle the life experiences of their students. As a result, she has begun but never completed a series of degrees and diplomas as an adult, and now finds herself in the unusual situation of being a lecturer in a University without a tertiary qualification.

When I asked Anthea if she would be interested in discussing her identity and career, she said yes, but also indicated that the whole notion was problematic for her. I therefore began the first interview by asking her what she found to be problematic about the conjunction of identity and career.

I often feel that I would be kicked out of my job if people knew who I really was. I present myself in certain ways in the company of others - their status and the assumptions that they make about me, influence how I present myself before them. I find it amusing and rewarding that they'll
say negative things about someone's behaviour or situation, and only I know that I have behaved that way or been in that situation.

It's amusing to be working at a university when I didn't even know they existed until I was 23.413

I asked Anthea to say more about why she presented a false front at work.

People I work with may not have faith in my skills if they knew my history. Right now, the Dean is being presented with an illusion.

I commented that this attitude certainly raised an interesting issue about the relationship between identity and career. That comment was motivated by a desire to hear her elaborate.

I think that we all have a front that we present at work, and because I'm new in this organisation, I haven't shared too much about my home self. There is a risk that their expectations may not be met at some stage.

These opening remarks from Anthea represent an opposite concern to Harry's: whereas he wanted a public identity which directly reflected his private identity, Anthea seems to want a public identity which conceals and deflects attention away from her private identity. I decided to move into learning more about what has happened in her life, that has led her to have this preference for having multiple narratives about her identity in

413 Just as there were parallels between Harry's career and mine, so too there are parallels between Anthea's career and mine. Although I knew that universities existed before I was 23, I did not enter one until then, and there are some ways in which that late entry has left ongoing doubts about the legitimacy of my identity as an academic. Those doubts helped me to empathise with what she was telling me.
different contexts. She began with what she considered to be the first major event in her lifestory: migration to Australia as a child.

_I was born in Manchester, and when I was nine, the family migrated to Australia and my father worked as a waterside worker in South Australia._

_At 23 I was a HR manager in a manufacturing company, and it troubled the Managing Director that someone so young should be in that role. So he organised for me to go to Chandler and McLeod for testing and the results were better than any other manager in the company. Then my boss could say "I was right." That’s the sort of ridiculous way that people think – unless you look right, right age, right qualifications, right gender, then you’re not legitimate. He was worried that if I made mistakes people would point at me and say “But couldn’t you see!”_

There is a possibility here that this manager’s initial doubting of her ability stands out from the vast backdrop of events in Anthea’s life, and is chosen by her as a key episode in her story, because his attitude is iconographic for her own consistent doubts about herself – doubts that led Anthea to read herself in the same way: namely, as someone whose credentials for occupying a senior or responsible position, are questionable. We shall return to a discussion of this possibility in the concluding chapter.

It is also remarkable that in telling this story about her early life, Anthea jumped so far in terms of time from childhood to early adulthood, with no intervening episodes. This was a storytelling that related as directly as possible to her reasons for preferring to maintain a multiply storied identity. I did not comment, but waited for her to say more.
When Chandler and McCleod sent a psychologist to explain the results to me, he said "Have you thought about going to university?"

But TAFE was nearer so that's where I went. Along the way in my career, I started an Arts Degree but left halfway through, and a postgraduate diploma and left halfway through, and that's the nature of me. I had a full time job, a four year old daughter and I fell pregnant.

These actions – beginning courses but not completing them, choosing TAFE rather than University, because it ‘was nearer’ – could be read as an unintentional maintenance of an identity in which her formal qualifications or credentials remain dubious. I did not comment on that possibility at this stage however; instead, I said: "That's a practical explanation for dropping out of courses, but what do you mean by the comment "that's the nature of me?"") This question was designed to shift Anthea from her focus on explaining the background to her preference for a multiply storied identity, to a more leisurely exploration of her identity and its sources - for without that broader exploration, we were unlikely to reach a thorough understanding of the distinction and separation that Anthea maintains between her public and her private identity.

My life has been full of constant change - my father says there is a gypsy in our family. We moved around so much that I went to seven primary schools and three high schools.

The fact that I was moved around as a kid was never something that I saw as negative because it was always done with excitement and anticipation: never with a sadness about leaving. When we moved from Whyalla to
Elwood,\textsuperscript{414} I was 13 and a friend of mine was upset but my dad was a philosopher who said "just enjoy what you have - you'll meet new friends and might meet Linda again later."

The whole idea of life was fun - that was a gift he gave us. Today might be all you've got, so we're a family of risk takers.

I've never asked myself why I did this or that. There hasn't been a masterplan.

Industy students who I had on Saturday from 9 to 4, I got to know them pretty well, and you throw in some anecdotes about the work you've done but they want to know 'How did you get to where you are now?' but I can't answer them because there was no plan. I just kept going.

So the failure to finish courses of study is something that Anthea reads as being ‘natural’ for her because of the ‘gypsy’ in her nature – a predisposition that Bourdieu, like Anthea, would account for by referring to the family practices of moving on from one place to another and shifting their children from one school to another. In those comments, Anthea also provides a further part of the reason that she finds the conjunction of identity and career to be problematic: namely that she considers her career to have been unplanned, and therefore not reflective of anything in particular, let alone her identity. Nevertheless, even at this stage of the storytelling, we can see Anthea’s approach to her career as

\textsuperscript{414} I too was a student at Elwood High when I was thirteen. It turned out to be my last year of full-time schooling, and like Anthea, I came to Elwood as a stranger, a teenage outsider. I am not sure what to make of coincidences such as this one, and the coincidences I have already noted between Harry and myself. Perhaps nothing needs to be made of them - in some way they speak for themselves about
reflecting the lifestyle of the gypsy that her father mentioned: wandering with no particular destination in mind. It could well be that the gypsy image, as a guiding metaphor, has had a more pervasive influence upon Anthea’s enacted sense of who she is, than she herself has realised. The hermeneutic challenge of this case, then, was to go beyond Anthea's understanding and reveal the manner in which her identity and career have been mutually contouring, even though she did not read her stories in that fashion at the time when we began the research conversations.

I next asked for more information about the major project that Anthea is currently working on, because her enthusiasm for that project suggested a way into seeing her career values in action and perhaps thereby, some further aspects of her identity in action. She has developed a workplace integrated learning program for managers, and describes it as being about ‘learner-driven learning’.

*What the program does is provide a context in which managers who need to develop their human skills can do so without having their intellect threatened, and away from the politics of their organisation. We adopted an emphasis on communication and understanding as essential for Australian managers whether they’re engineers, technicians, or factory supervisors.*

I asked her to begin this story earlier, rather than continuing to outline the intellectual genesis of the project: where had *she* come from that had led to what she is doing now?

synchronicity, and about the similarities of stories to be found amongst people from similar social locations.
I was a consultant to an Association. That Association was a union, and is now a powerful professional body. Brian was my boss, before he went to work with a government taskforce.

There are people like Brian who have known me in a previous life - I see distinct blocks of seven years in my life and that's mainly a turnover of people so the new people don't know the old parts of who I am.

(Here, Anthea returns to her theme of identity and career as disjunctive and discordant. She seems almost compelled to discuss that issue rather than stay with the genesis of her current career project.)

It's been 14 years, for instance, since I saw my older brother. I left home when I was 18.415 Only my husband, who I've known since I was 16, has known me across all the changes in career and location: but he hasn't been to the places where I work, so there are gaps in his knowledge of me too.

(There is nothing particularly unusual about one’s spouse not having visited one’s place of work. It is as if Anthea wanted it to be the case that she remains partly unknown to everyone, and therefore looks for reasons to support a belief that her desire is being realised.)

415 I too have not seen my older brother for many years - 21, in fact; and I left home when I was 16. Unlike Anthea however, I do not wish to see my brother again; whereas in her case, she insists that they would greet each other with genuine pleasure.
We do have two lives in the sense of having different roles and different personas. When I came to Southern University, there was a crisis of who I wanted to be perceived as.

If I had a conversation with a senior manager, I would have a fixed idea of how I wanted to be seen - I would have a plan and also contingency plans, and all of them are goal directed.

(Again, I could interpret this comment from Anthea as pointing to a desire to remain unknown. Rather than present that interpretation to her at this stage however, I decided to gather more of the story, because my awareness of the hermeneutic circle influenced me to keep all early interpretations as tentative as possible. To look more closely at the nature of ‘not being known’, I will refer in the concluding chapter to the views of Octavio Paz416 on culture and disguise.)

Prior to this conversation, I had asked Anthea to draw a lifeline, plotting major life and career events over time. I took that idea from Cochran, as outlined in Chapter Two of this dissertation, and the lifeline idea includes placement of events not only in chronological order, but also in relation to whether they were experienced as negative or positive. Positive events were to be placed above the timeline, and negative events below. When I asked Anthea to show me her line, she handed it to me with a comment:

I had to look for things to put below the line, just because I knew you would want me to. My husband John was retrenched 15 years ago, and I put that below the line, but it really didn't upset me, I just said "Oh, you

416 Paz, O. op. cit.
could do x or y." I just spoke about the mechanical issues, whereas his friends were all worried about how upset their wives would be. I can't see the point in crying.

How then, does she explain this positive outlook?

It just shows the value of my father's teachings. I have lived them: he lived life as if every day was a bonus. About 12 years ago, I had contact with a woman who was depressed and she'd say "Why do you always look on the bright side?" The same thing happened when other mothers noticed how I relate to my children. It wasn't obvious to me that I was treating my kids differently, but over time, people kept asking, "Don't you ever get upset with them?" I just thought I was treating my kids the same way that everyone else does. I overlooked how often other people get annoyed or upset. It seems natural to me to just accept things as they come.

Part of this outlook can be explained by what I call "the doll story". When we left England, I had a big doll that I loved and wanted to bring with me, but my mother insisted that it was too big and that they would not let us on the plane with it. I had to leave it behind.

It was really difficult for me to leave that doll, and I had to work very hard to hide my disappointment even though my family knew how I felt, and in hindsight, my mother realised that I could have taken it, it was just that she didn't have the courage to ask. So in Singapore, where we stopped off, my parents bought me a bride doll in compensation (my mother has a fixation with brides). It was a beautiful big doll, and I did like it, but we put it on top of the wardrobe in the hotel room, and forgot
to take it. I found though, that this time I wasn’t so upset, so the lesson was that you can suffer losses and move on.

We finished this part of the conversation at that point. “The lesson” that Anthea took from that story is only one of several possible ways of reading the story. Another child may have concluded that life consists of repeated disappointments, or that constant vigilance is required if one is to avoid loss, or that not even one’s parents can be trusted to do the right thing. For me the doll story illustrates not so much “the lesson” of that episode in her life as it does the impact that Anthea’s father’s outlook and encouragement had upon her way of reading events. Importantly for theory, his was an influence that we cannot account for solely by reference to social location – we are looking at a habitus in this example – and can account for its influence in terms of a child’s susceptibility to adopting and employing the narrative understandings of significant others, particularly before that child has developed its own life-reading skills. Fortunately for Anthea, she was influenced by a significant other who read the world from an optimistic horizon of understanding.

I next decided to let Anthea talk about whatever she wanted to, because I wanted to continue to move toward a process which was open and exploratory rather than narrowly and too purposefully focused. She chose to talk about her feelings at work as she was going through a difficult time with her project.

*There's a part of me that really doesn't want to be here.*

What is that part, and what does it want to do?
Gardening, paving. If I won Tatslotto, tomorrow, I wouldn't come back. There are other things like buying an antique shop or a book shop, or doing some writing: fiction or training manuals.

What is the attraction in those alternatives?

I wouldn't have to deal with people. I used to say I could live on a mountain. If I had a choice I wouldn't talk to anyone.

Others say I'm a people person, but I know I'm not. I don't mind if we do or we don't have visitors. We partly moved because too many neighbours wanted to get to know me.

(This was certainly beginning to confirm my early reading that Anthea interprets herself as being unknown because she does not want to be known.) I asked: How do you explain that dislike of being known?

Seven of us living in a three bedroom house when I was young. My older brothers always had friends around - the lounge was always full. They were nice to me, but ...

I shared the bedroom with my sister who was eight or ten years older. She had it divided in such a way that she had four fifths and I had one fifth.

I never complained and was always happy. But my siblings were always hostile, bickering, and maybe I decided that at the very least I'd be different. (It seems to me that this decision comes close to being an Existential decision: a desire for the totality of her behaviour to add up to
a character that was opposite to what she saw around her.) Mum had a temper. She threw my brother's guitar out the window - but the next day it was like nothing had happened.

Here Anthea has (inadvertently or intentionally?) veered away from the question about her dislike of being known, and onto an earlier topic: her optimistic temperament.

*I inherited from my dad, or perhaps I followed his example.*

My sister was often unpleasant to me and I didn't want to be like her. It's always been important to me to show that I can be different, to show that I can choose to do things my way. Being my own person, whether I'm at home or at work, is a big thing for me. When I was fourteen, I came home from work one day and mum said: “I’ve got a letter from Pat. She’s depressed but I can’t go because Shawn is still at school, how about you?” Pat, my older sister, was in Perth and was missing the family.

So of course I went, just like that.

What motivated you to go?

*Someone asked me. That was enough. I always say ‘Yes’ – as the youngest sibling, I always had to, and I guess that habit stuck. Now that’s a problem at work.*

Do you say ‘Yes’ to every request from everyone at work?
No. There are some people that I always say ‘No’ to. I get really annoyed when I see someone using their power to make things unpleasant for people at lower levels.

What’s the personal explanation for that annoyance?

One older brother would literally throw me down the stairs, beat me up if he was in a bad mood. Danny always treated me well though, so I saw the two uses of power. And dad was a Socialist.

So now I say 'No' to that sort of person whenever I can.

Going to Perth, I ‘grew up’. Coming back to Melbourne with my sister and her husband (he had lost his job), I was the only one with money. We stopped over at Port Headland, in a little town called Wickham. I got a job in the shop at the garage.

My two brothers arrived, also looking for work. Danny’s number was up for Vietnam, so he ran.417

Danny’s car was in the garage being fixed when he learnt that the military police knew where he was, so he decided to run. It was early in the morning and he woke me up and said “Sis, I need your help” because the garage wasn’t open yet and I had keys because I was working there. I opened the locks for him and he just took the car, along with tools and supplies from the shop that he put in the boot just before my boss arrived.

417 I too had a Perth incident in my life, only in my case it was associated with Perth, Tasmania. And my older brother, Johnny, also ran from the police when his number came up for Vietnam.
Danny said “Oh hi, I’m Anthea’s brother.” Then we all drove off. We were caught on the road near Kalgoorlie and had to spend a night in prison. I can still remember how cold it was in the cell with just a single blanket. We had to stay in Kalgoorlie for three days until Danny went to court.

What does your story of this incident mean to you?

*It’s a transition story. It’s partly about proving my resilience to myself, and partly about recognising that I was suddenly on an equal footing to my brother – he was actually asking me for advice.*

*The need to prove that I can do things my way recurs now at work. Someone will say “you can’t use an external graphics person” so I will, just to show that if I want to, I can.*

So, Anthea, do you see any other ways in which life experiences like the one you just told me about, re-appear in some form, in your career?

*I don’t see myself as having a career – I just work. I’ve never planned a career and I still don’t. Work is what I do because I need an income, and it’s that simple.*

When we resumed our conversation, I asked Anthea to say something about power and politics – it seemed that it would be a long time yet before she recognised the mutual contouring of life and career that I was seeing in the stories she was telling me, so I decided not to return to that issue for a while.
I came to Southern University with the deliberate intention to stay away from the political games that people play, but things are heating up politically and it’s hard to ignore it. I could have gone to DEETYA\textsuperscript{418} or worked as a HR manager in a chemical company. I was offered both those positions, but I didn’t want a high profile.

The mess of work keeps me from life. I can deal with business, but I do not like meetings, the grandiose, boring meetings at which I try not to – but I do – become involved. People just sit at these meetings and say the most ridiculous things, and boast about what they’re doing. I really have no patience for it. When I become involved, even though I wish I wasn’t there, I can’t help speaking up about some things, and then I get yet another task to do, another job.

Why do you think things work out that way?

Maybe I think I know everything; maybe I’m trying to be helpful.

Could it be a sense of competence that comes from some of the earlier experiences you have been telling me about, like just walking out of school and getting a job that same afternoon?

Yes, I’m like a steam train sometimes. I’ve developed a program in two months that a committee would have developed in two years. My first company client have told senior management at Southern University that the program works, and now senior management wants to control the program. Here’s my description (handing me a document) of how the

\textsuperscript{418} Department of Education, Employment, Training, and Youth Affairs.
program should be implemented, three pages, with their names on it, and an invitation for me to attend a meeting that management have called so they can tell me about how to implement the program, using my ideas that they are now calling theirs. Can you believe it. They give me back my own words with their names printed on the top as authors!

I’m already running the program at three organisations, but I’m still a team of one. I’ve already told management that I need a team, but they want to regurgitate my own work to me and hold a second meeting. I would write them a business plan but they’d just regurgitate it rather than act on it.

It’s important to me that the project gets up and running and I can say that I was part of it. My plan is if I can put up with it, I’ll stay here for a while. The motivation is that I’ve had difficulty getting a formal qualification. So I empathise with managers who don’t have them, but who are doing it really well, but who are at risk if they are rentrenched; and it’s a self-esteem issue for them.

This program allows those people to get a formal qualification in a way that suits them. The program is learner-driven.

My comment here is about the preoccupations that we act out in our occupations. Just as I have been motivated to help adults coming back to study in my career, because I strongly identified with their situation and experience, Anthea too seems to be motivated to work at a project which impacts favourably on people who match her sense of identity. She emphasises that she is a far more effective manager than the managers at Southern University (who have tertiary qualifications), and that she has
had difficulty getting formal qualifications, and then, remarkably, describes her client group in the very same terms.

I therefore asked Anthea to talk about her identification with the sort of student for whom she has designed the course.

*My first job as a personnel officer was in a manufacturing company. The personnel manager was an army Major who thought the workers were beneath him. He knew no-one’s name. When I walked around with him, with his seven years of experience, my impression was that he thought the workers were beneath him, while I was smiling at people.*

*He didn’t do much work and I was impatient. I was only 22 and full of energy. I’d come to this place after working as a store manager in Puckle Street, Moonee Ponds. While I was working in the store, I met a girl who worked for Medicare and the way she described her job, it sounded like a bludge. Whereas I had customers to contend with, theft, weekend work; she had less hours, less stress, less responsibility, and she was paid more! So I went back to work determined to get a job in an office.*

*I walked into the CES and said “I want a job in an office”. I couldn’t type or operate a switchboard so I got personnel. And the Major liked the idea of saying that he had a retail manager working for him.*

*This fellow would start work at 8.30, so he’d arrive at 8.29. He’d begin by combing his hair and polishing his shoes. But he had nothing for me to do: “file those papers”. So I helped on reception, I asked people at the pay office what they did, where I learnt a lot.*
And I filled in time by going to look for documents, forms and so on in the factory, and that way I got to know all the staff. From that beginning I eventually got the Major’s job. That wasn’t intentional on my part. I’d started running induction programs, recruitment processes. There was a 120% turnover, so after a year, I had hired almost all the staff.

(Once again, Anthea is emphasising the unplanned nature of her career - its reflection of nothing other than happenstance - and yet, if we think back to Bourdieu, we can see that our reactions to happenstance are not so arbitrary or unpredictable, but are instead a reflection of the dispositions of a habitus.)

The consequence of all that is that it’s easy to look good when you’re following someone who is lousy. Harold was a lousy HR manager. He looked down on the factory workers, and called them from the steel factory into his area, his carpet and upholstered chairs. They were uncomfortable and nervous and he took advantage. If someone came and said “the tea money hasn’t come through”, or “Kevin hasn’t got his overtime money”, Harold would say “Now, now, Charlie, these processes take time.” He was so condescending and lazy and although they couldn’t stand up to him, they knew what he was doing.

Seeing that and getting to know the workers individually, it was easy to take over his position with the power to make their working lives better.

Why did that matter to you – did you identify with Charlie’s emotions and position?
Yes. One applicant from England, when he came in looking for a job, asked if he could take the form home to fill in, but Harold's rule was that it had to be done here. He could see that this poor fellow couldn't write, but he just didn’t care. That humiliated people. My problem though, was whether I should hire the guy, knowing that he can’t read or write.

Why not say ‘illiterate’?

The term does not please me. It implies a more profound deficiency than simply not having had the opportunity to learn.

Could your annoyance with managers who meet but not act, go back to your earlier frustration with a world that should be organised better to be fairer?

Yes. They discount the negative messages as “We know, Charlie, but it’s not that easy.” Some have power, and if they were smart they’d use other people’s decisions.

The conversation ended at this point, as I had found a hermetic link between the different areas that we had covered: a link between Anthea’s experiences at the factory and her current experiences with Southern University and its management.

At our next meeting, I pointed out that last time we spoke, we identified the relationship between Anthea's experience in the factory and the meaning that she finds in what she is doing now.
It’s weird. I never set out to gain revenge for those people. This wasn’t planned, in spite of what career texts say. Work is something that happened while I was living my life.

But how then, do you come to be in this position, designing a course that has the potential to empower factory workers by lifting the skills and understandings of their managers?

There’s no doubt I’ve felt that abuse of power is wrong. I had lots of experiences of that. Remember that the era 1975 to 1980 was one in which equal opportunity still did not apply in retail. Less than 20% of retail positions were held by men, but all the senior positions were held by men. I was in charge of a store in Moonee Ponds, yet I had no control over decision making.

My staff tried hard and they responded to me treating them with respect. I hired a little 15 year old and I guess I saw myself in her, and she worked hard, but there were budget cuts and she had to go. I found her another job in a hardware store up the road.

Next day the company sent a window dresser whose costs for six weeks were the annual salary of that girl. Could they not have given me the power to make that decision and dress that window myself?

Dad used to say, “You’re no different in the bath”; “no-one’s better than you but you’re no better than anyone else.” If you swanked about a high grade at school, he’d pull you up. He had an absolute sense of justice and fairness.
This seems to be a theme in your story, Anthea. What themes do you think characterize your life? Would you include social justice?

Yes and no. There is also an economic side of my life; I don’t want to carry a placard for justice. It’s more at the local level that I want people who abuse power to come to feel what it’s like to be on the other side. That’s the only way they’ll learn from it.

When I come across these people, people who abuse their power, I know that it’s not the first time they’ve done it.

Is there a connection between your program and this desire for local justice?

Yes. If I think back to these people, Jim, the plant engineer at ARC, I was one level below him initially, and at the same level the next year, and one above the following year. At first if I offered him advice, as a 23-year-old lass, he’d just pat me on the head. Next year I wouldn’t advise him, I’d tell him and the next week I would order him. The question I had to ask was if I should continue trying to work with him or if I should take advantage of my power and just tell him to do a better job with people. In the end, I ordered him.

But I have to ask myself why was Jim like that? Because he was an engineer, trained to dismantle machines. He’d shout and swear at people just like he’d shout and swear at the machines. There was no people management in engineering degrees. Eventually, he’d ask me how to handle some of his people problems. So my thought is to get to these
technical managers at the workplace so they feel more confident about their people skills.

What impact did experiences like those with Jim have on you?

*It showed me that people present themselves differently to their reality, and maybe I learnt how to do that from him. When I moved to HR manager at a local Council, I think I walked in on my first day wearing a cloak to make people see me as a manager.*

*By moving through the levels at ARC, I learnt that managers are not the way they present themselves.*

It was now time to ask Anthea where she would like to go next in her career.

*I have never had any plans and I find it hard to think about that question.*

*Two years ago, I tried to plan and I enrolled in a law degree – it was an off-campus course run by Deakin University. I wasn’t happy where I was working, and that unhappiness was a motivation to try some further study and maybe change careers dramatically.*

*I was also motivated because Deakin set up their communications in such a way that you got the feeling that if you got through the test then you were privileged, and that led me to accept a place in the course. I had to go to Geelong on some weekends, read books and read cases.*
I guess because I’d dealt with lawyers through the industrial relations work I had been doing, that I expected it would be like that, but I discovered that I had to write essays on negligence or contravention of the fair trading act. The research took a lot of time and I found it boring and laborious.

Just as I was getting disillusioned with that course, I did a moot court and was praised by the judge, so I kept going for a year and a half. No one at home liked me being away on the weekends though. And I started to think more seriously about the logistics of being a ‘young lawyer’ on a low salary at my age.

So now it just depends on whether this new course that I’m doing retains my attention and fits into my home life. Boredom is a factor and in my life, if I don’t get what I want, I know how to go. In our family, you just disappeared and you didn’t go back to things.

When I decided to leave retailing, and get a job in an office, the other woman I worked with was surprised. You just couldn’t do that.

Is being able to move in your career – making changes, just going to something new when you are bored or aggrieved – is that more meaningful than other possibilities in your career?

Yes, because I’ve moved in ways that suit my family.

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419 Since our conversations began, Anthea had enrolled in a postgraduate diploma of Leadership and Change Management.
Where do you think this feeling that family matters more than career comes from?

For my family, my parents and siblings, the family always came first. Perhaps not in material terms, but in the sense of loyalty, being there for each other, being available.

I haven’t seen my brother in 14 years, but I know that if I arrived on his door, he’d take me in.

In addition to family life, what do you want to do or have?

That sounds like an assumption that I wanted a family. I didn’t want to marry till I was 23, but I met John at 16, and after many breakups, his ability to come back and his wanting to get engaged so that I wouldn’t go, is what led to a family, it wasn’t really my pushing for it.

Is it perhaps hard to answer the question of where to go next in your career in a way that’s different from this history of putting the family first?

What is a career?

A project or a set of projects that are aimed at results that you consider to be worthwhile.

There’s always something in my head, even if it’s not a plan. This writing thing is not going away, so I guess I’ll give it a try. A friend would also like to do a Masters and we could do it together. That would probably
make me more inclined. Perhaps I could do the IR/HR Masters. Partly because that’s what I already know, and partly because I could do it with someone. I know they’re not good reasons.

Next, I asked Anthea to talk about arrangements she wanted to make concerning pathways to further study for the graduates of her program, and her annoyance at academics who were putting up barriers to those pathways. She was also annoyed at barriers that she perceived to her entering a Masters program in Accounting.

_I just don’t have the patience for people; they either give me what I want or I just go somewhere else. That’s been the story of my life. And I’ve only recently realised how threatening that is to people._

_I just have a personal dislike of gatekeepers officiously closing the gate on people who want to learn. If the learner is informed about the learning process then it’s the judgement call of the learner about whether she’s right for the course._

_I went to the information evening for Accounting and it was really about what you as an applicant have to have before they’ll let you in. The whole evening was very much about this assignment of 6,500 words._

_In reality, all ten of the people who were there as prospective students would probably get in, but it’s the impression, the impression that Southern University has the right to decide whether you’re good enough, and the implication that you’re not good enough until you provide the documents to prove that you are._
It struck me as remarkable to hear Anthea speaking here of the same issue that she raised in our first conversation, about the manager who doubted her because of her age – the same grievance put into different words. She went on:

*Let me tell you about what happened to me yesterday afternoon. I was up at another building to see someone and happened to be standing in the information area when a woman in her middle age was at the counter asking for some advice. She was explaining that she had looked at all the brochures and the forms, but could not understand what she should do, because she had left school at an early age and had not completed a year 12, but now she wanted to do a course that would get her into medical research because her niece had cancer and she just felt so motivated to try and do something. Well, the woman at the counter just did not want to know. It was like, you know, there is a standard path into courses and medical research is postgraduate and you don’t even have year 12, so don’t waste my time asking about courses that you aren’t qualified for and don’t have any hope of ever doing. She didn’t say any of that, but her minimal response to this woman did say it. She just directed her back to the brochures and told her how to enrol in VCE.*

*So, even though I was in a hurry, I went up to this woman and said that I hope she didn’t mind, but I heard what she was saying and had some ideas about what she should study and who she should talk to. I gave her some time and showed some faith in her.*

What do you think made you do that?
I don’t know. It’s this idea of – I guess in terms of growing up and seeing that certain people in society had power and abused it and that other people accepted that the abusers were entitled to behave that way – and I challenged people who were like that when I was young, and I won, and every time I win again, that just adds more fuel to the fire and to the belief that I was right to do so and that might help others who come after me. There are still people who I helped to challenge the system at ARC who see me in the street and thank me for that.

People in power have created this aura that it’s not safe to challenge them but I know that it is safe if you don’t care what they can do to you – if you can just stand up and walk out whenever you want to.

This is where Anthea and I chose to finish our conversations. Power had been one of the key motifs woven into the fabric of our discussions, because power and its uses and abuses had been one of the ongoing dynamic issues in the lived experiences of Anthea: experienced both in her family life and in her career life. Anthea had initially denied that there had been any plans or even any personal themes in her career – she believed that her job was just work that she did for an income. She still rejected the notion of a planned career at the end of our discussions, but had nevertheless come to see the ‘figure in the carpet’ of her life and career narratives.

Ongoing concerns and abiding preoccupations that resulted from life experiences had been manifest in her action taking and in her decision making throughout her working life, even though Anthea had not been aware of these underlying thematic elements at the time. By reading (through telling) her stories of life and career, Anthea became better
placed to comprehend who she is as what she does, better able to see the mutual contouring of her identity and her career.
PART THREE: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS
Chapter Ten: Identity and Career

There is one immediate and striking observation that can be made from reading the narratives in Part Two from the perspective of the theory resulting from combining narrative theory, social theory, and existential philosophy: each of the research collaborators has moved forward in their careers, not as a result of benefiting from a clear and guiding sense of their identity or of their career, but instead from working out that identity in tandem with working out their careers. Identity has been and still is problematic for both of the research collaborators. The idea of being pulled forward by an attractive vision of the future and by a clear sense of who you want to become - an idea proposed by Senge, for instance, in his discussion of ‘personal mastery’ - does not fit with the reality of life for the two people who have participated in this study.

A further point that stands out is that identity has been shown to figure centrally in the careers of both Harry and Anthea, even though Anthea did not see that figuring when we began our conversations. It is also notable that a great deal of career decision making for both Harry and Anthea has turned upon their sense of who they are, even though their identities have been experienced as significantly problematic. In Harry's case, the problematic concerns the clashing of Koori identity with the trajectories of being a business academic, and in Anthea’s case, the problematic involves her private sense of identity clashing with what she sees as being the dictates of maintaining a public and organisational identity.

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For Harry, the identity problem has centred on being different, and it is a problem that has had at least two consequences. Firstly, it has made his task of answering questions about who he is, not only difficult in the usual sense of being uncertain about the implications of the past for the present and the future, but also difficult in the unusual sense of feeling that his difference was real but unexplained – until he discovered his Koori identity. Secondly, his problem of identity has had the consequence of preoccupying him with issues concerning how to retain the integrity of his Koori identity given the directions of his career.

For Anthea, the identity problem has centred on discrepancy: the discrepancy between public and private identity. That identity issue has interacted in a confusing fashion with her career preoccupation: the pursuit of justice at the interpersonal level. For although Anthea expresses a preference to reduce the time that she gives to public, organisational roles, her concern to have an impact on the ways in which those in power treat those with less power, continues to cause her to give more and more time to her public career. She is left with a dilemma, for although she believes that her private identity does not find full expression in her public life, and she asserts that she would not want to express her private identity in a public fashion, she does have to work and in fact works with enthusiasm and involvement. She therefore continues to experience an alienation of identity from career, even though her career has enabled a working over of her preoccupations, a return again and again to her central issues. It may well be that she is mistaken in the hard line that she draws between her private compared to her public identity, for on the manifestationist view of identity that has been a theme in this dissertation, we make who we are through what we do.
To structure the remaining part of this concluding chapter, each edited case study will be discussed in turn, and discussed in terms of the understandings that come from approaching the research material from the three directions of narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory, thereby further demonstrating the benefits of combining those three theories. Each theory and its set of concepts will be shown to throw a related yet different light upon the research collaborator's narratives of life and career, and in effect to provide a lens through which the same research material can be seen differently and thereby understood more comprehensively when we approach identity and career through the Combined Theory.

Our discussion in Chapter Six focused upon the ways in which combining the work of Ricoeur, Bourdieu, and Heidegger has provided us with a significant conceptual advance in terms of how we are able to think about and understand identity and career as mutually contouring. In that discussion, we examined a matrix which presented the dimensions of identity in relation to career-relevant actions and in relation to career-relevant awareness. To draw a further set of insights from the narrative materials of the two collaborators, we will now revisit that matrix, but represent it, this time focusing upon the issues that confront individuals over time, as they work through their careers from the perspective of career as a nexus of opportunity for building an identity which encompasses our narrative understandings, our social agency, and our existential responsibility. The matrix emphasises, once again, that our approach goes beyond psychology and opens up additional issues which thereby deepen and broaden our understanding of what is involved in the
management of career, when it is seen as having the potential to unify and realise the three dimensions of identity.

**Figure Two: Career as a nexus of opportunity for the construction and expression of identity over time.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Social Agency</th>
<th>Existential Responsibility</th>
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<td></td>
<td>What is there in the early parts of my narrative that may need to be untangled if I am to develop a clear and pleasing sense of who I am: an identity that assists rather than hinders me in my career pursuits?</td>
<td>What is there in the early parts of my sociogenesis that has provided me with a feel for particular social and organisational games, and with a sense of what is appropriate for someone of my early social standing – and in what ways is that sense and feel a help and a hindrance?</td>
<td>In what ways may I have fallen into an unquestioning and conventional understanding of who I am and of what I should do with my life, as a consequence of Dasein’s tendency to understand itself as that which can be measured and ‘reckoned up’?</td>
</tr>
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| Present | What needs to be thought and done if I am to find coherence in my personal and career stories – coherence which makes sense of where I have come from and where I am going? | Given those fields of endeavour in which I feel comfortable and capable, how can I use that to my career advantage, and how can I develop a feel for the game in new fields of career-related action? | Which interpretations of what it is to be a ‘good’ person or manager or accountant or academic, have been embodied in my career actions and decisions to date, and do I fully accept those previously unseen and unquestioned assumptions? |

| Future | How can I best continue the rethinking and re-authoring of my personal and professional stories, in a way that produces congruence between the two, and particularly in a manner that uses my past narratives as resource for enriching my future narratives? | Given that career success requires action within organisations and the capacity to move forward in the face of resistance, how can I use my understanding of habitus, capital, and field as a resource to develop that capacity? | Who should I work to become in terms of the totality of my actions over time, and what resources does the history of my society or community or family provide for answering that question? |
These questions highlight the central themes that have emerged in our work on career and identity. There is an emphasis upon and a recognition of the fundamental significance of time to identity and career, the constructed rather than essentialist nature of identity, the role that critical awareness and action plays within that construction, and the need for individuals to look beyond their own subjectivity and beyond the present moment if they are to find the resources necessary to build an identity through career that approaches coherence, provides for the expression and experience of social agency, and responds to our existential situation as beings-in-becoming who are responsible for the totality of our moments as the manifestation of who we are.

**Harry**

When we think about Harry Bennett in terms of narrative theory, we can see why it has been difficult for him to configure his identity in the sense of a coherent and sustaining narrative, given the confusingly prefigured material in which he has been entangled. Prior to Harry’s discovery of his Koori heritage, that challenge was perhaps impossible to meet, because the prefigured material was incomplete and contained misinformation. Like Pip in *Great Expectations*, Harry entered adulthood with a mistaken sense of his social position and of his social genesis.

The dramatic telephone call from his Koori relatives provided the moment of epiphany for Harry and also gave him a chance to refigure his personal narrative of identity. We see in his current difficulties about career enactment and career directions however, that his refiguration has not been an ending to his story: the configuring of life and career in a
coherent and sustaining fashion is an ongoing challenge, not a once-and-for-all achievement.

If we turn now to thinking about Harry in terms of social theory, we can see that habitus, for Harry, does not function in a straightforward fashion. As an outcome of moving backwards and forwards between bourgeois and working class society as a child, and between white and Koori culture and society as an adult, Harry has developed a social agency that trades upon his ease in playing the games of both sides. Harry's indefinite past has become a form of social capital thanks to the bridging skills that it has enabled in him, and it is Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field, and habitus that enable us to see how this aspect of Harry's identity operates within his career.

Existential theory emphasises responsibility for choosing how and who to be. It is the experience of Unheimlichkeit that wakes us from our everyday slumber, our everyday avoidance of that responsibility. Not-being-at-home was a constant feeling for Harry as a child. He has, however, reduced the severity of that feeling through his existential decision to identify himself as Koori. What is admirable about Harry is his recognition that he had to decide who he was to become - a high school teacher and later a high school principal with a troubled mind and a heritage of uncertain importance, or a Koori educator who is prepared to take a stand on Koori principles and Koori values. As a being-in-becoming, this decision recurs with a different face each day for Harry: he has had to leave the sphere of mere contemplation of, or mere appreciation for, his Kooriness, and take the risks involved in living and working as a Koori in a white culture. More will be said about Harry during the discussion of Anthea.
Anthea

We have seen in Anthea's case, if we approach it firstly in narrative terms, that the way she has been configuring her narratives of identity and career could be richer if they were more embracing of her preoccupations which, as prefigured narrative material, appear to have been operating outside of her awareness of the ways in which who she is, are reflected in what she does. Anthea seeks to deny the ways in which her identity figures in the contouring of her career. She asserts that her work is, for instance, "just what I do to earn a living."

This desire to not recognise herself in her career is the converse of her desire to not be recognised by others in her career - to maintain a distinction between her private and her public identity. So here a desire frames and informs the configuring of her career story. Desire not to be seen leads to an inability to, or a refusal to, see.

One way of accounting for this desire to separate who she is from what she does, is to consider Anthea's life in terms of habitus, field, and capital. As a child of working-class parents who left school early, Anthea's tastes, dispositions, and feel for the game do not make her comfortable in middle-class meetings even though she operates more effectively than most in terms of course design and course delivery. This is not an unusual situation. Even Heidegger, to use the example of one of our theorists, was troubled by a gap between habitus and the demands of his adult social location. "He knew what distinguished him from those who moved with assurance and skill in a bourgeois environment,
fashionably dressed, versed in questions of the latest literature, art, and philosophy."^{421} Safranski's point here focuses on Heidegger's awareness of being different, and he later tells us that Heidegger's peers and colleagues had a similar awareness. "His movements in the nonphilosophical arena would always lack assurance. The 'lower-class' smell clings to him. Even in 1920, in Marburg, when he was by then the secret king of philosophy in Germany, many colleagues and students - unless they knew him personally - would take him for the heating engineer or the janitor."^{422} Anthea does not have to contend with such marked social differences in style, but she does nevertheless have an abiding identification of herself as being different, and as being someone who would be rejected by those in authority if they knew more about her background.

We can contrast her feelings of being out of place with those of Paul Keating, who we referred to earlier, in Chapter Four. Keating considered that politics was the place for him. He had no doubts about his ability or about his entitlement to be a member of Parliament, or about his appropriateness as future Prime Minister. When discussing how well suited his upbringing as the son of a small businessman made him for his future career, Keating told his biographer, John Edwards, that he "had the jump" on a lot of other politicians because he had always "understood private business and how it felt and operated."^{423} So one of the things that troubles Anthea in her career is her lack of a feel for the game of being an educator in a primarily middle-class milieu.

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^{422} ibid. p22.

^{423} Edwards, op. cit. p121.
Existential theory shows Anthea's desire to separate who she is in her personal life from what she does in her career, in a different light again - a light in which what we do is to be understood as embodying an interpretation of our being. To reach an Existential understanding of Anthea's everyday workplace behaviour, we can turn to Octavio Paz's brilliant and Nobel Prize winning, existential interpretation of Mexican culture, to which we referred earlier, in Chapter Five. Paz sees Mexico as having a culture that induces Mexicanism in its people as a way of not being themselves.

Just as insight into Harry's identity results in part from reference to a culture, to a transpersonal set of beliefs and practices that he finds meaningful and nourishing, so too in Anthea's case we can also gain insight by reference to a culture, even though it is one about which she never spoke in the research conversations, and one that she may have no familiarity with or attraction to. Mexican culture, like all cultures, contains a pretheoretical interpretation of being in its practices, so Paz' interpretation of that culture should alert us to the understanding of being that adheres in Anthea's practices of "wearing a cloak" and of "being what they expect me to be", where there are similar, equally dissembling, practices in Mexican culture.

Mexicans, according to Paz, dissimulate and mimic. They feel that their mechanisms of defense and self-preservation are not enough, and that

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424 "Cultures, as well as human beings exist; their practices contain an interpretation of what it means to be a culture." Dreyfus, op. cit. p15.

"Dasein's shared ways of behaving are not mere facts to be studied objectively by a 'scientific discipline' such as anthropology or sociology (although they are that too). Rather, because they contain an understanding of being they must be studied as an interpretation." Dreyfus, op. cit. p19.
they therefore make use of dissimulation, which is almost habitual with them. Dissimulation does not increase Mexican passivity; on the contrary, it demands an active inventiveness and must reshape itself from one moment to another. This inventiveness is necessary because the Mexican, like Anthea when she is in her workplace, feels it is necessary to disguise who they really are. The dissembler, according to Paz, pretends to be someone he is not. His role requires constant improvisation, a steady forward progress across shifting sands. Similarly, Anthea tells us that “if I had a conversation with a senior manager, I would have a fixed idea of how I wanted to be seen – I would have a plan and also contingency plans, and all of them are goal directed.”

Taking his interpretation a step further, Paz points out that, in its most radical forms, dissimulation becomes mimicry, which is a change of appearance rather than a change of nature. Anthea too engages in mimicry: “right now, the Dean is being presented with an illusion." She seeks to appear as the organisational type of person without wanting to change who she considers herself to really be. Paz says of Mexican dissimulation and mimicry that those who gesticulate resort to a mask and that other Mexicans simply wish to pass unnoticed. Again, Anthea has a wish to pass unnoticed, to be left alone: “I used to say I could live on a mountain. If I had a choice I wouldn’t talk to anyone.”

We should note at this stage of our existential analysis that we are making a different interpretation from that which would follow from Heidegger's account of Dasein's tendency to understand itself as that which it is not, as an object; and different also to Sartre's account of bad faith. Anthea does not seek to convince herself that she is no more than the role she plays in her career. Precisely the opposite is true: she seeks to emphasise
how much more there is to her being than is embodied in her workplace role. Nor does she mistakenly identify with her career because she believes herself to be object-like, reckoned up by her public actions. Anthea is instead acutely aware that choice is involved in the role playing that she engages in, and does not find herself in the grip of *Illusio*, nor does she find herself being played by the game rather than being a player of the game.

Paz has, of course, an interpretation of the interpretation of (or more accurately, the attitude towards) being that underlies Mexicanism. He refers us first to the difference between submerged groups and Mexicans, and points out that whereas servants, slaves or races victimized by an outside power (the North American Negro, for example) struggle against a concrete reality, Mexicans struggle with imaginary entities, with vestiges of the past or self-engendered phantasms. In the struggle which the Mexican's will-to-be carries on against those phantasms, Paz declares that they are supported by a secret and powerful ally: their fear of being. Everything that makes up the present-day Mexican, he contends, can be reduced to this: the Mexican does not want or does not dare to be himself. Like Mexicans then, Anthea has a fear of being herself (does not dare to ‘be herself’ at work), but unlike Mexicans, it is not a constant fear, and it is fear of a different kind.

Whereas Paz asserts and argues that Mexicans have a secret fear of being, and he thereby provides us with a powerful and distinctly existential understanding of the interpretation of being that is embodied in Mexican ways, to understand Anthea's fear and to see how it differs from the fear of being that Paz refers us to, we need to return to and combine all three of narrative theory, social theory, and existential theory.
In narrative terms, Anthea's difficulty in the workplace centres on the gap between her life and career story and the story that she believes others would expect her to have. To present a configuration for her tangled personal and professional history which is easily comprehended and accepted by people whose familial, social, and professional trajectories have been more straightforward, would not be easy. In terms of Bourdieu's social theory, we can see that an additional reason for Anthea's preference to separate her personal and her professional presentations of self, lies in a second gap. This time it is the gap between the preferences of those who feel comfortable with and committed to the social and political games of organisational life - those whose sociogenesis has inscribed different dispositions and tastes than the dispositions of Anthea - and the preferences concerning how to get things done that have developed in Anthea's case. She prefers to go straight to the task and to make it happen, rather than write proposals and reports and chat in seemingly aimless ways at Departmental meetings. She does recognise however, that this is a preference she should try to conceal.

Finally, although we have not adopted Paz' existential claims about the fear of being, we can make use of the notion by reversing it and contending that Anthea's preference for two identities is supported by a fear of not being, or, stated more positively, by an understandable and indeed admirable will-to-be the person who stands for those themes that we identified in the previous chapter, rather than becoming a diluted but more publicly acceptable, version of that person.

Here we have come to a benefit that arises from having the two edited case studies to compare and contrast. In Harry's case, to be a Koori who
is also an academic is to be strong, proud, and clear. It is a positive movement away from *Verstricktsein* and *Unheimlichkeit* - from uncertainties and gaps in his past - and it is a configuration of who he is that makes a new and a preferable coherence of his storied and his enacted identity. In Anthea's case, however, the narrative resources - the publicly understandable discourse and ideas - that she would need if she sought to identify herself more fully in her workplace, are less readily available. Kooris have engaged in the political work of campaigning for recognition of their traditions and of their culture, so at the public level there is a clear and positive understanding and image of what it is to be a Koori - although it must also be immediately admitted that this positive image and clear understanding is not universal and that significant racism still is a feature of Australian social and political life.

There is however, no cohesive group which has sought to express a clear and strong identity that Anthea can identify herself with. Her narrative of incompleteness, of moving on, of being different, is not a narrative that would be readily recognised, understood, and accepted as worthwhile. Who we can be in the public domain is always mediated by what we can say, which in turn depends upon the resources of and the limits of public discourse and upon the community's stock of storylines that make sense of common life experiences. When one's experiences are uncommon, or have not been made part of a commonly understood story regardless of how common they are, then although there may be sufficient discursive resources to coherently configure those experiences for oneself and for the understanding of those few people who may have the time and interest to invest in listening, one is right to fear that it will be difficult or impossible to tell that story in a workplace environment.
To try to tell one's story and not be understood or to be misunderstood is to fail to be recognised as who one is, hence the fear of ‘not being’ that this situation can engender. The solution that Anthea has adopted has the surface appearance of a dissimulation or a denial of her private identity, but this solution in fact is a confirmation of her identity in that it foregrounds her differentness to herself and to those who know her well. Keeping her private and historical narratives mainly to herself is an action that reflects her identity as someone who is significantly different to the majority and who is content to leave that situation alone because she sees that, in practical terms, it cannot be otherwise. If the alternative to this clear and sustaining story, that only a few know and understand, is a diluted, lukewarm story that is comprehensible because it is typical, then she has chosen to act in ways that retain the truth of who she is rather than to act out of any desire to be accepted as someone else, a more conventional Anthea, who may therefore be more socially acceptable. She pretends to be straightforward as a member of the organisation, but does not pretend to be straightforward as a person - she chooses instead to keep her narratives and complexities of identity and career mainly to herself.

In conclusion

We have argued for a three-fold conception of identity in this dissertation, a conception which reflects the narrative, social, and existential aspects of human life and experience. The narratives of Part Two have demonstrated the constantly mutual contouring of identity and career. In Harry’s case, we have seen the inseparable connection between seeking public enactments of identity, on the one hand, and the availability of conceptual/textual/and communal resources for the statement and enactment of an identity which differs from the social norm yet which is
an identity to be proud of and an identity which it is possible to clearly communicate, on the other hand. In Anthea’s case, we have seen the inseparable connection between avoiding public enactments of identity, on the one hand, and the lack of availability of conceptual/textual/and communal resources for the statement and enactment of an identity which differs from the social norm and which is an identity that it is sometimes difficult to be proud of, because it is difficult to clearly communicate, on the other hand. Rather than focus on internalist notions of courage or will-to-be, therefore, studies of identity and its expressions should focus on the processes by which individuals and the groups with which they identify, develop the discourse, the images, and the narratives, which enable clear and positive statements about, and enactments of, who they are.

Understanding and applying the work of Ricoeur, Bourdieu, and Heidegger, in combination, has enabled us to see prefigured dispositions in the lives and careers of both collaborators, dispositions which guided and patterned their reactions to the contingencies of their existence, and to see episodes of Unheimlichkeit in their lives and careers: episodes which resulted in greater acceptance of responsibility for, and a refiguring of, personal identity as something to author rather than as something pre-given.

To read the narratives of Part Two in this way is to understand the mutual contouring of lives and careers at a level which includes the shaping of the individual by his society and by the events of his personal and communal history, without denying his capacity for agency and without characterising the agent as self-enclosed or self-complete. The concept of habitus enables us to see that individual reactions to the contingent events
of life and career are reactions that the individual is predisposed to have, and hence we can read a pattern of consistencies – a theme – which results from the agent’s freely chosen but predisposed decision making over time. This is a pattern that reflects the individual’s prefigured identity.

We can conclude therefore, that the lives and careers of Harry and Anthea have unfolded as the stories of who they are, and their careers have knowingly or unknowingly constituted far more than working at a chosen occupation. Clearly, a person's career need not be consciously or deliberately authored with the intention of reflecting that person's preoccupations, in order for that reflection to occur. Our preoccupations are played out - or more precisely 'worked out' - over time as the mutual contouring of identity and career.
Postlogue

I return in these last few pages to speaking directly in first person. My wish is to now go beyond academic impersonality and speak about the personal significance of this dissertation for my sense of identity. When I commenced this work, I was 46 years old, and now I am 51. So I was a late starter compared to the average doctoral student, I guess. My lateness resulted from an untimely earliness. I left school before I legally should have - at the age of 13 - although there were dramatic family circumstances that I have always thought provided a full justification for that leaving. Still, that act so long ago, in 1963, has meant that the greater part of my education has been completed as a part-time student and a full-time worker, and it has meant that my career progress has been slow.

And yet, for me, slowness has been entirely appropriate. In Milan Kundera's novel, *Slowness*, he points out that when walking, we slow down if we are trying to think, and my life has certainly given me cause to move slowly so that I could think and then think again. Without taking the time to move slowly, the events of one's life do not become personal experiences, simply because it takes time for events to move through the processes of hermeneutic composition and take their place in the ongoing stories of who we are and of what we have done. Without the reflective thought that occurs slowly over time, experiences are not woven into a configured sense of identity, and this point holds with particular strength when events are felt as what Bruner calls a "breach of canonicity," such as Harry's discovery of his Koori heritage.

I am pleased that my identity issues have been partly addressed through this writing. I did not however, choose to take an autobiographical
approach to the research,\textsuperscript{425} because I considered that autobiography would be too indulgent - even embarrassing - and because I had the sense that looking at myself (which I do anyway) would teach me less about my identity and about identity in general than looking at others who were like myself. Refraction shows us more than reflection because it calls upon more of our interpretive resources. My intentions therefore, were indirectly aimed at personal clarification.

That, finally, is what I think I have been wanting all along, in my personal, educational, and workplace journeys, and it is what this dissertation has made more available for me. I am talking about using ideas to see through. As James Hillman says, without ideas "we cannot see, let alone see through."\textsuperscript{426} The mind that lacks ideas "is a victim of literal appearances and is satisfied with things just as they present themselves."\textsuperscript{427} My work for this dissertation has been motivated by a desire to understand and employ a range of ideas that would provide me with a way of interpreting that went as far as I could go beyond literal appearances without relying upon metaphysics or Cartesian dualisms. That is why the ideas of Part One were essential to the process and why they have had personal impact. By exploring those ideas and mapping their relevance to my topic, I provided myself with a way of seeing that comes close to being a theory and, as Hillman points out, "every theory we hold practices upon us in one way or another."\textsuperscript{428} Part One, as a set of

\textsuperscript{425} Although, as Hillman points out, "the literal absence of the personal does not mean that the personal is absent; instead it is even more present in the book by shining through its phrases than if it were set out as an autobiographical appendix or cased in self-effusive sentences in which the author reminds the reader about his 'experiences'. … To find the author, go to the book. If the author is anywhere, he's in the book." Hillman, J. 1975, Re-Visioning Psychology, Harper Perennial, New York, px.

\textsuperscript{426} Hillman, J. 1975, Re-Visioning Psychology, Harper Perennial, New York, p141.

\textsuperscript{427} ibid. p141.

\textsuperscript{428} ibid. p123.
ideas, gradually came to hold me in its embrace, and allowed me to see through the two research collaborators and thereby to see through myself in terms of those ideas. To see through is to clarify and make transparent, and yet, some mystery remains because mystery comes from the indetermination of being, and my goal was never to determine for myself or for my collaborators an interpretation that was final or definitive. I do not think that would be possible, for to do so would be to transform myself and my collaborators into objects of study: it would be - to borrow a term from Heidegger - to understand them as what they are not.


Grosz, E. 1994, *Volatile Bodies*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW.


