

**Living lives of change:
Examining facets of women managers' career stories**

by

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Abstract

In this chapter I explore the stories of women managers who have been involved in significant career transitions or reviews. Working critically with notions of narrative, I examine content themes, forms and processes. I suggest that career and life stories are often multiple, shifting, contradictory and incomplete; that people are typically relating overtly or covertly in constructing their accounts to dominant social values and expected paths of development; and that telling one's story fully can be part of a process of life development. I note that there are parallel processes for academics theorising careers. From a qualitative, intensive study, some senior women managers' reasons for leaving or wanting to leave employment are presented. Issues such as how they integrated external and internal factors and needs, and made choices about organizational membership and life paths in the face of sometimes hostile conditions are explored.

I suggest that careers can be conceptualised beyond the boundaries of organizations, occupational choices and employment, with people's evolving lives as their basic form. I contribute to conversations about how such processes are enacted, especially in relation to the development of subjective career notions and mid-life reviews.

Introduction

Facet

A little face; *orig.* one of the small cut and polished faces of a diamond.

(The Shorter Oxford Dictionary, 1973)

In this chapter I shall explore various facets of women managers' career stories. I shall reflect on senior women managers' career patterns and decision-making by examining content themes which appear in the stories of women who have experienced significant career transitions or reviews. I shall also look at what forms these accounts took and aspects of how they were told.

I am working critically with an interest in narrative. There is currently abundant attention to the notions of narrative and story and their relevance to researching people's lives (eg Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992; Mumby, 1993; Lincoln and Denzin, 1994; Lincoln, 1997; Denzin, 1997). Understanding narratives as constructions of truth generated through complex, active (individual, interpersonal and social) processes of sense-making, self-presentation and interpretation is seen by many as a pathway beyond the social realism we can no longer claim in our research (Lincoln and Denzin, 1994). I approve this general direction, but am also concerned that working with narrative can become as conventionalised and stylised as any other form of inquiry. I am especially interested in three aspects of this work: firstly in how form (shape, pattern) arises in the accounts people give of their lives; secondly in the reference points people use to create and legitimate the stories they tell (for example whether these are externally/socially or

internally/personally oriented or a combination of the two); and thirdly in how the telling of stories functions as a life process. In exploring these issues, I am seeking to keep notions of narrative open, to engage with narrating as process rather than with narrative as product.

These interests can all be applied also to the parallel process of career theorising as an academic activity. As researchers we too construct narratives, use established ideas as reference or counter points and so on. I am interested in how form arises in academic theorising. This chapter's process orientation allows this as a parallel attention, but only briefly because of space. However it is highly germane to my own processes of narrative construction as I develop text and theory about women managers' lives for an imagined audience.

I have chosen the imagery of facets to name the multi-stranded analytic approach I am taking. For me it implies looking from different angles which constitute different types of analysis, and making no claim to encompass a whole in any one of these (in fact doubting whether there is coherence to reach for). I want to look at content, form and processes of narrative generation and sense-making. This chapter's approach is therefore offered as an exploration. Examining these different facets, moving between them and allowing incompleteness in any particular stream of attention, seems to provide a theoretical practice congruent with the subject matter of the chapter - people's life and career narratives and choices.

Theoretically I shall be exploring issues of career through stories told about career and life changes and decision-making. I shall be suggesting that these articulations are often multiple, shifting, contradictory, incomplete accounts; that people are typically relating overtly or covertly in constructing their accounts to dominant social values and expected paths of development, with consequences for the story-teller; and that telling one's story fully, and being heard with respect, can be part of a process of life development.

The study

The research engagement on which I draw is a qualitative study (reported in detail as Marshall, 1995) into the experiences of women who had reached middle and senior level management positions and then left employment, been forced out or considered leaving but eventually stayed. It was motivated by wanting to explore the apparent phenomenon of high achieving women leaving or expressing ambivalence about senior positions which has received some media and academic attention (for example, Taylor, 1986; Rosin and Korabik, 1992). I wanted to tell such women's stories from their own perspectives, to articulate their meanings in a world of organizational theory and media interpretations which seemed either unlikely to value what they had done or actively to devalue it.

I wanted to contact people who had felt that they had to leave employment or a particular job, rather than those who had moved for immediate career progression. Once I had set this parameter on participation, I let the contacts I made inform me of the kinds of experiences people had. I eventually worked with sixteen women in depth, and spoke

informally to others. I had many other relevant conversations. Also I presented reports to practitioner and academic audiences and had the themes confirmed. So whilst sixteen stories provide the heart of the data I have gained substantial confirmation that the issues the study raises for attention are concerns for many women managers, those who leave organizations and those who stay. The study's findings also align with those of North American statistical studies on women's propensity to leave employment which suggest that lack of promotion opportunities, male-dominated corporate cultures and organizational politics are key factors (eg Rosin and Korabik, 1991; Brett and Stroh, 1994; Stroh and Senner, 1994). As this inquiry looks at a small group of people intensively it provides complementary data to larger scale survey research. It especially offers insights into some of the dynamics involved in career reviews and transitions, and into how complex decision-making, intertwining careers and lives more generally, happens.

As the enacted research approach is significant to the themes of this chapter, I shall discuss this below. Before doing so I shall give some demographic details of the people studied.

Women managers moving on

The positions managers had moved or considered moving from were: Chief Executive (1), Executive Directors (5), Senior Management Team Members or Departmental Heads (4), senior managers (2), and middle managers or professional staff (4). Their occupational roles were indicative of the areas in which women have relatively more access to senior jobs (although against a low base) - ie personnel, organizational development, general management, nursing, public relations, sales, community work and training. Fourteen were working in the UK, one in North America and one in New Zealand. They ranged in age from mid-thirties to early fifties. In terms of ethnic origin, all were 'white'. Demographic characteristics of the sample contradicted potential stereotypes that women might leave senior jobs mainly because of parenting (only one person had young children) or because they could be financially dependent on a male partner to support them. Only four people were potentially in the latter situation, and one of the partners heavily resisted his wife's intention to leave work as he had married an independent career woman not a potentially dependent home-maker. Some of the women with partners were themselves the main family salary-earners. Other participants were single or divorced. These were, then, mostly decisions with significant financial consequences.

Most people moved from their jobs and organizations and then spent some time out of employment. Many felt that they regained life energy as they moved on. Several talked about returning to interests or levels of vitality which they associated with their youth. But a few people faced increased pressures and stress in at least the short-term.

By the end of the study, a duration of approximately two years, most participants had re-entered employment or become self-employed. Their occupational positions were: Managing Director & other roles (1); Non-Executive Director & public speaker (1);

Directors (2); senior managers (2); middle manager (1); consultants (6); academic and trainer (1); entrepreneur (1); and parent at home (1)

The participants had moved on to find or create life and career circumstances which they felt were more freely chosen. This contrasting of job positions at two points in time should, however, be treated with caution; it gives a misleadingly stable picture. The research participants had experienced much more change than is apparent in terms of their employment, life circumstances, attitudes and perceptions - and their lives were continuing to change.

Is gender at issue in this data?

I am not suggesting that the experiences reported here happen exclusively to women. To what extent gender is at issue in this data is a matter of open debate, which must remain inconclusive. Some aspects seem likely often to be gender-associated at the moment given implicit if not overt gender cultures in organizations (Collinson and Hearn, 1994), how much norms of management behaviour are still shaped by idealised male sex role stereotypes, the relatively low percentage of women in senior jobs and women's generally wider range of social roles than men. Some factors are more associated with the power dynamics of elite groups and how they exclude those defined as 'other' which could be on the basis of gender, race or other factors. Some men would certainly report experiences of senior management and career which have similar or related themes to the stories told here.

Women managers who 'leave' as 'test cases'

It is important to note that this research focused on privileged people, who are also unusual, atypical women. The majority of women are still concentrated in low pay, low level jobs and there is much occupational gender segregation. Women make up a high percentage of the part-time, flexible workforce. Many have limited career and pay prospects, job security and quality of working life. So there is more to achieving gender associated career understanding (and equality) than this chapter addresses.

And, if we remember this, it is worth looking in depth at this elite group because they are 'test cases' in several senses, providing potential insights into organizational life and careers more generally, seen through a selective lens, the perceptions of relative newcomers to the territory of senior management. Most of those studied were pioneers for women in their organisations at those times. They were highly visible, so that how they behaved was likely to be over-interpreted, treated as symbolic of all women (a potential trap in career theorising also). They are difficult to understand against both dominant stereotypes of women and ideal images of management (which are still often male-associated despite the so-called 'feminisation' trend). We therefore need to analyse with a both/and framing, to see these specifics **and** the more general picture.

I do not offer this data as a tale of woe or victimhood, but as issues which need to be engaged with, a sense-making narrative which needs to be told frankly - and heard openly - within the women in management field in order to move on in practice and theoretically. The field of gender theorising is also an evolving story. If we can take stories such as these seriously, and listen to their forms and concerns within their own registers rather than seeing them only from dominant social or academic framings, we contribute to helping organisational life and theorising become more malleable, accommodating of diversities, and available for revision.

Storying lives - attending to form

How stories come to be told and how they undergo changes and reformulations as relatively routine life processes are significant issues when we want to treat such material as research 'data'.

The research approach I adopted assumed a process and constructivist approach to story-telling. (And my use of the material here invites a sense also of critical theory.) This section is therefore offered as an exploration in processes of story-making, paying attention to narratives and their construction as an interactive inquiry process. My interest in working with subjective, unfolding notions of career has resonances with the approach of Parker and Arthur (this volume). I provide less explicit methodological structure than they do, however, as I treat how research participants express themselves as an additional source of data.

Initially I interviewed participants individually, taping our conversations. I asked them to discuss their career and life history, the job and organization situation they had left (or wanted to leave), the process of leaving and their general views on being a woman in employment. The timings of the interviews in the person's career transition varied from some people anticipating a forthcoming event to others looking back a year or so after leaving a specific job, and so offered different aspects of the experience.

These interviews were mostly frank, direct and self-reflective on the managers' parts. For some people they were cathartic events. The women wanted to be heard and accepted by someone, without having to distort or suppress 'truths' they felt about the experience. Sometimes it seemed that telling the story fully allowed their lives and the story of their lives to move on. Some reflected on what they found themselves saying in this permissive space. One noted with surprise and delight how much 'warmth' she felt towards the experience, she felt she had learned from it despite the challenges. Another noticed how much the events still upset her, that she had not left them behind as she had thought. Telling her story to me allowed her to take further steps in doing so.

The women were telling their stories to another woman in private, with the purpose of later making them public. Some talked overtly about handing them over to my care. They believed that these stories should be told because they reveal aspects of women's organizational lives which are seldom so frankly spoken. They thought women should

speak out - especially to other women who may have similar experiences - to tell the less glamorous sides of success. But most did not feel they could do this personally.

I wrote their individual stories based on thorough and highly engaged qualitative data analysis (Marshall, 1995). I then negotiated the stories with the women and revised them, to agree a story we could tell in public. (The names used are pseudonyms.) It was valuable that for various reasons it took some time (up to two years) before I reached this stage. Most people were more willing to tell their stories fully because their lives had moved on and the accounts seemed to be of past selves. This was, however, certainly not true in one case, and the woman withdrew her crafted story from the research based on a diffuse sense of anxiety that it might prove recognisable and disrupt her recently re-established life (see Ruth below).

As the research neared a close, people told me about further developments in their lives and about revised perceptions of the career changes we had discussed. At some point I decided to stop integrating new information or insights into the data, needing to stop updating the stories in order to close the research engagement. But these further discussions gave me insights into how storying often shifts, that many lives are continually in process, and that asking participants to 'verify' research accounts is a complex endeavour. (I note that some people may want to hold more fixed, consistently replicable, versions of their life stories, and may be served by doing so.)

As the research progressed, I realised that my initial intention to tell the women's stories was not a straight-forward process, especially as: there was no one truth to tell about any one person, but often multiple, sometimes conflicting, themes and issues; I expected readers to interpret the stories from different viewpoints, assumptions and value positions (some probably highly critical and looking for 'weaknesses'); and I might be making women vulnerable by being so open. Sense-making in this area is contentious and highly politically loaded. I soon came to realise that addressing these issues was an integral part of the research process - that the research was as much about finding an analogically suitable form to represent the material as it was about the issues involved.

So the sixteen stories are at the heart of the resulting book, incorporating ambiguities, conflicts and my voice occasionally with reflections and questions (Marshall, 1995). Amongst them are sections of commentary which draw out issues for exploration. I sought to make choices and dilemmas of interpretation overt, rather than seeking to arrive at one truth about these women managers' lives. I wanted people reading this research material to engage with issues of sense-making - and therefore valuing - for themselves.

(In career - and all - theorising, then, I suggest that the form of the academic presentation is as important as the content of the conceptual storyline.)

At a late stage in the project I held two workshops in which research participants met and commented on the themes which were emerging in analyses. This more interactive research engagement added another source of data to the study, a further perspective rather than a competing notion of truth.

Despite their richness as sources of data and forms of representation, narrative and story have potential disadvantages, especially in this type of research area. They may direct attention and analysis to the individual and deflect attention from systemic and cultural issues. As individual and organisational/social issues are intertwined, they often mirror each other. Often characteristics of the system as a whole are lived out by individuals - our story is seldom ours alone. When we seek to interpret, we may then individualise inappropriately, for example either judging someone incompetent without appreciating that much of their behaviour (or how it is interpreted) is shaped by contextual factors, or thinking ourselves incompetent when we cannot find productive working strategies to deal with situations beyond our control. Thus we risk inappropriately assigning characteristics of the system as if they are characteristics of the individual. To overcome this possibility we need dual frameworks of sense-making which recognise potential individual and contextual factors and take care if choosing one interpretation frame over the other. In working with the research material here, it is important, then, that we do not only turn the spotlight of scrutiny on women, as much research does, but also illuminate the organisational world through their experiences. Goffee and Jones (this volume) offer similar reminders that career theorising may easily over-individualise and under-conceptualise systemic influences.

Sources of plot lines

Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) suggest that people draw from socially and culturally allowed themes in constructing their own lives and life narratives. This means they are constrained in the stories they can tell.

‘We assume that all stories are told and that all self-understanding is realized within the narrative frames each culture provides its members. These frames of intelligibility determine and limit the power of personal narrative.’ (p.2)

‘Social influence shapes not only public action but also private self-understanding. To the degree that this is true, social control takes on a more ominous aspect. For now it appears that the alternatives one recognizes as possible or moral are constrained in the marrow of individual self-representation.’ (p.5)

This was often the women’s experience, and had significant consequences for their abilities to tell and affirm their own lives. Their decisions to pause in outwardly highly ‘successful’ careers could not be readily understood and valued within most social (and academic?) frameworks of meaning about careers. Several noted that many colleagues in their organizations could not understand their decisions, and some would then note who had been able to do so or lines of explanation which had proved ‘intelligible’. (See Claire below.)

In public discussion it seems highly likely that women’s decision-making will be devalued. Women are sometimes portrayed as not tough enough, not willing to give the commitment considered ‘normal’ in senior jobs and up-ward tracking careers. Several research participants had stayed over-long in difficult organizational settings because they

did not want to concede to such interpretations of themselves, and of women more generally, appreciating that their behaviour might be treated as symbolic.

It seems likely then that there are 'truths' and stories of lives that can and cannot be readily told. As senior women managers are currently still an atypical - some would say a contradictory - category, positive attributions for their behaviour are not readily available in cultural frames of meaning. The themes from stories I present below are challenging in this sense. They can be readily dismissed as those of marginal voices who have not habituated successfully to the 'realities' of organizational life. Or they could be interpreted in the frames the women seek to articulate for them: alternative value bases and visions of possibilities, including taking life more generally as their base for 'career' decision-making. Emerging notions of career espouse related themes (eg Weick, 1996). This chapter's stories offer potential insights into some of the dynamics and challenges people may experience as they live partly beyond organizational boundaries.

In addressing such themes this chapter is in related territory to that of Eaton and Bailyn (this volume). In the powerful motif they use, what was ground (life as the background to career) becomes figure, to be paid attention as a whole, so that notions such as purpose, achievement and success are brought into question.

Rosenwald and Ochberg identify how the individual can live from alternative values:

'We imagine that it is possible, though surely difficult, to enlarge the range of personal narrative. Individuals and communities can become aware of the political-cultural conditions that have led to the circumscription of discourse. If a critique of these conditions occurs widely, it may alter not only how individuals construe their identities but also how they talk to one another and indirectly to the social order itself. Discourse mediates between the fate of the individual and the larger order of things.' (p.2)

'Those who would free themselves of their own culture's restrictions must find alternative conceptions of social engagement through which to develop their identities. This too makes liberation difficult.' (p.15)

Thus issues of society and control are always in the background (if not featuring more prominently) when we articulate and hear life stories.

Leaving journeys

Once I had set my core criteria for inclusion in the research - that people felt they had to move from a particular job and were not doing so for promotion - I let the 'sampling' inform me of different patterns people's lives took. I identified suitable participants through contacts, a mail shot and writing about the research in a journal article inviting volunteers.

It was characteristic of the research, and of my learning about women leaving jobs, that there was no common pattern to people's leaving journeys. Three people were forced to leave and two were placed under pressure to do so. Most of these already wanted to leave of their own accord. The remaining eleven more freely chose to leave, but then described pressing reasons for doing so. Despite their dissatisfactions, not all the research participants actually left employment. One contemplated leaving but then stayed in her job temporarily, two others found new jobs before moving on. These potentially different groups of people made very similar comments about organisational life and career issues. The data, and other confirmatory sources, therefore suggest that the issues they faced are more widely relevant, and that leaving is one possible response. Given this sense of resemblance, I treated the accounts as an array of related stories.

Multiple reasons

There was much diversity in the reasons people gave for wanting to leave organizations, and there were typically multiple themes or issues in any one story. This in itself was one of the study's main findings. Attempts to arrive at simple explanations of women managers' behaviour in this respect are therefore futile and inappropriate. Elaborating the themes that did appear, and portraying the decisions as complex and multi-stranded was a major realisation of the original research intent to portray experiences from the women's perspectives. It was answering my original question and answering back to potentially negative framings of women's decisions. Also, it soon became apparent that the women's stories were not about career alone but about life choices - and this too I sought to depict.

To be congruent with the stories told to me, I wanted to write accounts incorporating a mixture of voices and emotional tones; feelings of power and powerlessness; achievements, difficulties and stress. Narrative form can incorporate expectations of neatness, linearity and singularity of plot line, coherence between past, present and future. I suggest we need sometimes to recognise lives as more fittingly reflected by incongruence, multiplicity, or discontinuity of action and rationale, and not seek to tidy this up. We can instead look for aesthetic qualities of raggedness, incompleteness and so on, if these are congruent to the tale told. In this research, for example, it was appropriate to write stories in which people identified multiple reasons for moving on, and would sometimes designate more than one as the 'main' reason, because this was the form of their narrative. This raises challenges for researchers about whether we can hear and tell multi-faceted stories with incongruent aspects and not seek to close the gestalt.

Key dynamics in women's accounts of leaving or wanting to leave employment

I am wary about over-generalising, about speaking as if there is more coherence and certainty in research material than is warranted, in order to smooth a theoretical narrative. I am seeking to honour the diversity in and process quality of the data. This was more possible to do in book form. A shortened version necessarily truncates. Below I examine themes in people's decisions to move on in their careers and lives. The typology offered is organized in terms of key dynamics represented in people's stories. It fits my

theoretical stance of holding ideas firmly but lightly, however, because it does not offer well defined, mutually exclusive categories. Instead, stories placed under one heading share qualities or themes with those under other headings. The stories allocated to a particular grouping are more exemplars of their type. (And I appreciate that I could have adopted a different categorisation initially, and so arrived at a different contribution to theorising. Thus we come to tell selected theoretical truths about our research material.)

Within its frame, this is an initial but incomplete mapping of why women might leave senior management positions. It does not attend to issues of race or elder-care for example, and I might expect a wider range of factors to emerge given a more extensive sampling. I shall describe each dynamic in some detail to show the complex of career/life decision-making and the complex interweavings of individual and contextual factors which the women paid attention to.

Wanting different lifestyles

Four people in the sample come into this category and their stories have some relatively common characteristics. The women have shown much achievement and career success. Three had reached senior posts and had been highly committed to employment for many years. The fourth had developed career aspirations later in her work history. All now wanted to develop other aspects of themselves, which their working lives and who they had become as successful managers were not allowing them space to do. Kathy, for example, talked about wanting to ‘go off in a completely new direction’ (p.54).

All page numbers quoted are from Marshall (1995) unless otherwise stated.

Christina looked back at the organization in which, as Personnel Director, she had shaped several phases of significant change, and concluded:

‘In many ways it was a very repressive place to be, and I was sick to death of feeling compromised and had had enough of it. I’d put an enormous amount of work into my time there, had done everything I believed it possible for me to do.’

‘I really didn’t feel I could be me, I had to be the person people expected me to be.’ (p62)

Christina’s story shows a strengthening sense of self-discovery, and increasing vitality and clarity of judgement, as she took more control of her career/life. Moving on, which was associated with several activities which helped make the transition a reconnection to muted notions of self and interests, provided a release of energy and sense of being a renewed person which is at the heart of her account.

‘One of the reasons I feel so youthful is that I recognize myself now as the person I was twenty years ago, and not the person I’ve been in between. The things that amuse me and the way I express myself are much more like they were then.’ (p62)

All four people wanted time and space to see what emerged. All were seeking a better fit between who they are and what they do, but needed an opening in their lives out of which fresh, more personally meaningful, possibilities might emerge.

Claire's story shows the complexity of multiple reasons for leaving, and the difficulties of trying to find a satisfactory explanation of one's behaviour to give others in a social world of constrained images. She had been in her Personnel Director post for eighteen months. A major restructuring programme was planned and expected to take two to three years. She realised that whilst she was willing to help the organisation make the first moves, she did not want to see this through:

'I knew that I didn't want to go and do something else, I just wanted to stop. It's all I knew. I wanted out of the organization, corporate life, power, just to get out. I'd done it for twenty years and it was enough. But I had no clue about doing anything else. I just wanted to do nothing. And that was extremely hard for everyone I talked to to understand.' (p78)

She wanted 'to do all those things (she) hadn't done for the past twenty years', such as lunching with friends, going to exhibitions, getting up late, and handing her husband a gin and tonic when he arrived home from work.

'I wanted to switch part of my brain off for a while, so that I could feed another part of it.' (p78)

Claire took charge of her life, and forced her decision through in the face of everyone's inability to understand. Some people thought, for example, that she would do something 'worthwhile' like study, expecting that she could not do 'nothing'. Her husband forcefully resisted her choice. He had married a professional woman and did not want her to become something else. Claire no longer wanted to do 'the right thing', as a received imperative from outside herself. She was determined to make a significant change, but noted how difficult it was for people to believe that she had had enough of high pressure living.

'I did feel some pressure to find a good reason, as opposed to just saying "I want to stop working because I've had enough and want a good rest". I had to find that good reason for everybody, including my husband.' (p78)

Looking for an explanation to give others, Claire highlighted another factor in her decision-making - that she was unlikely to be able to have a family given the busy life she was leading, was worried about time running out and wanted to create space for this to happen. Saying this was 'embellishing a little', but ironically this stereotyped women's priority was the reason other people found easiest to believe.

'So then I had a ball for nine months. It was wonderful, just bliss.' (p79)

Claire thoroughly enjoyed herself, did not feel guilty, and regained her sense of vitality. Then she was enticed back by an invitation from an old friend to do some consultancy.

These four women, and others, talked about 'no longer feeling driven' by internalised injunctions to work hard, prove themselves, do worthwhile things and so on which had previously shaped their behaviour. Instead they were now in charge, generating their own directions, not working from received notions of success or career.

I noticed once I had grouped these stories together that all the managers were in Personnel (four of the five people in the study who were). Is this the nature of such 'women's' jobs? The managers had lost touch with themselves and their needs, partly through being so responsive to other people's and their organizations' demands. Claire made this connection directly:

'Having been in a profession where you spend most of your time listening to other people it was very important for me to feed myself and get some nourishment for me.' (p81)

Wanting a more balanced life

There was only one person in the research sample who had young children and the extra life demands that this can bring. Her situation was especially demanding because of a long commuting journey, she often stayed away from home during the week. (When I was contacting potential participants for the research, I was told that many parents, especially those who have reached middle management levels and above, are using various forms of childcare and domestic help to manage combinations of employment and family lives, and so are less likely than might be expected to decide to pause their careers.)

Sarah was initiating a managerial function in a legal organisation. The post had a limited timescale for her, because running the function would not have engrossed her sufficiently. So she saw this phase through and then left. But the primary reason for wanting to leave was that she could not balance the rest of her life with her job.

'Undoubtedly the most important factor for me was that I just wasn't seeing enough of my children and husband.' (p110)

'I had two half-lives.... and half and half didn't amount to one at all. It was a grey existence.....' (p110)

'The price was too much. The price is just loss of the rest of yourself, the rest of things that go to make up a civilised existence. A balance. I just couldn't balance anything.' (p110)

'It sounds terribly undedicated or whatever, but I keep coming back to getting the balance right. I just felt I'd gone so far one way that I really needed to let the pendulum swing the other way for a while and then find the middle ground.' (p113)

Sarah acknowledged that she had wondered whether delaying her return to employment might jeopardise her future choices, but also felt that life would change again - 'I'm quite happy to wait....' (p113). Several people had been concerned that they might put themselves beyond the realm of employment for ever, but by the close of the study it was readily apparent that this had not been the case, that new, externally-generated, opportunities or initiatives from them had emerged.

Leaving change roles which became untenable

Most of the research participants were involved in facilitating organizational change in one form or another and were successful in doing so. But for four people who had also previously been successful in these terms decisions to leave were made in extreme situations in which they were the leaders for significant change programmes and the initiatives proved exceedingly difficult. Amongst these stories there were five interesting, although not wholly common, characteristics.

a) The managers and the change initiatives had initially been successful, but then other powerful people had begun to mobilise against them, and to attack the woman manager as the figurehead. Patricia, a Nursing Director in a North American hospital, for example, had undertaken a major change programme towards more participative decision-making, enhancing the roles of nursing and other personnel. Improvements in patient care had resulted. Her Chief Executive Officer (CEO) asked her to disseminate such changes in other parts of the hospital. As she sought to do so, the doctors mobilised to resist the resulting shifts in power, in which their positions were threatened.

b) Senior figures, who were advocating change in private, did not support them in public. Patricia reported this as a repeated dynamic, which she sought to challenge.

‘And through all this I was very supported by the CEO. When I would go back to him and say “In this meeting, when some of these things were questioned you didn't really come out and support this, is this indeed what you still want to happen?” he would absolutely assure me that “yes”, it must go on, it cannot be stopped, they will come round to our way of thinking, but we must proceed ahead. And so there was a lot of encouragement to continue with this change process.’ (p166)

But change was not being managed carefully organization-wide, and despite her challenges the CEO still failed to give public support:

‘So in the back room I was very supported.... but when it came to the open forum with the other administrators I always felt that I was being hung out to dry a little bit.’ (p166)

When there was confrontation on a critical issue, the Chief Executive sided with the doctors and let Patricia be used as the scapegoat. She was dismissed - with a compensatory settlement.

c) The women become isolated. Relationships with their potential political rivals were already strained, but as the change initiatives became challenged many of their previous allies became unwilling or unable to support them. This is an interesting dynamic as in several of these cases the women were acting on behalf of people with less organizational and social power than themselves. How much support it was appropriate for them to expect was therefore a challenging issue, as many of their allies were even more vulnerable than the change agents. For Patricia it was this withdrawal of support from those she had considered colleagues which was the most disappointing aspect of the events.

d) They became over-committed to work, losing other sources of perspective in their lives. Patricia noted with hindsight that she had funnelled her life down to employment alone and so had eroded her own energy, becoming seriously tired as she sought to adjust her strategies and facilitate change in an increasingly unsupportive setting. She contrasted this with earlier challenging jobs, in which having a home life with teenage children had been a rich balancing factor for her.

e) It was interesting, however, that the managers carried on, working actively, revising their change strategies, not being willing to be deterred. In doing so they disregarded their own safety. It seemed that this was an intentional or semi-intentional choice. When asked whether she had taken enough account of organizational politics in her activities, Patricia responded that she deliberately ‘did not want to resort to playing politics’, she wanted to ‘play it straight’. She wanted to model in her approach the revised image of organizational functioning the change initiative was advocating.

Patricia was too committed to the potential changes to heed her own concerns, to trust her gut reaction which was telling her ‘slow down, there’s something wrong here’. But she also said that she did not want to be ‘smart’ enough not to try for what is sometimes unattainable. She had to be committed to her job and, as an organizational leader, to have thoughts on how the organization could be different, to make her working life worthwhile.

Patricia thought she probably knew two years before she left that the CEO’s failure to support her publicly was dangerous. But she carried on trying to work through other sources of power and influence. Her focus was on the changes, not on her own security.

‘I wanted to believe in what was happening. It wasn’t that important to me to keep my job per se, but we were building something, it was important for both patient care and the profession of nursing....’ (p168)

Patricia thought that women were more likely than men to disregard personal safety and push for goals they believe in:

‘So, with any encouragement at all, we [women] will go forward and continue to pursue those goals. I think men are more political than women. We look at what the value is, and I think men look at whether this is going to fly. They’re maybe not so committed.’ (p168)

These situations persisted until three of the women decided that ‘the personal cost was too great’ and to desist. One wrote a proposal for reorganising her function which consolidated prior changes and made good organisational sense. She did not include a position for herself, thus making herself redundant. Patricia’s CEO promised her support and the continuation of the change programme until her penultimate day in the organization. He then dismissed her.

In these stories the women’s value orientations are prominent, as is their willingness to work for visions of social change enacted through organizational processes.

Blocked promotion prospects

Two people in the sample especially reported not feeling fully stretched, having to push to achieve promotion and seeing jobs go to other (male) people, some of whom they judged less competent than themselves. Mercedes, had previously moved on to a new organisation each time this had happened to her.

‘There are two things you can do if you’re going to whinge. One, you can come to terms with what you’re whinging about and make the best of it and keep quiet. Or you can leave. And I go by the latter code really.’ (p207)

She was in local government, making this more possible. She had moved organization three times during the previous eight years. But she had become too senior to do this easily. Her ambitions to be Director in her then authority had just been disappointed - and she could do her job ‘standing on her head’. She had contemplated leaving, but by the time the interview came she had decided against. Her several reasons for staying, at least temporarily, were that she enjoyed her high salary and what it could buy, did not want to be beaten, and was determined to retire as a Director rather than as the deputy she then was. She was also watching her age (she was older than many new director appointees) and whether she would have to compromise and put on an act (of more masculine characteristics) at interview to gain consideration. By the end of the research she had moved organisation again, taking up a Director post.

The other person in this situation, Stevie, was group manager in sales in a chemical company. Whilst there was little overt discrimination in her organization, she came to believe that covert processes were operating.

‘For a long time I was of the opinion that.... if you were good you’d make it. I hung onto this for about five years until the overwhelming evidence was that it’s not enough to be good or better. There’s accumulated stuff that’s unconscious discrimination.’ (p212)

She described the ‘general erosion’ in career terms she later realised had been happening: she had not progressed as quickly as she thought she should, or as quickly as men recruited at the same time as her; she had to push hard for promotions, and was not very

stretched when they did come. Also she had to prove herself anew in each job, somehow her reputation did not accrue as she saw men's doing. Stevie believed that her track record of achievement could not outweigh the fact that she did not fit the company's dominant cultural image of success.

'People have an image of what a successful [company] manager is, how they behave, how they look and are, how they communicate and manage. And that is a [company] clone. Typically it's a man who has a wife who doesn't work, so he's geographically flexible. He probably has kids, if he hasn't he is a good sportsman and has a wonderful social life. He's one of the boys, he doesn't do anything excessively, he doesn't challenge or make waves. Pretty smart. A good guy. So when women come along they don't fit into any of those things.' (p215)

Stevie had already violated this image in more ways than being female. She had also answered back to a senior manager, following her own value of being blunt and honest but knowing that she challenged organizational norms, and had thus acquired him as a powerful enemy able to limit her progression opportunities.

No longer wanting to battle

The two people in this categorisation were in the older age group in the sample. Their stories provide a conceptual sequel to those of limited career opportunities above. Both had achieved much in their careers and been pioneers as women in their occupational settings. But these achievements had had to be fought for, and the ground continually protected in order to maintain position and respect from others. Their energies for engaging in this added 'work' had eventually flagged.

Margaret was a manager in banking. She had spent over thirty years with one bank, and had had to fight every step of the way to be allowed necessary training or promotion. She was usually the most senior woman people had encountered - 'obviously, wherever I went I was a peculiar animal' (p242).

As Margaret felt that promotions had been given her on sufferance, to appease her and improve the bank's image, she had not developed faith in herself and her competence. This was despite her demonstrable successes in professional examinations and circles.

'I always thought I got there because they thought "It's a woman, so we'll just keep her quiet and we can say we've got a woman here", not because of my ability. I never believed in my ability, and it's only since I've left the bank and seen people's reactions to me that I've begun to think maybe I wasn't so bad after all, and maybe I did get there on ability. But I never believed in myself during the job.' (p243)

Margaret could not discuss these issues with anyone directly, feeling isolated as a woman in a male-dominated environment and being invested in maintaining her outward

projecting image and skills of professional competence. She could not therefore intrude any alternative feedback she could trust into this picture of self-doubt.

Moving into senior management, she had relaxed more than usual after gaining promotion. She thought she had achieved her ultimate grade and was now weary of battling. Before she could find out whether this situation was temporary, pressures on banking because of recession had further eroded her energy and enthusiasm.

Reluctantly at first, she accepted an offer of early retirement. But moving on released her energy. After a pause of only a few months she found a new job and was very successful, being promoted quickly - and she was able to have the confidence in her abilities, and positive feedback, that she had previously been largely denied.

Fighting for legitimacy

This account is distinctive in the research for several reasons, not least because this person withdrew her carefully crafted story at a late stage and I had to write a skeletal version to include as data instead.

Ruth had been 'out' as a lesbian for several years, and had had to struggle to create a positive identity, acceptable to others. She was the departmental manager in an organisational context in which people were overtly committed to equality, but the atmosphere was charged and uncertain, with considerable ambivalence about authority. Ruth's attempts to take a managerial stance were sometimes undermined by her subordinates, and some senior managers were wary of her and of her department's work. Her ability to survive in this environment was further weakened by various incidents at work and by an unsettling experience in her personal life. Her vulnerability attracted people who had experiences of injustice or abuse to tell. Counselling them, and being unable to protect herself from feeling the issues they raised, was a further pressure. Looking back, Ruth believes her abilities to cope with these various demands were affected by internalising devalued stereotypes of lesbians, undermining her feelings of competence and worth. She became defensive and excessively tired, the situation became too stressful. Eventually senior managers pressured her to leave and she negotiated a generous financial settlement to do so.

Ruth's experience shows how variable and conditional a lesbian manager's acceptability can be. It is an awkward sign that whilst talking about gender and management is sometimes risky enough, there are issues which are mostly ignored, invisible, which point to dangerous territory for people to inhabit. There is little research in this area (Hall, 1989, is an exception). Ruth's reasons for withdrawing her story mirror this sensitivity. The time with the organization and experience of leaving had been traumatic for her. She had taken time to reorient her life. Two years later she was successfully in a middle management job, and accepted for who she was. Despite her wish to breach the relative secrecy about lesbian identities and politics surrounding sexual orientation, she experienced a diffuse anxiety that somehow people would recognise her in even a disguised account and that publication could threaten her current situation. That I should have partly to erase the story from the research, therefore seemed very fitting.

Being forced or pressured to leave

Two women in the sample were forced out when new top managers took over their businesses. Both had intended to leave before this, but had wanted to do so in their own time. One was struggling to have her contribution accepted in an extremely male-dominated and quite unreformed (in these terms) organisation. The other was highly successful in a female-dominated industry; unfortunately her success and public popularity did not endear her to her new boss. These two stories show some of the sharp end of interpersonal power dynamics at senior management levels which affect both men and women. I shall illustrate through Julia's account.

Julia was accepted for her competence in public relations, but otherwise felt consistently excluded and devalued by her senior management colleagues, all of whom were men. She had moved organizationally and geographically to take up her position, but soon felt some regret about this.

‘I've never come across such a chauvinistic environment in my life.’ (p279)

‘The men didn't want to know. They're all long-serving and didn't want their cosy “club” disturbed. The only person who was half way decent to me was a fellow countryman.... Basically they just couldn't cope with a woman in senior management at all.’ (p279)

By the end of her first year, Julia was already looking to move:

‘I'd had enough, and wasn't happy. I wasn't going to fit in the environment. I'd actually done quite well by my own professional standards, but it was such an organization that you were basically lining yourself up to be hit with a big stick every day, no matter what you did.’ (p282)

The political climate deteriorated further for Julia and for several other (male) senior managers when a new Chief Executive was appointed.

‘His view was that the way to manage a company was to create fear and have people bounce around.’ (p282)

‘The new Chief Executive... decided that my face didn't fit.... Forget job descriptions and objectives and measuring any of that. He didn't like me in the role. He liked me, but not in the role. He told me that’. (p283)

Some negotiations followed and Julia eventually left for another job. She was unusual in the sample in this, but she did not want the risk of leaving without financial security, explaining this as a significant and enduring aspect of her character and life pattern. She was subsequently very successful.

Three cross-woven themes in people's accounts

Through the stories there also ran three broader themes which appeared in different forms in different people's lives. These had significantly informed people's propensity for career/life transitions. They were: working in 'male-dominated' environments; striving to maintain a viable sense of self; and experiencing stress and tiredness.

Working in 'male-dominated' environments

Eleven of the women experienced significant dissatisfactions from working in what they termed 'male-dominated' organizational environments. They meant that men were strongly in the majority, that the collective dynamics of managerial life fitted negative stereotypes of masculine, adversarial or exclusionary behaviour, and that much recruitment was in "like-image". For most it was what happened after promotion or appointment beyond the organisation's previous glass ceiling that mattered in their decision-making. (The popular notion of 'glass ceiling' can be a limiting metaphor. It implies that once women are promoted beyond a previous barrier much is resolved. But there are then challenges about inclusion, exercising power, having credibility and so on which should not be under-estimated.)

Interpersonal behaviour at senior levels was described as often very aggressive, rude, territorial, status-conscious and hostile; with conflict, power struggles, politicking, bullying and intimidation as common features. Research participants (variously) disliked the atmosphere of potential punishment and fear, 'the rough play of big boys', the 'hostile environment' and people running businesses on emotions and vindictiveness. They were shocked at these ways of operating, and thought them ineffective and energy wasting. They preferred working strategies they described variously as professional, effectiveness based, blunt and honest.

The women felt 'at odds' in these organizational environments in several ways. They especially lacked available allies amongst their colleagues, reducing their potential job effectiveness and ability to influence decision-making. It seemed that they were not accepted into informal networks despite their formal appointment and so had limited power bases; several became isolated.

It took me some time to realise that the women were describing the classic dynamics of tokenism - visibility, polarisation effects and assimilation to stereotypes - described by Kanter in 1977 as operating when there is one or a few people who are in a relative minority in a group. She identified these dynamics in relation to gender amongst a company's salesforce, but showed that they could operate across various sorts of socially salient differences. It seems from my research that they are now sometimes apparent at senior management team and Board levels.

Most managers' earlier careers had not prepared them for the dynamics of power and exclusion they encountered, they simply had not met such environments; they therefore had few coping strategies established and had to develop these in highly visible

organizational positions. These processes pose many dilemmas of identity and effectiveness for the tokens, (and are challenging for members of the dominant group who are under pressure not to 'break cultural ranks' and relate more authentically with tokens).

Several of the managers emphasised that they did not leave because they could not cope with these dynamics, but because they did not respect or want to be part of that way of operating. They wanted to work in more productive, less repressive environments.

Striving to maintain a viable sense of self

Many of the managers found it hard to maintain a viable, acceptable to themselves, sense of self. They were especially experiencing significant, for some increasing, incongruities between their internal and external images. Some of the processes involved were: invisibility, against which they had to assert themselves as senior managers; being judged against gendered images, which typically did not expect competence from women; that success images were those of men; and not liking what they had become as they adopted tougher, more adversarial and masked styles to match their organizational environments and be effective. One woman described how the costs of acting 'out of character' - and the 'tremendous tiredness' - had become more evident. Another felt that she had lost a centred sense of self as she tried to meet the multiple expectations of work colleagues and family members. Another reflected: 'I guess, in the end, that was the fundamental thing which made me leave, because over a period of time it was just too difficult to hold together a coherent sense of self within all those competing expectations.' (p.143)

Some people may see such pressures as aspects of career accommodation for everyone (I would question this normality or its desirability), but they become more pointed when managers are judged also against idealised or devalued gender stereotypes.

Many of the women wanted to feel more authentic and coherent, and this was a major motivation in moving on. They wanted to work in organizational cultures in which they could be more fully 'themselves'. Some people would question whether coherence of self is possible in post-modern times. But this call was not for a romantic unity of personhood. Rather it was for full access to the multiple aspects of themselves which they saw as the sources of their integrity, decision-making senses, and personal, and ultimately organizational, power. But it is difficult to maintain a viable sense of self in hostile environments - and so sometimes the powerful choice is to leave, releasing energy as a result.

Experiencing stress and tiredness

Many of the research participants reported excessive stress and tiredness, largely due to the additional work they did to present themselves and maintain job effectiveness in hostile cultures (rather than to job demands). Many also realised later that as they had tried alternative strategies for being effective in these circumstances they had become over-committed to work and that the rest of their lives had been neglected, reducing further their bases of energy and support. Rather than casting doubt on women's capabilities, the data testifies to strengths these people showed. Many had stayed over-

long in highly demanding environments because of how ‘tough’ they were. Perhaps they were too tough for their own good.

This research material offers interesting insights into some dynamics which may underly some statistics of ‘overworking’ (Brett, Medvec and Stroh; Peiperl and Jones; this volume). It shows especially that there may be complex interplays of individual and contextual influences prompting and sustaining such behaviour.

In reflection

In this section I shall relate the above material to career theorising by exploring several selected themes and dynamics. These are usually not common to the whole group, but illuminated through different people’s stories. Whilst I shall talk of women because the data is grounded in women’s lives, I do not expect all of these processes to be exclusive to women. However, they may often manifest differently in men’s lives. The critical theorist in me maintains a watchfulness about whether gender inequalities might be replicated inadvertently in new conceptions of career.

One strong impression the collected stories give is of a senior organizational world which is often rejecting or hostile towards the women, in which they have repeatedly adjusted themselves and their behaviour to seek effectiveness. This context is a major factor not only in prompting career movement, but also in challenging their attachment to employment and leading them to seek replenishing spaces which are ‘outside’ this world. A dilemma which has long been apparent in research on women in management is whether the adaptations of self many undertake to survive in organizations (Sheppard, 1989) put their abilities to thrive in jeopardy. Many of the women in this study were making decisions based on the health of their whole lives to seek the latter, and many reported personal development as an aspect of the career transition process.

Issues of identity were highly significant in the research data; an inability to achieve a viable identity was a factor prompting movement. Despite the ways in which women had resisted pressures or shown their unwillingness to be moulded, many had experienced personal erosion in their jobs which had become apparent to them in realisations that the costs they were paying were too great for the beneficial impacts they were having. They chose not to go on coping, in the hope that they could thrive elsewhere. The search to (re)gain sight of what was valuable in life or a centred sense of self was key for several people, leading them to set in train an evolving process of self-recovery and/or self-discovery.

It seemed that previously research participants had often been outer-directed, for example internalising received messages about achievement (these may well have been authentic for them at the time), or working on behalf of some notions of ‘the greater good’. They had comparatively suppressed or subdued their own perceptions and needs. In deciding to move on many shifted toward paying more attention to inner voices, wishes and interpretations, sometimes prioritising these in a highly focused way at key decision points (eg Claire). Some seemed, however, to find this difficult to justify, especially if

they were then putting their own needs before those of others. They wanted to feel assured that they had tried sufficiently hard to address organizational issues before they could give themselves 'permission' to be more self-oriented. One important discrimination that many had to make was when it was appropriate to persist in a challenging environment and when it was appropriate to desist. The challenge of distinguishing this choice is most apparent in the change agents' stories. They pushed themselves to stay in difficult situations as champions of the potential for change. They did not want to concede, partly unwilling to contribute to potential images of women as 'weak'. They had little if any feedback they could trust because they were isolated from colleagues. They pushed themselves beyond their limits.

So these career transitions are highly context influenced, but are simultaneously strongly based in personal values and seeking self-realisation. Again the form they took - of multiple reasons for moving on - is important. The stories give some glimpses into complex decision-making which interweaves lives and careers. They show that factors other than women's reproductive roles figure significantly in shaping their careers. They show an openness to movement and change in the lives studied, and the continually unfolding nature of this. Here the research data is highly congruent with conclusions reached by Gunz, Evans and Jallard (this volume) that boundaries in career terms are now often valuably conceptualised as aspects of making sense of one's place in the world. With Weick (1996) I would see this as typically a continually evolving process, with enactment as a key aspect both emerging from life process and providing definition for its further development.

In the collection of stories offered above there are indications of what I would broadly call 'mid-life' work. In this volume Boyatzis and Kolb offer a highly articulated mapping of potential modes of adaptation and growth. From my interest in storied lives I am both interested in this and wary about applying its categories and clarities to complexly unfolding lives. These women's stories could, nonetheless, be seen as explorations into different forms of generativity. In showing wide ranging concerns and an active attention to legitimising self-care alongside service to others their meanings of generativity contrast with those advocated in Kanai and Fujii (this volume) which have a narrower focus and a clarity of other-directedness. It would be inappropriate to over-interpret these apparent differences given the many ways in which the data bases and research approaches of the two studies vary. Sources such as Gallos (1989) would, however, suggest that notions of mid-life development are potentially gender-associated.

Telling one's life

Telling their life narratives self-reflectively, to me or other people who would hear with respect, was part of many women's development. Their stories were grounded in personal (and often social and political) truths which needed to be told. (As stories are construction, I am not suggesting that there is an objective truth about a life. Rather, I believe that there are narratives which are 'true' to a person's experience at a particular time, and shape the life lived, which can be validated or not by interpersonal and social processes. Labelling such stories as outmoded 'social realism' or 'women's voices' is a

dismissive, disparaging classification - paradoxically claiming a greater right to 'truth'.) The women were taking authority and power to assign meanings in their lives, and so challenging dominant social rhetorics, about women's life patterns and/or the value placed on hierarchic 'success' in employment, which were likely to devalue their choices. Stories fully told were part of then moving on.

Individuals may be able to go beyond career/life plot-lines which are sanctioned in society's narrative 'frames of intelligibility' (Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992), toward developing alternative meanings. Whether the diverse stories then told, and enacted, can influence dominant value systems and theoretical frames is an interesting issue. Established forms of conceptualisation and valuing are highly resilient and can be replicated in the incorporation of 'new' ideas. For example, flexible work notions are now sometimes associated with significant inequalities of control, pay and opportunities, which are sometimes gender associated. Ideals of high commitment and over-working are still prevalent in organizational life.

Theorising lives

With this chapter's material I am contributing to notions of women's flexible careers. But I do so only with great caution. This theoretical narrative has much potential value. Nicholson and West (1988), for example, argued that 'important differences in career paths and patterns of men and women' mean that, in these terms, 'men represent the past and women the future of organizational society' (p.216). They identified two (of five) trends in women's career development as: 'their more spontaneous and "existentialist" value-driven career orientations' (p.216) and their retention of high levels of upward and radical career moves much later in their careers than men' (p.216). The data above provides further confirmation for such patterns, but suggests that the prompting is not value-driven alone. The contributions that gender/power patterns at senior management levels are making to career movement cannot be ignored, for example.

A theoretical contributor who gives a particularly appealing account of flexible careers/lives is Bateson (1989). She uses the core metaphor of 'composing a life', inviting us to see life as 'improvisations, discovering the shape of our creation along the way, rather than pursuing a vision already defined.' (p.1) Her ideas link with those of emergent career 'planning' I have developed elsewhere (Marshall, 1989). She suggests that:

'It is time now to explore the creative potential of interrupted and conflicted lives, where energies are not narrowly focused or permanently pointed toward a single ambition.' (Bateson, 1989, p.9)

'Composing a life involves a continual reimagining of the future and reinterpretations of the past to give meaning in the present.' (p.29)

Is Bateson's positive framing for discontinuous, changeful experience a viable discourse? It seems radical and holds much potential to honour data such as that presented above. And it may do us a disservice by painting a positive gloss on all experience, inviting us to make more virtue than is warranted out of challenging, sometimes stressful, necessity. Neither does it account for stressful experiences of living at impasses apparent in several women's stories. The advocacy to hear multiple, potentially conflicting, voices in any one narrative I have presented here seeks to go beyond Bateson and incorporate her suggestions into a broader framing. With her, however, I think we need usually to conceptualise careers beyond the boundaries of organizations, occupational choices and employment, so that lives provide the basic form, value-base and boundaries - which are then open to continuing revision.

In this chapter I have been seeking to hear the women's stories presented within their own registers, resisting temptations (internalised academic injunctions) to frame them from within established or emerging career theorising. This is my academic parallel to telling a good enough life story, so that it (narrative and life) can then move on. How we theorise may be 'right' in its time, but it is always a construction. Women managers' stories are still trapped in a web of frames of meaning underpinned by notions of male-female differences. (I have not escaped them here.) We need a truly generative leap to tell life stories which are beyond gender themes altogether (glorifying women as different does not achieve this). So what we say can be considered true (against appropriate warrants of judgement) within a systemic, evolving process, rather than as definitive 'truth'.

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This volume:

Boyatzis and Kolb
Brett, Medvec and Stroh
Eaton and Bailyn
Goffee and Jones
Gunz, Evans and Jollard
Parker and Arthur
Peiperl and Jones