The Incredibles: Investigating what it is like to be a portfolio worker

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Declaration

This is to certify that

(i) The author of this thesis declares that it does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for another degree,

(ii) All work presented represents the author's own original work except for when referenced to others,

(iii) In order to accommodate the corrections stipulated by the examiners, this thesis is less than 81,500 words in length, exclusive of abstract, acknowledgements, contents, lists of images, figures and tables, reference list, and appendices.

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Abstract

This study provides insights into the experiences of portfolio workers and contributes to the growing body of work on non-standard working arrangements.

The empirical material was gathered from 36 semi-structured interviews, a focus group and a lived experience diary. The research was carried out by a portfolio worker and this position, as portfolio worker-researcher, has helped to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' views and interpretations of how they experience, negotiate and make sense of their portfolio working careers.

This qualitative Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis-informed study draws on the concepts of new careers, identity, and identity work to generate insights into portfolio workers' perspectives on their position within the world of work.

The findings suggest that portfolio work does not reflect the polarised views presented in existing research. Rather than entailing *either* autonomy, flexibility, novelty and fulfilment; *or* precarity, a lack of job security, and restricted freedom and growth; the understandings of portfolio work are more nuanced and highly dependent on previous experiences.

Following the analysis, the thesis puts forward a new definition of portfolio work and an empirically-based typology of portfolio workers. The analysis also highlights the extensive identity work carried out by portfolio workers, whereby aspects of identity are concealed, or revealed, depending on the circumstances. This ability to manipulate identity, conceptualised as a Rubik's cube identity, facilitates the presentation of a legitimate social identity and concomitant self-identity. The process of identity manipulation, increases identity capacity,

developing social and cultural capital and creating value by helping to develop the

adaptability, resilience and transferable skills required to navigate today's

changing world of work.

Acknowledgements

and life in general, have been an essential, and very enjoyable, part of the process for me.

Thanks to the various NHS doctors who have now saved my life four times. Surviving post-partum haemorrhage, cancer, extensive bilateral pulmonary emboli and sepsis gave me confidence that I could survive a PhD.

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Finally, thanks to my family. To Dad, who, before he died, told me that his only regret was that he would miss the celebration at the end of my PhD. Thanks for continually encouraging me to get more and more qualifications; I've finished now. To Mum for providing the seamless early childcare that enabled me to start portfolio working. To my brother, Clive, for the regular encouraging phone calls resulting in him eventually embracing the portfolio working concept in his own life. To my sister Sue, for agreeing to delay our visit to our childhood home in Dubai until this is all over.

Thanks to Richard, for encouraging me to continue to portfolio work and find the time and space to undertake this research. To Celena and Jamilla, both already building work portfolios of your own, I hope you will forgive me for all the time I spent in the study, rather than with you.

Sooner or later, thanks to the re-shaping of the organization, we shall all be portfolio people. It is good news.

Charles Handy (1995a: 146)

Chapter One: Introduction to the Thesis

1.1 Overview

This thesis concerns three key aspects of portfolio working in the United Kingdom (UK). First, it examines the evolution of the portfolio working concept. Second, it investigates who portfolio workers are, what they do, and why, providing insights into their experiences. Finally, it seeks to understand what portfolio work 'is like' for those who work this way and how portfolio workers make sense of this style of work.

This chapter identifies the motivation behind the choice of topic and provides the context for the investigation by highlighting general trends impacting on working patterns. It concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis and its contributions to knowledge.

1.2 Rationale

Handy (1995b: 175) defined portfolio work as: 'a collection of different bits and pieces of work for different clients'. This definition has been further developed by several academics (e.g. Cohen et al 2004; Clinton et al 2006; Wood & Michaelides 2016, see also Appendix XI). There does not appear to be a consensus in the literature on what portfolio work is, so a suggested new definition, based on

existing literature, is proposed in Chapter Two and expanded on, based on empirical evidence, in Chapter Seven.

Portfolio working fits within the broad category of flexible working, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, based on Hogarth and Simm's (1999) four definitions of flexible working[1]. This typology is still widely used but has been updated and annotated with examples drawn from a variety of more recent sources. The definitions cover the most common working arrangements and distinguish between structured and unstructured, and temporary and permanent, work arrangements. Permanent work arrangements are either structured, whereby both parties know which set times and days are to be worked, or, in the case of flexitime, what core working hours are; or unstructured, whereby the individual is given greater choice over when and where the hours are worked. Temporary arrangements are either structured based on a specific contractual term with a finite end date and are often used to cover, for example, maternity leave; or unstructured where workers might work intermittently as and when required. The latter is a tenuous 'employment' relationship and has been challenged recently by Uber and Deliveroo drivers, and Pimlico Plumbers workers (Grierson & Davies 2017). The divisions between each category are, however, not as definitive as the diagram might suggest. What is unique about portfolio work is that it can cut across all categories. My own

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[1] Defined by the UK government as 'a way of working that suits an employee's needs, e.g. having flexible start and finish times, or working from home.' (gov.uk a no date). This definition is underpinned by the assumption that flexible working arrangements 'suit an employee's needs' and it does not recognise that, in practice, these arrangements might be preferable to standard employment terms, but they might not necessarily meet employees' needs fully. The government definition is the one used legally when companies are required to consider requests for flexible working.

portfolio, and that of a few others in my sample, includes working arrangements under all four categories and most of the participants in my study spread across at least two.

Structured Permanent: * fixed part-time * term time only *self-employed *compressed hours *job share * flexitime	Structured Temporary: * fixed-term contract * freelance * contingent * agency * project based * independent contractor
Unstructured Permanent: * annualised working hours * homeworking * mobile working/teleworking	Unstructured Temporary: * casual employment * gig workers * app based workers * on demand/on call * zero hours * platform work

Figure 1.1: Non-standard working arrangements (NSWAs)
Source: Author's own based on Hogarth & Simm (1999)

I first encountered the term 'portfolio work' (Handy 1995b) when studying part-time for my MBA and working very long hours for a major property company in Mayfair on the standard traditional career trajectory for a chartered surveyor. Handy (1995a: 146) suggested that

> Sooner or later, thanks to the re-shaping of the organization we shall all be portfolio people. It is good news.

I remember thinking what an interesting and attractive way of working it would be but never achievable for me in a profession where only 2.5% of chartered surveyors

were working part-time[2] (Halpin 2015). However, for the past 20 years I have been portfolio working and have found that some individuals, and organisations, do not seem to fully understand this non-standard working arrangement (NSWA). I therefore decided to embark on a PhD to delve into the working lives of portfolio workers, and this thesis is a result of that investigation. Through my work I have examined this working pattern to contribute to an improved understanding of it.

My interest in discovering, and exploring, the experiences of individuals who are portfolio workers required a combination of epistemological approaches underpinned by an abductive ontology. As I work for a few different organisations I had the benefit of easy access to many portfolio workers and have been able to construct an interpretation of these participants' experiences of portfolio work.

The phenomenon investigated is also a lived experience (Reid et al 2005) of my own. I therefore acted as a 'practitioner-researcher' (Saunders et al 2009: 598), 'insider-outsider' (Humphrey 2007: 11) or 'fellow traveller' (Cohen 2014: 21). This means I have interpreted the findings based on my own preconceptions and interpretive repertoire when gathering and analysing the empirical material. I have, however, only aimed 'to construct a possible interpretation' (van Manen 1990: 41) rather than arrive at a definitive answer. A highly reflexive approach was needed due to the 'closer relationships between the researcher and researched'

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[2] Part-time work involves fewer hours work than full-time work. There is no specific number of hours that makes an individual part-time but a full-time worker will usually work at least 35 hours a week (gov.uk b no date)

(Blaxter et al 2006: 158) but I believe this generated richer data and a more

'complex narrative' (Humphrey 2007: 15). Van Manen (1990: 43) suggests that

> Even minor phenomenological research projects require that we not simply
> raise a question and possibly soon drop it again, but rather that we "live"
> this question, that we "become" this question.

As I have worked as a portfolio worker for many years I have been able to both

'live' and 'become' my research question and have kept a lived experience diary to

capture my portfolio working experiences.

1.3 Context

There is a wealth of literature (e.g. Arthur et al 1999; Cohen 2016; Inkson et al 2015)

concerning understandings of career. There appears to be some consensus

amongst both academics and government statistics (ONS 2018a) that there has

been a shift from 'traditional careers' with an 'emphasis on continuous, full-time,

long-term organizational employment coupled with extensive commitment to

one's career and organization' (Valcour & Ladge 2008: 300) to 'new careers' (e.g.

Arthur et al 1999) that encompass more flexible, adaptable, individualistic ways of

working. This shift has been influenced by a variety of environmental factors that

are likely to contribute towards the growth of NSWAs. A brief overview of some of

these key factors – demographic and employment status, policy and legislative,

sociocultural, economic and technological – is provided in the next section.

1.3.1 Demographic and employment status trends

The UK population is aging. Average life expectancy at birth in the UK has

stabilised at 79.2 years for men and 82.9 years for women (ONS 2018b). Over 18%

of the UK population are now 65 and over, and in the next twenty years this is

estimated to rise to over 24% (ONS 2017a). The number of older workers within

the UK workforce is therefore increasing. The proportion of workers aged 50 to 64

has increased from 19% to 28% of the total workforce over the past 26 years (see

Figure 1.2), a trend that is likely to continue.
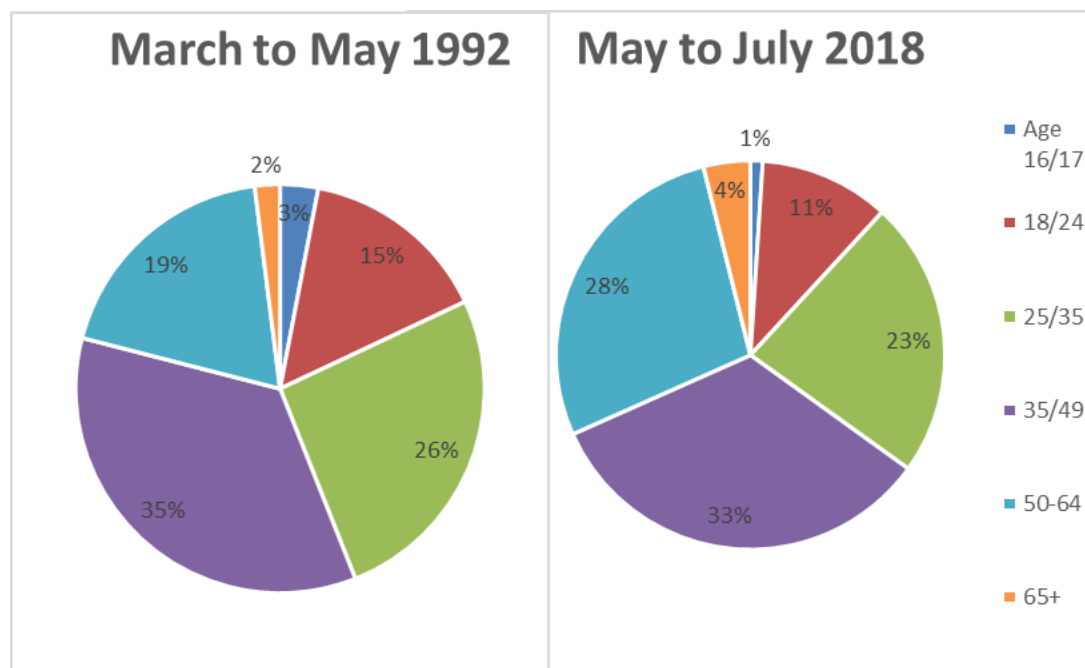
Figure 1.2: Age structure of UK employment 1992 – 2018
Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2018c)

Due to a combination of reduced physical capacity with age, and reluctance

amongst some organisations to employ older workers, this work is likely to be

based on NSWAs. Some organisations have been taking positive action to recruit

this section of the workforce, for example B&Q (Matheson 2006), Barclays Bank

and National Express (Groom 2015), but these jobs tend to be part-time and low

paid. Children of the elderly, with caring responsibilities, may also find that part-

time work enables them 'to reconcile work and care responsibilities' (Ben-Galim &

Silim 2013: 25).

At the other end of the spectrum, those entering the labour market, known as 'Generation Z', are often *having* to work part-time due to a lack of full-time opportunities. They are 'a generation of realists and pragmatists' (Gratton 2011: 156) and are becoming used to this style of working. The preceding generation, 'the Millennials', also place 'high value on workplace flexibility', and fewer than half 'expect to be working standard office hours five to 10 years from now' (Holland 2013). These generations actively seek 'variety, excitement and challenge' unlike the majority of those in older generations (Gentry et al 2009: 54). This is, however, a somewhat stereotypical view, and there may be ambiguity within these stereotypes (Pledger Weeks 2017; Storey 2000). Expectations of work are also likely to alter as the situation of the individual changes, and it may be easier to achieve the optimal combination of flexibility, security, variety, excitement and challenge sought in a variety of part-time roles, i.e. portfolio work, rather than in just one full-time position.

Another factor that may result in more part-time work is that many workers within these younger generations aspire to start their own businesses (Shields 2014). As small businesses tend to suffer from high mortality (Roper & Hart 2018), it is possible to reduce risk by having a portfolio, working part-time to generate a reliable and dependable income whilst the business builds up or to provide income for periods when business is slack. Part-time working might also provide leads to further business opportunities.

In both the UK and other developed countries, there has been an increase in part-time workers over the past few decades (see Figure 1.3). The number of part-time

workers in the UK has been reported (ONS 2018a) to be over 8.53m which is an

increase of 42%, compared to an increase of 21% for full-time workers since 1992.
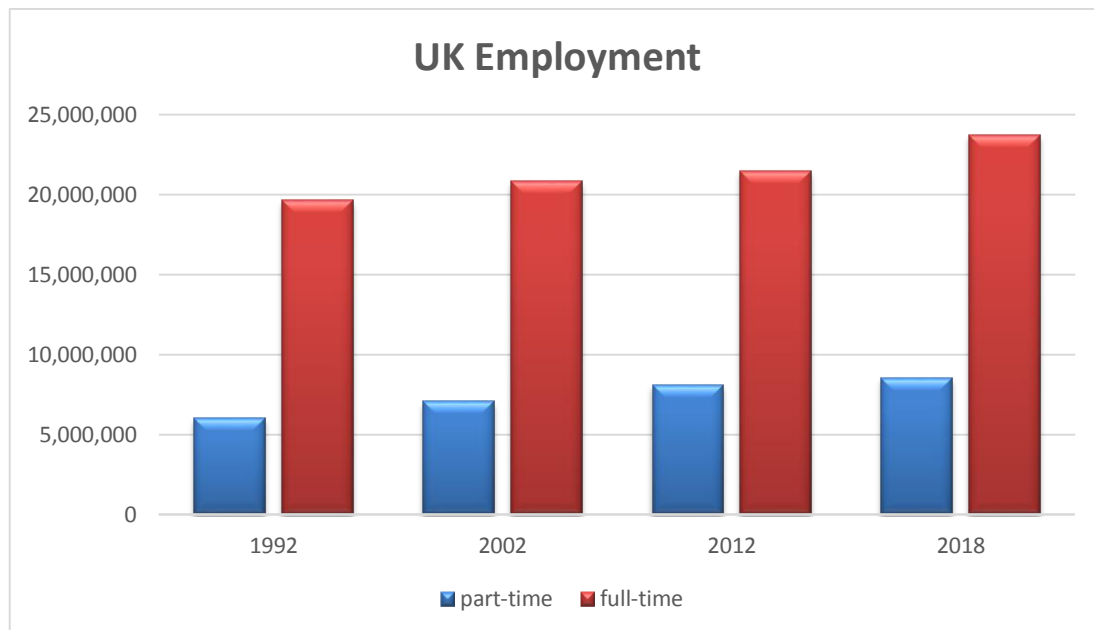
Figure 1.3: Trend in numbers of part-time and full-time workers in the UK
Source: ONS (2018a)

The growth in part-time employment is echoed by the growth in self-employment,

with a particularly dramatic growth in part-time self-employment, which has

almost doubled since 2000 as shown in Figure 1.4.
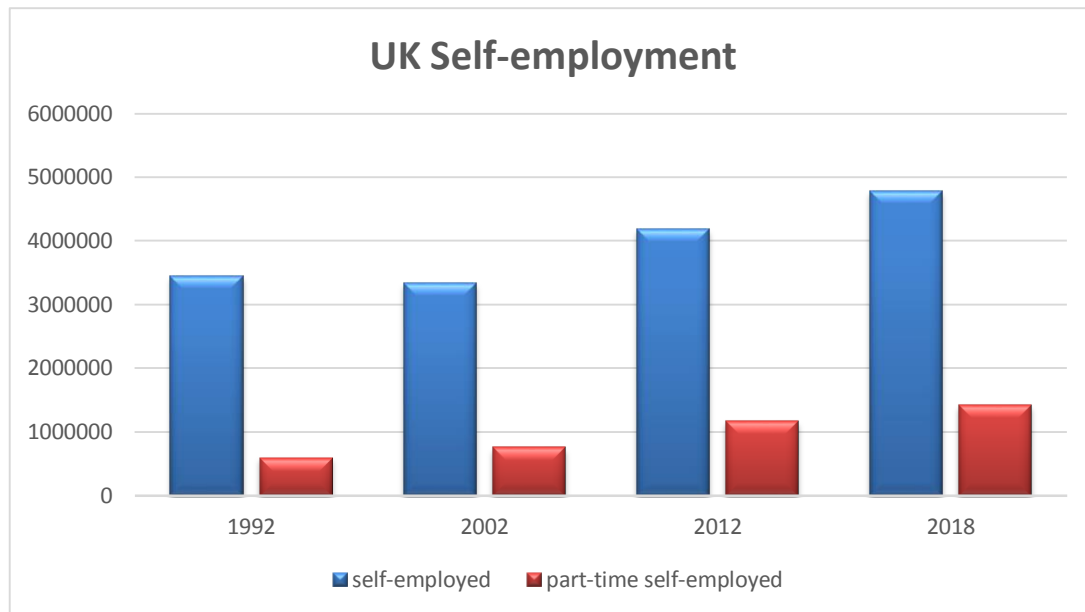
Figure 1.4: Trends in self-employment in the UK
Source: ONS (2018a)

These statistics can however be misleading as the Office for National Statistics

(ONS) relies predominantly on surveys asking people what their 'main job' is,

focusing on a quantifiable figure (Fleming 2017). A portfolio worker could be both

self-employed and employed, full-time and part-time, and, when deciding on their

'main job', could base their answer on longevity, hours worked, income, or another

measure. Their 'main job' can also change frequently over a short time frame. In

response to changes in working patterns the ONS has recently started measuring

the number of workers in two jobs, and those on zero hours contracts (ONS

2018e), to gain a better understanding of labour market trends.

1.3.2 Changes in policy and legislation

The impact of the UK leaving the European Union on working patterns is difficult

to predict but it seems likely that the uncertainty surrounding the future will

result in Human Resource Management (HRM) policies of organisations requiring

more flexibility with a resultant increase in NSWAs. There have also been several

government policies and interventions that are likely to lead to further increases in

the number of NSWAs in the UK. Below I present an overview of those most relevant to my research.

Subsidised childcare

The UK Government is committed to the provision of assistance with childcare to enable more carers to enter, remain in, or re-enter, the labour market. There are two main policies directed at carers with childcare responsibilities: the tax credit system and the provision of some free childcare (gov.uk 2018a); both of which encourage carers to work part-time, and potentially discourage them from working full-time.

The Children and Families Act 2014 and The Flexible Working Regulations 2014

This legislation does not impose flexible working on organisations; it simply requires them to 'deal with the application in a reasonable manner' (legislation.gov.uk 2014 & 2018) and provides some support to employees who want to reduce their working hours as there are legislative parameters to underpin their negotiations.

The Pensions Act 2014

This Act provides for a periodic review of the State Pension age (legislation.gov.uk 2017) which has been increasing with each revision. The age at which workers are entitled to collect their state pension has increased to 67 for those retiring between 2026 and 2028 and is likely to continue to rise over the next few decades. The rising state pension age, together with increased life expectancy (see 1.3.1), mean that many potential retirees are either wanting, or having, to work for longer (e.g. Ehrenreich 2006).

1.3.3 Sociocultural changes

There has been a major change in the attitude to women working over the past few decades, and it is now considered socially acceptable, even expected, for women to work and for others, whether formally or informally, to care for their children (Inkson et al 2015; Weale & Barr 2017). A raft of legislation relating to non-discrimination, and maternity and paternity provision, amongst others, has been introduced to protect and support women in the workplace. This has contributed towards an increase in the number of women in the UK labour force to 71%; the highest female employment rate since comparable records began in 1971 (ONS 2018a). A higher proportion of women than men tend to work part-time and this is evident across the globe (OECD 2018). Despite the assistance provided to women to continue to work, there is still a need for children to be cared for, and many women are balancing their work with their caring responsibilities (Lewis & Cooper 2005), both of children and the elderly, and therefore work part-time.

Another sociocultural issue is the 24-hour economy, 24/7 work ethic (Spicer & Fleming 2016) or 'always on world' (Williams 2017); i.e. the trend towards longer and non-standard business hours. Technology facilitates both 24-hour working and 24-hour leisure time. Employing full-time staff to achieve 24-hour coverage can be problematic for organisations; therefore NSWAs are likely to be used (Li & Han 2017).

The 'job for life' is no longer an expected pattern amongst many workers and employees, due to the other changes in the working environment outlined in this chapter. There are demands for a more flexible and adaptable workforce who are prepared, and often required, to move from job to job to construct their

livelihoods and achieve their personal objectives. Gratton (2011: 3) is one of many

authors that identifies this change when she states that

> many of the ways of working we have taken for granted in the last 20 years - working from nine to five, aligning with one company, spending time with family taking the weekends off, working with people we know well - are all beginning to disappear.

Coplin (2013: 66) considers that this change is driven by the entry of 'Millennials'

to the workplace as

> they are much less likely to accept old hierarchical structures and the delayed career gratification of the 20th century. They want more freedom, openness and less structure.

As basic needs in society are met, people are beginning to search for 'meaning and

purpose' in their working lives with psychological needs becoming more

important. Purpose is identified by Pink (2011: 132) as one of the three main

motivators of the 'babyboomer' generation - the others being mastery and

autonomy. He describes purpose as asking questions like

> When am I going to do something that matters? When am I going to live my best life? When am I going to make a difference in the world?

Working full-time can make it difficult to find the time for the fulfilment of

purpose outside the job role but working part-time might allow time for other

interests to be pursued. Another issue with full-time working is identified by

Hochschild (2012a) who opines that the 'outsourced self' is the only way of coping

with full-time work whereby pressure of work leads us to rely on others 'living our

lives for us' employing perhaps cleaners, gardeners and carers. Over recent years

there has been an explosion in newly created service roles such as, inter alia, life

coaches, internet dating agencies, wedding planners and property viewers. Flexible

working may provide the opportunity for individuals to carry out more of these roles themselves, or, alternatively, may be the preferred working pattern of those fulfilling these roles.

In the UK, education is based on a series of examinations with a general perception that university is a realistic aspiration for all. The number of people attending university has risen over the past few decades to a level where it is reported that the number of the labour force classed as graduates in the UK is now 42% (ONS 2017b), having risen steadily from 17% in 1992. This upward trend has, however, led to 49% of graduates working in non-graduate roles (ONS 2017b), doing work that may not be of the level they aspire to or that makes full use of their qualifications.

There is still a widely held perception that full-time work is more secure than part-time work and part-time roles tend not to include the same level of benefits that full-time work offers (Jolley et al 2014; Kofman 2016; Williams 2012). This view is also institutionally reinforced through, for example, mortgage and loan applications and eligibility for benefits. Despite changes in the approach to careers that have been well-documented (e.g. Alboher 2012; Gratton 2011; Inkson et al 2015) there is still, amongst many graduates, the expectation of progress up a 'career ladder' once they have achieved their degrees, and this has historically been more likely to involve a commitment to full-time work. A full discussion of the different definitions of 'career' is provided in Chapter Two, and the impact on identity is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

1.3.4 Economic changes

There has been a trend, in the UK, over the past few decades away from the manufacturing industry and towards the knowledge-based service sector. By the end of 2017, less than 8% of the labour force in England and Wales were working in manufacturing and over 83% were working in services (ONS 2018d). The service sector tends to be part of the '24-hour society', therefore many workers in these roles will have NSWAs (see Figure 1.1).

One of the major reasons for the decline in manufacturing in the UK is globalisation which has made it possible to source manufactured items more cheaply from countries where labour costs are lower than in the UK (e.g. Strangleman & Warren 2008). In addition, during the global recession in the 2000s there was a trend towards downsizing and outsourcing in organisations to cut costs (Gratton 2011; Hassard et al 2012; Ross 2004). Organisations pursuing flexibility have started utilising employment contracts that transfer some of the risk from employer to employee (Sennett 1998; Standing 2011), such as zero hours contracts. Many workers accepted these contracts due to the shortage of full-time jobs during the recession (Biggs 2015; Pennycook et al 2013). The percentage of the labour force on zero hours contracts, in their main jobs, is estimated to be 2.8% of all people in employment (ONS 2018e), having risen from 0.4% in 2005.

1.3.5 Technological developments

Technology has, arguably, led to the biggest change in working practices since the industrial revolution. Although it was envisaged that technology would make working life easier and reduce the number of hours worked, as Ross (2004: 44) states:

> you would be hard put to find anyone whose experience of the new technology in their workplace had resulted in a net reduction of hours on the job.

The impact of technology has been widely discussed by many authors (e.g. Biggs 2015; Coplin 2013; Ramarajan 2014; Walker 2013). There appears to be a consensus view that technology has facilitated flexibility and a blending of the work and personal elements of workers' lives with greater opportunities for flexible work, self-employment (Collin & Young 2000) and part-time jobs (Watson 2008a). This flexibility however is likely to result in more precarious bases of employment (Beck 2000; Bratton & Gold 2017).

Technology can facilitate working in different locations, at different times, and for different employers leading to the decline of collective workplace institutions. As the CEO of Microsoft, Satya Nadella, (2015: 00:06:49) contends: 'Work is no longer a place you go to'. It is now, for many, an activity that can take place anywhere and at any time. Technology has also enabled workers to set up their own businesses quickly and cheaply as is evidenced by the growth in self-employment in the UK over the past few years (see 1.3.1). Although Millennials might lack 'long attention spans', this generation 'seems to be incredibly flexible, adaptable and multi media savvy' (Tapscott 2009: 10, 98). The ability to work anywhere, at any time, facilitates working in multiple roles simultaneously. It could also lead to an increase in the numbers of part-time workers as individuals take more than one part-time job to build a portfolio.

Although technology has many benefits to offer the working environment there is a concern that long-established industries are being disrupted by it and certain skills have become redundant; a concern that is becoming more prevalent with the

growth in applications for Artificial Intelligence. Skills becoming redundant seem to be compensated for, to an extent, by the increase in new job roles seen since the technological revolution. Skills gaps are being addressed by external consultants, temporary staff and freelancers, leading to transformations in the structure of the labour market and employment relationships (World Economic Forum 2018). Workers need to be able to undertake additional education and training to continue to find work in the new areas that emerge. It may be easier to find the time to undertake education and training to acquire these new skills if not working full-time, although perhaps more difficult to obtain organisational support.

The various factors outlined above are leading towards increasing numbers of 'new' careers within all types of organisation making it important to update our understanding of modern experiences of the evolving world of work. There are also factors that will contribute towards the continuation of the traditional full-time model of work but these are beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.4 'New' Careers

There has been a growth in the study of modern careers, and various 'new' careers (Sommerlund & Boutaiba 2007: 527) have been identified as outlined in Chapter Two. These NSWAs are alternatives to the traditional linear career. Portfolio working however can combine elements of both types of career; it is possible to pursue a traditional career as part of a portfolio whilst simultaneously having a new career. Hassard et al's (2012: 592) research into managerial careers suggests that they are 'more complex and messy than both the "traditional" or "boundaryless" ideal-types suggest'. It is the 'complexity' and 'messiness' of

portfolio working experiences that I have investigated. Cohen (2016: 30) supports

this view of the complexity of careers today when she states:

> Careers are not quite what they used to be. They now subsume internships, portfolio working, and other forms of pseudo apprenticeship. The orderly incremental progression has been replaced by intermittent and erratic forms of self-promotion. Career is once more approximating to its original sense of 'careering about'.

The shift from 'traditional careers' (e.g. Valcour & Ladge 2008), to 'new careers'

(e.g. Arthur et al 1999) has been influenced by a variety of factors (see 1.3) and has

led to calls for further research.

1.5 Need for Further Research

Several different authors (e.g. Ashford et al 2018; Caza et al 2018; Hassard et al

2012) suggest that there is a need for further research into NSWAs, particularly

those at the margins of the labour market (Dobbins et al 2016). Limited research

has been carried out specifically into the portfolio working pattern. Fenwick (2006:

67) suggests that 'there is need for further examination of portfolio workers' own

stories of experience' and research that 'specifically examines portfolio workers'

learning processes in developing their work and identities.' (ibid 2006: 77). Clinton

et al (2006: 182) point out that 'a limited number of studies have investigated

portfolio working, and only two of these looked at individuals from more than one

section' and that 'individuals with multiple professions… have been overlooked by

these studies'. Ramarajan (2014: 636) recommends future research 'to examine the

work and broader life contexts that make multiple identities salient', as most

research into identity has been in the context of traditional careers (Petriglieri et al

2018). Totterdell et al (2006: 80) mention that it is unknown whether portfolio

workers having an 'overriding sense of control' of fluctuations in work

characteristics will mitigate any negative effects on feelings of wellbeing. Clarke (2013: 699) highlights the importance of research 'in a context of multiple loyalties' which is the situation being experienced by many portfolio workers working within different organisations contemporaneously. George and Chattopadhyay's (2015: 16) research into non-standard work concludes that future research could 'examine if the preferences for and experiences of nonstandard work change over an individual's career.' Smith (2016: 379) also suggests that 'Investigating other organizational domains... would enable researchers to grasp the complexities, richness, and contradictions of employment today.'

Petriglieri et al (2019) suggest that future studies should consider the extent to which independent workers draw on alternative discourses to promote their identities. The issue with coherence of portfolio type careers is also highlighted by Mainiero and Gibson (2017: 2) who identify a need for research into 'how career transitions combine into a coherent whole of a career', which is likely to be relevant to portfolio workers with the numbers of transitions they experience.

There are two overarching reasons why further research into portfolio work is needed. The first is that there are increasing numbers working in this way. The second is that, in the academic literature, workers in this category are viewed in dichotomous terms. Some authors (e.g. Cohen 2014; Handy 1995a; Wood & Michaelides 2016) laud portfolio work as offering autonomy, flexibility, personal fulfilment, satisfaction, variety, challenges, opportunities and choice. More critical literature cites the difficulties of social isolation, uncertainty, lower status and limited access to training and development (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Hewison 2016; Mandl & Biletta 2018). There is a lack of empirical research into the working lives

of portfolio workers and this study addresses the gap in understanding by investigating 'contradictions and paradoxes' (Maranda & Comeau 2000: 50) in relation to the portfolio working paradigm.

The limited amount of existing research into portfolio work tends to focus on one or two main occupational groups only, for example, the transition of managers and professionals from organisational employment to portfolio work (Cohen & Mallon 1999); freelance translators (Gold & Fraser 2002); freelancers over 50 years old in the media industry (Platman 2004); women's career transitions from organisational employment to portfolio work and careers of research scientists (Cohen et al 2004); former NHS employees that had moved to portfolio work (Duberley et al 2006); nurses and adult educators (Fenwick 2006); a majority of either business consultants or workers in publishing (Clinton et al 2006); a longitudinal study of women who had moved from employment to self-employment (Cohen 2014); and a limited range of occupations, many of which related to publishing (Wood & Michaelides 2016). There is therefore a need for further empirical studies of portfolio working, across a wider range of participants, to explore the polarised views presented in the literature.

To investigate what it is like to be a portfolio worker it is necessary to understand how this working pattern is experienced. To do this there is a need to pinpoint which specific aspects of it are drawn on to make sense of it. There is a difficulty in trying to understand the nuanced nature of this working pattern based on the personal experiences of individuals as this may not emerge clearly from their own accounts. Individuals are likely to provide complex narrative accounts that support their preferred self-identities, which may result in contradictory views, but these

can be explored in the interview context. The preferred self-identities may be used both as a coping mechanism, in an attempt to comply with external expectations, and as an opportunity to create additional value to employing organisations. These representations will also reflect their previous experiences, framing their present and potential selves against them.

1.6 Aim of the Study

As outlined above, there are calls for further research into portfolio workers' working lives and experiences, particularly in relation to multiple loyalties (Clarke 2013), multiple identities (Alcover 2018; Ramarajan 2014), changing experiences over time (George & Chattopadhyay 2015), coherence (Mainiero & Gibson 2017) and use of alternative discourses to promote identities (Petriglieri et al 2019).

The research question developed in response to these calls is:

> *What is it like to be a portfolio worker, based on individuals' accounts of their experiences?*

As outlined in section 1.5, there is a 'gap' in present research in relation to the experiences of individuals working on a portfolio basis. To address this gap, the normative aim of this study is to gain an understanding of what it is to be a 'portfolio worker', giving a voice to this statistically-hidden minority. It endeavours to increase the understanding of this style of work, and its implications, for individuals, organisations and policy-makers (e.g. Mandl & Biletta 2018; Taylor 2017)

Initial sub-questions were developed from the main research question but, as Alvesson suggested (2011: 119), 'New and perhaps more interesting research

questions … may be triggered and replace more conventional questions' and this is exactly what happened during the research. It was clear very early on that all participants wanted to situate their experience in their previous career history to make sense of their situations. There was also a very specific theme emerging concerning identity implications due to the lack of a clear, established organisational, and sometimes occupational, identity.

To answer the main research question, the following sub-questions are therefore addressed.

1. What is portfolio work?

2. How do experiences of portfolio workers impact on identity?

3. Who are portfolio workers, what do they do, and why?

4. What does it mean to portfolio work?

Each of these sub-questions is addressed in a separate chapter.

1.7 Outline and Contributions of the Thesis

To contextualise this research, it is necessary to understand the external forces leading to increasing numbers of portfolio workers. The first part of this chapter has provided an overview of those elements within the external environment that are contributing to the growth in demand for, and supply of, portfolio workers. Calls for further research have then been highlighted. The final part of this chapter outlines the structure and the main contributions of the thesis. A range of insights into the motivations, requirements, expectations and experiences, of a unique group of portfolio workers is provided. This makes a useful contribution to the

understanding of this expanding, increasingly important, yet unrecognised and misunderstood (Caza et al 2018), sector of the workforce.

Chapter Two provides an overview of findings from existing literature on 'new' working patterns and career types to locate portfolio work within the broader context of literature on contemporary forms of work. It is important, however, to note that it is not a 'new' career but a new categorisation and definitions are contested. Also, many portfolio careers can incorporate a combination of different categories of work cutting across the binary categories of 'traditional' and 'new' careers. To address the first sub-question, this chapter also discusses the evolving definitions of portfolio work and explores the conflicting portrayals of what portfolio work means. Portfolio work seems to be presented in polarised terms as either a flexible and empowered way of working, or as insecure, precarious and exploitative. Views of portfolio work as flexible and empowered use examples of consulting, journalism (Clinton et al 2006) and creative work (Reid et al 2016) whereas views of portfolio work as precarious and exploitative use examples of cleaning, catering (Karpf 2002) and hairstyling (Cohen 2010). This research examines portfolio work beyond this binary distinction.

The body of literature relating to identity at work is explored in Chapter Three to offer a theoretical basis for the analysis of empirical data and to help to answer the second sub-question regarding how the experiences of portfolio workers impact on identity. Much existing identity research is based on the 'traditional career', and this thesis contributes to the body of identity work literature, specifically concerning the impact of multiple identities on how individuals see, and present, themselves. It highlights the importance of identity work, anchors, construction,

conflict and coherence for those workers with multiple organisations and occupations.

An overview of the selected methodology is provided in Chapter Four. This qualitative study uses an emergent interpretivist approach to identify, explore and analyse factors that impact on how portfolio workers make sense of their experiences. It first investigates their journeys into portfolio working, i.e. whether this style of working was viewed as 'an autonomous choice or an externally imposed demand' (Loacker & Śliwa 2016: 660) and whether it is limited to certain groups of people only (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Ibarra 2015; Storey 2000). The study is not intended to make generalised claims based on the outcomes of the research but to add – both empirically and conceptually – to existing knowledge available on this working pattern. It provides rich data from the perspective of a wide variety of situated individuals on the complexities, inconsistencies and interpretations of this phenomenon.

The findings of the empirical research are analysed in Chapters Five and Six. This includes grouping the data into common themes that have emerged from the narrative interviews and identifying any contradictory elements both between different groups of workers and hierarchical levels and within the participants' own evidence.

Chapter Five specifically considers who portfolio workers are, what they do, and why. It explores individuals' definitions of portfolio work and why they started, and continue to, portfolio work. This results in the construction of a typology of portfolio workers which answers calls to classify different categories of workers in the gig economy (Ashford et al 2018).

The empirical material suggests that portfolio work is not limited to specific occupations or professions, ages, organisational settings, educational or income levels, or households. It also highlights the extensive identity work that has to be undertaken in order to be positively perceived by both employing organisations and wider society. In addition to portfolio workers' core occupations or professions, there is evidence that multiple jobs result in a lot of time, often unpaid, being spent on administrative work, networking, marketing and seeking more work.

Chapter Six explores what it means to portfolio work from the perspective of those working in this way. Key findings demonstrate the difficulties of finding an optimal balance with the tension between too much work and not enough work, control and lack of control, precarity and security, being ongoing features of this style of working. Having multiple jobs, however, appears to lead to greater psychological security due to the diversification of risk. The findings also highlight the high-level scheduling skills, identity capacity and resilience required to build the necessary social, cultural, and economic capital to work successfully in this way.

The main deductions drawn from the research, and its contributions, are provided in Chapter Seven. A new definition of portfolio work, based on both the literature and empirical evidence, is presented. Portfolio work can be undertaken in a wide variety of occupations and professions, however the combination of early and late career roles, low- and high-status roles, and age not always being an indication of career stage, can make classification of portfolio workers difficult. The typology developed partially addresses these difficulties.

The final contribution highlights the extensive identity work undertaken as a vital and integral aspect of this way of working. Identity is situational with elements being either concealed, or revealed, in a similar way to that of 'The Incredibles'[3]. This extensive identity work is conceptualised as a Rubik's cube identity, one that can be manipulated to present a different face to each organisation. This not only signals a legitimate social identity, and concomitant self-identity, but the process of identity manipulation creates additional social and cultural capital by helping to develop the adaptability, resilience and transferable skills required to navigate today's changing world of work.

There are two main aspects of this research that are original, making a further contribution to the body of work on portfolio careers. One is that it does not address just one type of occupational group or hierarchical level, as most portfolio work studies do. The other is that it has been carried out by a portfolio worker, who has continued to work in this way throughout, rather than a full-time academic researcher situated within the traditional hierarchical career structure of a university organisation. This therefore provides an insight into both the depth of working experiences of portfolio workers and accesses a wider breadth of likely applications.

The final chapter, Chapter Eight, summarises key contributions, identifies limitations, makes recommendations for future research and provides final reflections.

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[3] The Incredibles are a fictitious superhuman family who try to fit into a normal life hiding their superhero talents 'from a world that still needs them but no longer appreciates what they can do' (Pixar undated).

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This introductory chapter has outlined the reasons for the subject choice, the purpose of the thesis, the gap in empirical research into portfolio work and multiple identities, the importance of this research to a wider audience, the basic structure of the thesis and the main contributions. The next chapter provides a review of the literature within which portfolio work is situated.

The difference between a job and a career is the difference between forty and sixty hours a week.

Robert Lee Frost

(cited in Shea 2014)

Chapter Two: Work and Careers

2.1 Overview

The previous chapter identified some general empirical trends impacting on working patterns. This chapter focuses on the literature concerning the evolving conceptualisation, understanding and theorising of work and careers. The conceptual distinction between 'work' and 'career' is challenging. The phenomenon of work is a social construction without universal meanings (Grint & Nixon 2015) and the definition of career continues to evolve (e.g. Inkson 2015). For the purposes of this research, work is considered to be an activity, either paid or unpaid (Handy 1995a), that usually occurs in social situations (Grint & Nixon 2015), and career is deemed to be the pattern of work experiences over a period of time (Cohen 2014; Greenhaus 2010; Inkson et al 2012).

The subject of careers is addressed within different bodies of literature, developed in distinct disciplines: those founded in psychology that concern career choice and development (e.g. Arthur & Rousseau 1996; Savickas 2000; Savickas et al 2009); those founded in economics concerning achieving competitive advantage by effective strategic HRM (e.g. Boltanski & Chiapello 2007; Bratton & Gold 2017) and those founded in sociology that concern the study of organisations (e.g. Tweedie 2013; Watson 2017). More recently, emerging 'new careers studies' (Inkson & King 2011: 41) attempt to integrate these insights from different literatures, focusing on

knowledge workers and the development of new career concepts that emphasise individual, rather than organisational, control.

These interdisciplinary studies highlight a dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'new' careers. Proponents of 'new' careers suggest that they offer autonomy (Alboher 2012; Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011; Ibarra 2015; Rothwell & Rothwell 2014), freedom (Handy 2015; Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011; Vallas & Cummins 2015), flexibility and novelty (Ibarra 2015), and fulfilment (Vallas & Cummins 2015). Conversely, critics of 'new' careers suggest they lack long-term commitment (Watts 2000), restrict freedom and growth (Hirsch & Shanley 1996), have less job security (Poehnell & Amundson 2002), and are precarious (Gherardi & Murgia 2013; Murgia et al 2017; Ross 2009).

There is also a growing body of literature specifically concerning portfolio work which is usually discussed in the context of 'new careers' (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Cohen 2014; Wood & Michaelides 2016).

2.2 The Traditional Career

The concept of a career has historically been considered in hierarchical, progressive, sequential, longstanding and linear terms (e.g. Arthur 2008; Sullivan et al 2003). Careers have been seen as enacted within an organisation, or series of organisations. It is this model that has provided the context for most research on careers (Valcour & Ladge 2008). Although many careers still follow this traditional career pattern, there is a suggestion that a 'career may be changing from being a linear, future-orientated trajectory to becoming more of a collage of experiences' (Beardwell & Claydon 2010: 259). This view is supported by several writers (e.g. Coplin 2014), some of whom (e.g. Tapscott 2009) suggest it is due to changing

generational expectations (see 1.3.1). Inkson et al (2012: 324) widen the definition of career, stating that

> the ongoing relationships between people and their work are nicely captured by the notion of career: which uniquely connects individuals with organizations and other social institutions over time.

Although difficult to define, the notion of career facilitates the creation of meaning. Collin & Young (2000: 5) highlight the psychological importance of careers when they suggest that careers

> can involve self-identity, and reflect individual's sense of who they are, who they wish to be, and their hopes, dreams, fears, and frustrations... career can be seen as an overarching construct that gives meaning to the individual's life.

Portfolio workers do not have a career, in the traditional sense, within one organisation. They need to extract, and construct, meaning, and concomitant identities, from a, sometimes diverse, collection of jobs and roles. As Cohen (2014: 14), in her longitudinal study into women's careers, points out, meanings are not fixed but are 'dynamic, contested, multi-faceted, and reflective of wider social interests and relationships' and change over time.

It is generally accepted (e.g. Ehrenreich 2006; Gratton 2011; Ross 2009) that the traditional career involved a planned, linear progression within one, or a series of, stable organisations that was usually mapped out by, or with, the organisation. Some authors suggest (e.g. Mainiero & Sullivan 2006: 8) that we are now seeing the 'death of the linear career', but this seems premature as approximately 75% of the UK working population work under traditional full-time permanent employment contracts (Labour Force Survey 2018). Inkson et al (2012) propose that careers are more heterogeneous than either the traditional or new careers literature suggests

so rather than the 'old' career being 'dead' it is co-existing with 'new' career patterns. The two types of career are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to pursue both simultaneously, as many portfolio workers do.

The wider definition of 'career', that moves beyond the simple linear progression within stable organisations, is reflected in several 'new' career conceptualisations. The more recent bodies of work appeared shortly after the UK recessions in 1990/91 and 2008/9. As Cohen (2014: 92) suggests, 'the recession created a sense of insecurity, precariousness, and urgency all round' resulting in cost-cutting and redundancies, the end of safe and secure employment (Johnson 2018), and severing of the traditional relationship between the organisation and the individual. This encouraged 'discontinuous thinking' (Inkson 2004: 84), rethinking life priorities (Handy 2015) and embracing 'new career' patterns. Other individuals however were involuntarily forced into a new career pattern in order to earn a livelihood (Biggs 2015; Inkson et al 2015).

2.3 The New Career

This broad descriptor incorporates any career that does not follow the 'traditional' pattern previously outlined. New career working patterns have been described using a variety of terms, such as the portfolio career (Handy 1995b), intelligent career (Arthur et al 1995), protean career (Hall 1996), boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau 1996), post-corporate career (Peiperl & Baruch 1997), multi-directional career (Baruch 2004), kaleidoscope career (Mainiero & Sullivan 2006), customised career (Valcour et al 2007), hybrid career (Sullivan and Baruch 2009), parallel or slash career (Alboher 2012), encore career (Simpson et al 2012) and plural career (Caza et al 2018).

These terms were coined to herald the arrival of new career trajectories, reflecting changes in the way people live their working lives, presented as a positive change. Each descriptor moves away from the hierarchical, linear, progressive, long-term aspects that characterise the traditional career promoting a more fluid and multi-directional (Baruch 2004) construct. They all emphasise the growing independence of the worker from the organisation with individuals taking responsibility for their own careers (Inkson et al 2012) and constructing them outside organisations (Peiperl & Baruch 1997). Individuals in the new career construct are considered to define career success subjectively, in their own terms (O'Doherty & Roberts 2000) by, for example, feeling fulfilled, achieving personal objectives, or the required work-life balance, rather than relying on recognition of success from organisations in terms of promotion, income or position in the hierarchy (Cogin 2012; Gold & Fraser 2002; Greenhaus et al 2010). The difference between internal and external definitions of success is encapsulated by Bailyn (2006: 31) when she writes:

> Life success is not identified solely with occupational achievement; personal definitions often extend beyond the work domain. The sense of self – one's identity – becomes less anchored to public signs of external achievement, and success is related more to personal values and growth and to family and community involvement rather than to pay, promotions and job prestige.

Bailyn's (2006) definition of success highlights how work and organisational participation can impact on selfhood, i.e. work can be 'a primary source of identity construction for many individuals' (Alvesson et al 2008: 23). The importance of identity to portfolio workers is therefore considered in detail in Chapter Three.

These polarised views of the 'traditional' and the 'new' career are extremes conceptualised by mainstream careers researchers. The different descriptors

included within the 'new' career classification are somewhat idealistic notions that organisation studies researchers problematise as too simplistic. Hassard et al (2012: 577), for example, suggest, in respect of the old/new career definitions, that

> neither adequately captures the complex interactions between individual agency and structural constraints that circumscribe contemporary organizational experience.

The various new career classifications also seem to be aspirational ideals rather than the compromise that most careers usually are. Many of the definitions of career are far more precise than the experience of them (O'Doherty & Roberts 2000).

Career narratives tend to be constructed by individuals wanting to make sense of their working lives and present an authentic identity. One of the difficulties is that, although theory has moved on to reflect the changing environment, organisational practice can be slow to respond (Clegg et al 2016), and organisations tend to take a conventional approach to job titles (Cable et al 2013). This can make it difficult for individuals trying to carve out a specific identity beyond job titles and traditional hierarchical organisational structures.

Current careers research emphasises the discontinuity of the 'traditional' career and a radical shift from this to 'new' careers. However, external factors are causing more of a 'continuous evolution within a complex concept which contains many layers of meaning' (Storey 2000: 34). The challenge is extracting the meaning perceived by individuals which entails the adjustment of the tensions in the relationship between them and the society they work within.

Mainstream careers researchers (e.g. Hall 2002; Inkson 2007; Valcour & Ladge 2008) suggest that individuals tend to follow either a traditional or a new career whereas organisation studies researchers appreciate that there is the possibility of combining elements of both within one career (Sullivan & Baruch 2009) and that the traditional career is often a precondition of a new career (Sommerlund & Boutaiba 2007). The two definitions are not clear cut and mutually exclusive. It is common for a portfolio career to contain elements of both, particularly where individuals are looking for some additional challenge, interest, recognition or self-actualisation (Maslow 1943).

2.4 The Portfolio Career

Portfolio work is usually discussed in literature that refers to NSWAs, contrasting them with the traditional career. Although it has been heralded as an 'emerging' pattern of work (e.g. Fenwick 2006; Grigg 1997; Ibarra 2015), the idea of building a career based on several different types of employment is not new; it is simply a new categorisation (Storey 2000; Wallace 2017).

'Portfolio work' and 'portfolio career' are used interchangeably in most of the literature specifically relating to this area of study (e.g. Cohen et al 2004; Fenwick 2006; Gold & Fraser 2002; Hopson & Ledger 2009) but there is, arguably, a conceptual distinction between the two. Portfolio work refers to 'packages of work arrangements for the plying and selling of an individual's skills in a variety of contexts' (Cohen et al 2004: 408). Although Reid et al (2016: 34) similarly describe the portfolio career as 'a collection of multiple, concurrent jobs', for the purposes of this thesis, the portfolio career is considered to be the unfolding sequence of work-related experiences *over a period of time*. The portfolio career definition

therefore moves away from the traditional career interpretation of a linear, hierarchical, upward progression. Portfolio work is differentiated from portfolio careers by the temporal nature of careers. This conceptual distinction might also be extended to differentiate between polarised views of portfolio working as insecure, precarious and exploitative and portfolio careers as empowering and flexible but this is not supported by the literature to date.

Numbers of portfolio workers are not recognised, or measured in the UK, by either the Office for National Statistics (ONS) or the Labour Force Survey (LFS). They are present in these statistics but hidden and either ignored or double counted (Leighton & Brown 2013). As Ibarra (2015 no p.no.) writes about the portfolio career:

> Pundits have hailed such arrangements as the future of work, offering flexibility, novelty and autonomy. But numbers relating to who does this and how are scarce, buried in general statistics on self-employment.

It is not only self-employment statistics that 'bury' data relating to portfolio workers but also statistics on zero hours contracts, part-time contracts and individuals in two, or more, jobs. Although this thesis cannot attempt to answer the question of the numbers of those working in this way – a question that continues to concern the UK Government as evidenced by the commissioning of the Taylor report (2017) – it analyses the literature to identify key aspects of portfolio work.

A definition of portfolio work is developed from existing literature to underpin the research and findings.

Handy (1995a: 146) was the first to conceptualise portfolio work when he defined a work portfolio as 'a way of describing how the different bits of work in our life fit together to form a balanced whole'. He identifies five main categories of work within a balanced portfolio, which are summarised in Table 2.1.

PAID WORK	Wage work	Money is paid for time given. Usually by employer to employee.
	Fee work	Money is paid for results delivered. Usually by organisation to professional, freelancer or craftsperson.
FREE WORK	Homework	Tasks that take place in the home such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, shopping, maintenance, etc.
	Gift work	Work done for the community, charities, local groups or neighbours.
	Study work	Training for a sport or new skill, learning a language, further or higher education (HE), etc.

Table 2.1: Classifications of portfolio work
Adapted from Handy (1995a: 146-147)

Handy (1995a) makes no mention of the 'emotional labour' which Hochschild (2012b: 7) defines as the 'management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display', and this is likely to be a key requirement of portfolio workers marketing their services to a variety of organisations.

Subsequently, a limited number of other authors have defined portfolio work, and a summary of the definitions showing the development of the term 'portfolio work' is provided in Appendix XI, which also highlights some of the inconsistencies in the definitions (see also 7.2.1).

Handy (1995a: 146) presents portfolio work as a choice rather than a necessity, suggesting that workers proactively amass a collection of jobs to form a balanced whole, that the collection should have 'a theme to it' and that 'the whole is greater

than the parts.' This view is supported by Trunk (2006), who emphasises that it is a portfolio that is carefully constructed for a specific purpose rather than just a collection of 'bad' jobs. Grigg (1997) and Cohen and Mallon (1999) take the definition a little further, shifting the focus towards paid work rather than unpaid or leisure work. Inkson's (2007) definition of a portfolio career supports Handy's (1984) idea of creating a balanced portfolio, but his definition perhaps lacks the clarity needed to differentiate portfolio work from other forms of work.

In Clinton et al's (2006) study of portfolio workers, participants were asked to agree the definition used to describe their status which brought in the contractual basis of work. More recently, Wood and Michaelides (2016), in their diary study of portfolio workers, conflated the terms portfolio worker, freelance worker and independent contractor defining them all as self-employed. This conflation is confusing as freelance workers and independent contractors are different to portfolio workers. A freelance worker is provisionally defined (Kitching & Smallbone 2008: 5) as

> a skilled professional who is neither an employer nor an employee, supplying labour on a temporary basis, under a commercial contract for services for a fee to a range of business clients.

They go on to explain that an independent contractor can be differentiated from a freelancer in two main ways. One is that they are commonly working in specific industries, such as building and technology. Contractors also tend to commit to one employer or client at a time rather than working for multiple ones simultaneously. They may be self-employed but could also be contracted to an agency as an employee, or to an organisation. Because Wood and Michaelides (2016) have conflated the definitions of portfolio worker, freelancer and

independent contractor, their definition, and as a result their research findings, are unhelpful from the perspective of this research.

Drawing on the similarities across all definitions, I offer a new short definition of portfolio work as:

> *Undertaking multiple jobs, in a variety of organisational settings, on a range of contractual terms, with a view to achieving an acceptable balance.*

and it is this definition that will be used to provide the context for the study of portfolio work. Following analysis of the empirical material a more detailed definition is developed in Chapter Seven.

Portfolio work is juxtaposed against the traditional career pattern to highlight the similarities and differences between these two patterns of work and the polarity of views of the portfolio working phenomenon. Many of the characteristics attributed to portfolio work converge with those attributed to new careers due to the individualised employment relations (Fleming 2017) that they have in common.

A notable difference observed between the definitions provided in Appendix XI is that many authors (e.g. Handy 1995b; Ibarra 2015; Trunk 2006) present portfolio work as a positive choice, whereas others recognise it may be a necessity (e.g. Halpern-Meekin et al 2015; McKinsey 2016; Platman 2004) when faced with low employment rates. This research aims to explore the meanings of portfolio work based on the accounts of experiences of those that are working in this way.

Handy (1995b; 2015) not only presents portfolio work as a choice but also frames it in a predominantly positive light suggesting, inter alia, that it offers an alternative to 'a moderately successful life followed by a long slow decline into eventual oblivion' (Handy 2015: 28). Portfolio work, in his view, can include elements that

are interesting, fascinating or fun (Handy 1995b: 71), that offer independence (Handy 1995b: 175), and that provide the time and opportunity for 'free work' (see Table 2.1). His optimistic presentation of portfolio work as 'good news' (Handy 1995a: 146) and a beneficial choice rather than a necessity (Handy 1995a) runs through his writing which evolved from a managerial organisational design perspective. His assertion that 'sooner or later we shall all be portfolio people' (Handy 1995a: 146), however, contradicts his own conceptualisation of the 'Shamrock organisation' (Handy 1995a: 70), whereby a professional core is required in addition to the contractual fringe and the flexible labour force.

Cohen and Mallon (1999), in their two qualitative studies of professionals and managers leaving middle and senior management roles to undertake portfolio work, support Handy's (1995b) view of the 'fun and variety' portfolio work offers and report feelings of being 'freer and more in control' and being able to 'achieve a far greater degree of balance in their lives' (Cohen & Mallon 1999: 346). They do, however, point out that the discourse of choice and autonomy resulting from liberation from organisations can also have negative connotations in terms of loss, not only of regular income and security, but also, inter alia, belonging, status, training and development. This ambiguity is explored by Duberley et al (2006) in their research into career transitions which concludes that, rather than ambiguity, it is more of a tension between the security and belonging identified in the traditional career discourse and the desire for 'growth and development and adventure' suggested in the new career discourse (Duberley et al 2006: 291). Fenwick's (2006) research into nursing and adult educator portfolio workers also emphasises the feeling of freedom, together with the higher satisfaction and overwhelming preference for portfolio careers over their previous traditional

careers. She points out, however, that elements of exploitation, in terms of work intensification, uncertain income and unpaid labour, were often unrecognised by her participants suggesting that they are either outweighed by the positive elements or considered less important.

This feeling of freedom is labelled as independence by Gold and Fraser (2002) in their research into transitions to portfolio work, and this is considered as a measure of success of the portfolio career to some workers, depending on their individual circumstances. Clinton et al (2006: 196) predict that

> high levels of autonomy, with high levels of manageable uncertainty and low levels of social isolation would lead to a largely positive experience of portfolio working

whereas the converse would presumably lead to a largely negative experience.

Several other writers support Handy's (1995b: 2015) view of the changes in the world of work as positive, providing the opportunity for, inter alia, autonomy (Wood & Michaelides 2016), challenge (Barley & Kunda 2004; Mainiero & Gibson 2017), choice (Cohen et al 2004), flexibility (Inkson 2007), independence (Cohen & Mallon 1999), variety (Clinton et al 2006; Cohen & Mallon 1999), and work-life balance (Clinton et al 2006; Edgell 2006). This positive discourse runs through much of the literature on both portfolio work, and other new careers, and is analysed under the key themes later in this chapter (see 2.5).

However, 'there is a need for additional research on the potential negatives of non-traditional careers' (Sullivan & Baruch 2009). The limited research that exists provides a stark contrast to the positive body of work outlined above. This polarised view is exemplified by Karpf (2002) who controversially entitled her

opinion piece 'Why "portfolio working" is just a fancy name for exploitation'. She points out that, to achieve the desired autonomy, portfolio workers forfeit security including holiday pay, sick pay and pensions. Sennett (1998: 83) suggests that those working in this way are 'dwelling in a continual state of vulnerability'. Standing (2011: 6) claims that increased requirements for flexibility are 'systematically making employees more insecure' and that this insecurity comes from not only labour insecurity and lack of secure income but, also, a lack of a secure identity moving workers into what he describes as 'the precariat'. In his later work, Standing (2014) supports Karpf's (2002) view that those working in this way are exploited, with costs of labour once covered by the organisation, and risks of employment, now down to the individual (Fleming 2017; Sennett 1998; Smith 2016). Murgia et al (2017) also identify the risk of self-exploitation due to the feelings of precarity (Standing 2014) and Sotelo Valencia (2016) takes this a stage further identifying 'super-exploitation' and precarity due to the flexibility required by organisations resulting in deregulation of the labour market.

There is a tendency in the literature to promulgate a dichotomy between the positive, perhaps somewhat idealistic (Smith 2016), and naïve view of new careers and flexible employment, and the negative implications of changes in the world of work. To explore these polarised views in more depth, some of the key themes that emerge as areas of difference have been reviewed.

2.5 Key Themes in the Portfolio Work Literature

This section provides a thematic overview of how portfolio work is discussed in various studies based on those aspects most frequently mentioned. This review also highlights the dichotomy between views of traditional and new careers.

2.5.1 Time

Time is probably one of the key issues that impacts on working choices; a decision on working patterns tends to be a trade-off, simplistically, between time and money, for both the worker and the organisation (Wilkinson & Redman 2013).

Work results in time away from other possible activities (Bailyn 2006). The positive framing of portfolio work is that it, in common with other flexible new career patterns, provides the time for individuals to pursue non-work activities (Wilkinson & Redman 2013), such as hobbies and volunteering (Inkson 2007), and to manage the other multiple demands on their time (George & Chattopadhyay 2015), such as child and elderly care (Bailyn 2006), acquiring new skills, experiences and developing networks (Gratton & Scott 2016).

However, taking time off work can cost money (Barley & Kunda 2004) in terms of both income not earned and income spent. There may also be a sense of insecurity which can result in a heightened awareness of the opportunity cost of taking time off, making it difficult to do so (Bailyn 2006; Clinton et al 2006).

Part-time workers have been reported as working considerably more unpaid overtime than full-time workers (Conway & Sturges 2014) which could be due to employers exploiting the major inducement that part-time work offers, or the workload being too heavy to achieve within part-time hours. Portfolio workers in multiple part-time jobs might find this an issue. They are also likely to carry out many tasks including 'work design and client relations' (Fenwick 2006: 76), 'networking, learning new skills and job applications' (Standing 2014: 152), 'marketing, accounting and filling in tax returns' (Hindle 2008: 149), and 'career development' (Valcour et al 2007: 195) in their own unpaid time.

This unpaid work must be fitted around paid work, but there has been a 'lack of focus on the relationships between paid and unpaid work' (Riach & Loretto 2009: 103). There is an organisational expectation that flexible workers 'be available for labour and work at all times of the day and night.' (Standing 2014: 22). This view is supported by Fletcher and Bailyn (2005: 101) who propose that work practices are based on the premise that 'the best workers are those that are willing and able to devote as much time to work as it seems to demand' using time as an indicator of performance. This reflects views of the ideal worker (Lewis & Cooper 2005; Werth & Brownlow 2018) and organisation man (Whyte 1956). It is not only organisations that may view working long hours as a valued attribute, so may the workers themselves. As Gratton and Scott (2016) opine, working long hours, which could also result from the expectation of constant availability (Standing 2014), make the individual feel, and appear to be, busy and in demand giving them an intrinsic sense of value and worth and signalling their value to others. This has clear implications for identity (see Chapter Three).

Time impacts on most of the other key themes identified. It is not only the time spent at work that is important but also how much control the individual has of that working time; what level of autonomy they have when deciding how to spend that work time; how long that working time is likely to continue for, i.e. security; how the time spent at work integrates with other aspects of the individual's life; and how similar the expectations of the organisation and the individual are about the use of that time.

2.5.2 The psychological contract

Historically, the relationship between organisations and workers was a long-term relational psychological contract (Handy 1993; Rousseau 1995). Present day workers have been described as 'increasingly disloyal and selfish' or, framed more positively, as 'independent and assertive' in their career behaviour (Inkson 2007: 9). They view the worker/employer relationship as a short-term transactional psychological contract (Inkson et al 2015; Watson 2008a). This is however perhaps an over-simplistic view. Attitudes are strongly shaped by the systems of labour relations, legislation and institutions within which they operate (Grint & Nixon 2015; Legge 2004). In the context of portfolio workers it is particularly important to view the long-term relational contract and the short-term transactional contract as two extremes of a continuum of possible types of psychological contract. Portfolio workers may experience multiple types of psychological contract within their portfolios.

The psychological contract can be defined as the 'obligations and expectations in the employment relationship' (Gerber et al 2012: 196), but these are based on an employee's 'perceived reality' (Slay & Taylor 2007) which may, or may not, be shared by the employing organisation. It goes beyond the explicit terms and conditions stated in the formal contract. It is an implicit contract that contains all those other elements which both employer and employee expect to give to, and receive from, each other during their working relationship, for example, opportunities for career progression (Slay & Taylor 2007).

As the traditional long-term view of the career has declined, the basis of the psychological contract should have changed to suit the 'new' career arrangements.

Noer (2009: 4) suggests that 'the final shattering of the old psychological employment contract' came about as a result of 'the financial meltdown of 2008' leading to 'perceptions of heightened job insecurity' (Storey 2000: 31). The economic situation was undoubtedly a factor that affected the implicit psychological contract but it also affected the explicit formal contract with increasing numbers of short-term and zero hours contracts (CIPD 2013).

An understanding of the psychological contract, and its impact, is important because breaches can impact adversely on required work outcomes (Gerber et al 2012). Many writers support the suggestion that there has been a shift from a relational to a transactional contract (e.g. Handy 1995a & b; Inkson et al 2015; Slay & Taylor 2007). Bernhardt and Krause (2014: 299) however suggest that a 'balanced contract' that falls between the two extremes might be more realistic. This balanced contract is perceived by employees as being secure, but this depends on how well the worker fits the employer's shifting needs (Bernhardt & Krause 2014). Despite the descriptor of balanced, in this definition, the power is placed with the employer. However, for it to be a truly balanced contract, power should be shared equally between organisation and worker. As Gerber et al (2012: 197) suggest, 'there is a growing understanding that psychological contracts are multidimensional constructs' and this is particularly applicable to portfolio workers employed in more than one role. The expectations of the employee are also likely to change with age and the career stage reached. As Cogin's (2012: 2288) research, into the

work values of four generational cohorts, established, 'Generation X and Y[4] employees appear to be seeking a different psychological contract with employers' which is unsurprising due to the very different influences these generations have experienced (see 1.3).

The psychological contract could potentially be of greater importance than the explicit contract, for some portfolio workers, depending on the main motivators of the individual. Some portfolio workers might also have no explicit contract at all relying entirely on the psychological contract. As Watson (2008a: 288) suggests

> The implicit contract, made up of a complex bundle of "inputs" and "rewards" is a fragile one, existing, as it does, in the context of the dynamic nature of the priorities of both work organisations and workers.

This dynamic nature of priorities is likely to be even more pronounced in portfolio workers because their fluid working arrangements will mean that their expectations from each of their roles are likely to be different. As the combinations of roles change, so the psychological contract within each one is likely to change. Portfolio workers might also need to look beyond organisations for their motivation finding it, for example, from clients (Hindle 2008).

Satisfying expectations under the psychological contract, on short-term contracts, can lead to very long-term employment, depending on the worker's, and the organisation's, requirements, subject to complying with relevant legislation. Baruch (2004: 67) suggests that 'The new psychological contract will mean a true, open partnership.' However, depending on the balance of power, parties may not

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[4] Generation Y are also known as Millennials; the two terms are widely used interchangeably (Masnick 2012).

be open about their expectations. On precarious contractual terms, either party can quickly end the relationship if the implicit, or the explicit, contract no longer suits their objectives. Portfolio workers will also have multiple contemporaneous psychological contracts that are likely to impact on each other. The power to negotiate work contracts with organisations that suit individual requirements comes from having skills and experience that are valued by organisations, but unless an acceptable livelihood can be achieved, this power does not tend to be exercised (George & Chattopadhyay 2015).

2.5.3 Power and control

Employment involves an economic, legal and social relationship between worker and organisation that is characterised by an unequal balance of power due to the asymmetry of the employment contract (Bratton & Gold 2017). Social power can be understood as 'the intentional exercise of causal powers to affect the conduct of others' (Scott 2013: 151). This power can involve forcing others to do things by exercising overt power, or shaping and framing what individuals already intend to do (Clegg et al 2016). Power in the employment relationship has been studied extensively (Harding 2013; Lasswell 2017; Wrong 2017) as it is important to workers, organisations and those studying them, due to its impact on workplace relations and performance.

Power can be defined as 'the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others' (Wrong 2017: 2), although the intentional aspect is widely contested. Power can come from a variety of sources including control of resources or information, or having specific expertise. For the purposes of this research, power is conceptualised in terms of both relational power – concerning

the 'give- and-take' (Lasswell 2017: 10) of interactions between worker and organisation (Roscigno 2011) – and contextual power – in relation to the environment within which the worker is operating, concerning the 'power to' do something rather than 'power over' others (Wrong 2017: x).

Much of the existing academic literature suggests that the balance of power is in favour of the organisation rather than the worker (e.g. Bratton & Gold 2017; Collin & Young 2000) because the organisation can impose their preferred employment terms. In practice, however, the extent to which this is possible will depend on labour market conditions and the respective negotiating strength, and relational power, of the parties. Bratton and Gold (2017: 439) propose that

> flexible non-standard work patterns – sometimes called 'precarious employment' –… create a disadvantaged and marginalized workforce, the precariat.

This view is supported by one of the participants, in Ehrenreich's (2006: 44) study of redundant white-collar job seekers, who said,

> they can use us when they need us and get rid of us when they don't - no benefits or other entanglements involved.

This suggests that some of the employer power emanates from the employee's insecurity (Collinson 2003; Maranda & Comeau 2000), a view supported by Fleming (2017: 210) who points out that 'One cannot truly express individuality, self-reliance and choice when desperately dependent on an unequal power relationship.' Power and control, or agentic choice, will be constantly changing and shifting, as they depend on the interpretation of those involved in the relationship and the individual circumstances of each party.

Power is a socially constructed phenomenon and labour power is, as Edwards (1979: 12) suggests 'embodied in people, who have their own interests and needs and who retain their power to resist being treated like a commodity.' But, again, this will depend on the context within which that power operates. In terms of the establishment of power relations in society, Fillingham (1993: 18) states that 'When an abnormality and its corresponding norm are defined, somehow it is always the normal person who has power over the abnormal.' Applying this to those on NSWAs could suggest that the power lies with the 'norm', i.e. those on standard contracts of employment. However, as Webb (2006: 195) points out, the power of people to 'influence and control contemporary organisations, particularly private corporations, is limited.' The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service's (ACAS's) research (Wakeling 2014: 7) into zero hours contracts reports workers feeling anxious about turning down work, or looking for other work, in case they lose hours, which reflects the imbalance of power.

In the literature addressing new forms of work and careers, however, an alternative view has been put forward, whereby those in new careers have *greater* power in the employment relationship. Cooper (2005: 398) suggests that 'the short-term contract and freelance cultures provide the individuals with a great deal of control'. Gherardi and Murgia (2013: 85) also believe that those with 'a portfolio of jobs' have 'freedom and control over their lives'.

There is also a generational change in expectations of individuals who require more power in the employment relationship. Ross's (2004) research into New Economy workplaces cited a participant, who was a member of the 'babyboomer' generation, saying that her age group

> was more likely to ask, "What can I do for the organization?" whereas the younger folks are asking themselves, "What is the organization going to do for me?" (Ross 2004: 103).

Sullivan and Baruch (2009: 1543) also recognise that 'Increasingly, individuals are driven more by their own desires than by organizational career management practices'. Barley and Kunda (2004), who surveyed contingent workers, found that those advocates of 'free agency' felt that this style of working gave 'personal control' affording them, rather than the organisation, the power to choose when and where to work. These workers can maintain their power by ensuring that they retain their 'employability' (Gerber et al 2012; Inkson 2007; Rothwell & Rothwell 2014). This can be achieved by gaining more experience or training (Hassard et al 2012; Inkson et al 2015; Savickas et al 2009) making them less dependent on just one source of work. The employability that results from having a level of skills and education that is valued by organisations moderates the balance of power (Erdal 2011).

The balance of power between employer and worker is ever-changing due to the dynamic, and sometimes contradictory, contexts within which careers are performed (Bosley et al 2009). It will depend upon each party's situation but it is vital, as Watson (2008a: 152) suggests, 'to pay attention to the balance of power between employer and employer (sic) interests, across organisations as well as within them' because the balance of power will impact on, inter alia, individual and organisational performance, motivation levels, retention, commitment and engagement. The balance of power is, however, sometimes difficult to identify as the power relationship impacts on identity, and construction of specific identities will, in turn, impact on the way the power relationship is experienced (Ramarajan

2014). In most organisations, the power relationship is unequal but the organisation can decide to share their power by 'empowering' the worker (Collin & Young 2000).

2.5.4 Autonomy and empowerment

The theme of autonomy and empowerment refers to the transference of power to the worker by promoting self-regulation, self-motivation (Clegg et al 2016) and self-management, and encouraging individuals to apply discretionary behaviour and contribute towards decision making (Bratton & Gold 2017). Autonomy and empowerment are identified in strategic HRM literature and organisation studies as contributors towards high performance (Bratton & Gold 2017). Proponents of portfolio work claim that it can enhance 'control and autonomy' (Kelliher & Anderson 2008: 428) having a positive impact on job satisfaction. The portfolio worker reportedly has the 'freedom to plan their days and a far more varied workload' (Hindle 2008: 150). Freedom is also highlighted by Ross (2004: 251) who suggests that amongst contingent workers

> the freedom to operate without constant or rigid supervision and to exercise personal control over work schedules was seen as a general blessing.

It is the *perception* of freedom that is important, and it is self-reported perceptions of freedom that are likely to impact on the take up of various NSWAs (McDonald et al 2008). These perceptions, in turn, will be influenced by the identity of the individual (see Chapter Three).

There is a body of work that suggests that increased autonomy and empowerment are perceived so positively that individuals are prepared to sacrifice aspects such as security (Handy 2015) holiday pay, sick pay and pensions (Karpf 2002) to achieve

them. Greater autonomy can often be directly related to a lack of security, or precarity, and there may be a 'trade off' between the two. In addition, autonomy may not be a key objective for all workers. As Savickas (2000: 62) found, 'flexibility and adaptability may be more important than autonomy' and again, there may be a balance to be struck between autonomy and flexibility.

Some of the discourse around autonomy frames the requirement for it as a cultural change driven by the entry into the work place of Millennials who have different expectations of work (see 1.3.1). It is claimed that they require 'freedom', in addition to 'openness and less structure' (Coplin 2013: 66) and the key to this is 'empowerment' (Coplin 2013: 95). Portfolio workers might appear to have more freedom to choose what work to do, and when, but, as they tend to have a collection of short-term contracts, they are inclined to 'maximize their income by working as many hours as possible' (Barley & Kunda 2004: 239) because they are never certain when the next contract will arrive. As the above discussion demonstrates, existing literature presents a polarised view of whether NSWAs contribute to greater, or less, autonomy and freedom. As Fenwick's (2006: 69) research concluded, 'the question of whether the relations involved in portfolio work tend to create more progressive or repressive conditions remains open' and this contention still holds today due to the lack of research into understanding the working lives of portfolio workers.

2.5.5 Precarity and security

Precarious work is generally defined as being insecure (e.g. Hassard et al 2012), unstable, and is often associated with NSWAs (Kofman 2016). Many writers (e.g. Savickas 2000; Sommerlund & Boutaiba 2007) believe continuous employment, or

job security, no longer exists and that there is an increasing sense of insecurity amongst employees (De Cuyper et al 2018; Hassard et al 2012). These are however somewhat one-dimensional views. There has undoubtedly been a change in the understanding of security. As Ross (2009: 10) suggests, there is a need 'for shifting our mentality about the practical meaning of security, flexibility and autonomy.' Part of this 'shift' is the change in emphasis 'away from employment towards employability' (Storey 2000: 32). Mainstream literature on careers and employment suggests that the obligation for employment no longer lies with the organisation but with the individual who is responsible for their own employability (Baruch 2004; Inkson et al 2015), skills and training (Gherardi & Murgia 2013), using their careers for 'the development of competencies rather than the accumulation of job titles' (Gratton & Scott 2016: 145).

Security goes beyond just security in terms of continuous employment. Muffels (2008) summarises 'flexisecurity' (Wilthagen & Tros 2004) as comprising of job, employment, income, and combination security. Job security relates to security within a specific job, employment security to any form of employment, income security to the ability to earn a sufficient income to cover outgoings, and combination security to the ability to maintain the required work-life balance.

For portfolio workers, security is likely to be redefined as their 'ability to find their next job' (Barley & Kunda 2004: 275) giving them not only, potentially, a sense of greater job security than permanent full-time employees but also a sense of agency over their own security. The desire for job security has also been identified as a generational issue by Gentry et al (2009: 54) suggesting that Generation X 'place low importance on job security' and 'place more importance on autonomy,

independence, variety, excitement and challenge'. This view is supported by Patton (2000: 74) who points out that Generation X are of the view that 'job security comes from adaptability and transferability of skills'.

Clinton et al (2006) highlight the importance of distinguishing between the concepts of insecurity and uncertainty; the former being viewed as a negative outcome by the portfolio workers in their study, but the latter as an inevitable, but manageable, characteristic of this style of working. Pennycook et al (2013: 21), in their research into zero hours contracts, present the 'permanent uncertainty' of working in this way as a negative aspect but others consider it liberating (e.g. Smith 2016).

The meanings and understandings of uncertainty, insecurity and precarity will depend on the individual and 'workers' perceptions of precarity and vulnerability are not well studied' (Hewison 2016: 439). Wilton (2011: 108) suggests that

> the perpetual insecurity associated with much employment flexibility has significant implications for stress and the alienation of workers, potentially leading to the loss of valuable employees.

The insecurity experienced by portfolio workers is not unique to flexible working as the downsizing and layoffs following the recession in 2008/9 (Noer 2009: 4) created feelings of insecurity and precariousness (Cohen 2014). As a result, both 'good' and 'bad' jobs (Evans & Tilly 2016) are now insecure (Kalleberg 2016) so it is difficult to differentiate between them based on security.

Cohen (2010: 79), in her study of mobile hairstylists, however, points out that self-employment results in 'chronic income insecurity.' There has been a dramatic rise

in the numbers of self-employed individuals in the UK (see 1.3.1 and Figure 1.4) but

the Trades Union Congress (TUC 2013) report that

> the figures suggest that many of those who have lost their jobs over the last few years are not simply choosing to go freelance, but are being forced into false self-employment, which is often insecure and poorly paid.

Whether moves towards portfolio careers are viewed positively depends on the

individual. As Inkson et al (2015) suggest, those who are orientated towards

security and stability, or what Hindle (2008: 150) describes as the 'comfort and

allure of full-time employment', will find the changes in the world of work

threatening, whereas more intrepid individuals will embrace the openings such

careers can provide.

The discourse surrounding security and precarity also addresses the identities of

individuals. As Standing (2011:12) suggests

> Besides labour insecurity and insecure social income, those in the precariat lack a work-based *identity*.

The themes of precarity and security in the literature on 'traditional' and 'new'

careers highlight the need to investigate individuals' experiences of portfolio work,

who they are, what they do, and what their work means to them. Identity provides

a means of addressing these issues therefore the concept of identity is discussed in

Chapter Three and explored with empirical evidence, and the development of a

typology, in Chapter Five.

2.5.6 Flexibility and work-life balance

One of the main reasons cited for choosing to work in a new career is the difficulty

of achieving an acceptable work-life balance with the traditional career. Mainiero

and Sullivan (2006: 2) are of the view that

> Instead of living to work, people are now working to live... workers are creating their own patchworks of job experiences to suit their lives.

This view belongs to a body of literature that embraces and frames 'new' careers in positive terms but needs to be considered in the context of having been researched and developed just before the global recession started in 2007. It is quite possible that there is a shift occurring, but the realities of downsizing and delayering (Noer 2009) mean that many workers are not voluntarily creating these 'patchworks of job experiences' but *having* to do so to survive. For portfolio workers it is unclear whether they are working in this way by choice, or because they have been unable to secure the traditional contract they would prefer. It is likely that the dichotomy of choice versus necessity is more nuanced, and flexible, than it might initially appear. It is possible that individuals might formulate accounts that reframe their imposed situation as 'choice' in order to support either a better work-life balance or the performative identity of an entrepreneurial, individualistic outlook. The issue of identity is therefore crucial to an understanding of portfolio work and it is reviewed in Chapter Three.

Work-life balance is a problematic term as it does not distinguish between paid and unpaid work, suggesting that work and life are two separate, or segmented, elements (Gratton 2011); that work is not part of life; that the two are mutually exclusive; and that they need to be in balance rather than, for example, harmonised (Gambles et al 2006). As a number of authors have pointed out, boundaries between work and life are being broken down (Gratton 2011) and becoming blurred (O'Driscoll et al 2006) as a consequence of flexible working and the availability of technology such as smart phones and laptops (Biggs 2015; Ross 2004). This has been recognised by the development of concepts such as 'work-life

blend' (Hopson & Ledger 2009: 4), 'work-life integration' and 'work-life

harmonisation' (Lewis & Cooper 2005: 8).

Existing studies in psychology (e.g. Hopson 2009; Lewis & Cooper 2005) and

sociology (e.g. Bratton 2015; Perrigino et al 2018) suggest that work and life should

be combined and that, ideally, they should be combined into a coherent,

complementary and synergistic, whole (Gerber et al 2012; Gregory 2016; Sirgy & Lee

2018), rather than being viewed as competing and conflicting with each other.

Much of the recent research into work-life balance has concerned the impact of

work-life balance policies offered by organisations (e.g. Perrigino et al 2018;

Talukder et al 2018) on different types of worker (e.g. Ezzedeen & Zikic 2017; Pandu

& Sankar 2018; Wilkinson et al 2018). There is a considerable amount of interest in

achieving work-life balance from the UK government (Taylor 2017), employers

(Macdonald 2003) and workers (Cogin 2012), but there is a mismatch between the

rhetoric and practice (Bratton 2015). Although the term work-life balance is

problematic, it is the most widely used term and, as such, is also applied in this

thesis.

Flexibility is a broad term that can include several different organisational

strategies relating to work arrangements including, inter alia, times, places,

functions and contracts (Lewis & Cooper 2005). For workers, flexibility can make a

key contribution to work-life balance allowing them to manage 'interactions

between different life domains' (Savickas et al 2009: 241) more successfully.

However, as with most employment interactions, the interpretation of flexibility

will vary between the parties and may not be reciprocal (Taylor 2017). The worker

is likely to interpret flexibility as feeling they have control of their own time

(Barley & Kunda 2004). The employing organisation, however, is likely to interpret flexibility as workers being open to change at short notice, taking risks, accepting casual contracts and undertaking a variety of functions without formal procedures and regulations (Sennett 1998) so that the organisation is agile enough to respond to changing market conditions (e.g. Lewis & Cooper 2005). This can result in feelings of precarity (Gherardi & Murgia 2013) amongst workers. These different interpretations of flexibility are likely to require negotiation and reciprocity, particularly in relation to the psychological contract (see 2.5.2), for both parties to perceive flexibility.

Work is frequently defined as a certain number of contracted hours, e.g. full-time or part-time, but it is important to point out that the underlying assumption that the hours contracted are the hours worked is flawed (Conway & Sturges 2014). Part-time work, which forms part of most portfolio work, 'remains poorly conceptualised because of the continuing assumption that work is done in at least eight-hour blocks for at least five days a week' (Webb 2006: 114). Part-time work suffers from poor perception (Newcombe 2012) and may be considered simply 'another avenue into the precariat' (Standing 2011: 15).

Definitions of part-time work distinguish between voluntary and involuntary part-time work (Wilton 2011: 108) and between these two extremes are time-related under employment and overemployment (Edgell 2006: 116). It is important to appreciate that voluntary part-time workers, which many portfolio workers are, are not all 'pining for core jobs… having to eke out an existence on part-time earnings until something better turns up' (Handy 1995a: 79). Edgell (2006: 123) only mentions those that *must have* more than one part-time job due to the 'poor

pay' and does not mention those individuals that undertake two or more part-time jobs for other reasons.

The literature reviewed tends to conceptualise work as a homogeneous element of people's lives, whether it is balanced, or integrated, with life. Watson (2008a: 191) observes, that we need 'to be careful about assuming that work that does not follow the standard full-time model is homogeneous'; the same observation can be said to apply to life. The small number of studies on portfolio work tend to rigorously separate work and non-work (e.g. Wood & Michaelides 2016; Clinton et al 2006) and, it is often non-work factors that will impact on career choices (Hassard et al 2012) but non-work can be difficult to define.

As Hindle (2008: 149) points out

> Portfolio workers lack a lot of the things that full-time employees take for granted... They need to acquire a far wider range of competencies, such as computer skills, marketing, accounting and filling in tax returns.

Certain activities, such as training, are considered to be part of work for full-time employees, but for portfolio workers, training is likely to be unpaid, therefore this categorisation is less straightforward. Similarly, the lack of a work-based identity (Standing 2011) is likely to require identity work to construct a working self (Harding 2013) that can continue to sustain employability. The decision on whether or not these activities are work will depend on how the individual worker frames them, and this is insufficiently covered in the literature to date.

The conceptualisation of NSWAs as homogeneous (Watson 2008a) also does not acknowledge the situation for portfolio workers who have multiple bases of employment. Understanding work-life balance in the context of this group is likely

to require an awareness of balancing multiple work commitments, where different types of work satisfy different needs and wants, and fit around life, to achieve an overall optimal balance. Although the literature suggests that the barriers between work and life are becoming blurred (Gratton & Scott 2016; Sirgy & Lee 2018; Voydanoff 2007), it is not understood whether the same observation applies to the barriers between different types of work. To help to develop and conceptualise the understandings of, and meanings attributed to, not only work-life balance but also the concept of work, it is therefore necessary to turn to the concepts of identity and identity work, which are discussed in the next chapter.

2.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has addressed the first research sub-question, 'What is portfolio work?' based on a review of existing literature. In particular, it has discussed the literature concerning 'new' careers, of which portfolio work reportedly forms part, to identify some key differences between the 'traditional' and the 'new' career. Key themes found within these bodies of literature have been explored, including: time; the psychological contract; power and control; autonomy and empowerment; precarity and security; and flexibility and work-life balance.

Within the literature that is founded in psychology, portfolio work is presented as a flexible and empowering way of working for the individual. Those scholars that have discussed careers founded in economics and strategic HRM present it as offering flexibility and competitive advantage for organisations. Scholars within organisation studies, founded in sociology, take a more critical approach to portfolio work and tend to frame it as precarious, insecure and exploitative. They focus on the impact on the individual and what it tells us about contemporary

society. More recent literature on careers studies brings together insights from these different disciplines, taking a multi-disciplinary, integrated, approach assessing the meaning for both the organisation and the individual to provide a more balanced view. This study addresses the subject of portfolio work investigating it at the level of individuals, from which wider observations and broader conclusions are drawn.

There is a scarcity of empirical studies into this style of work. Some scholars suggest that it is a new and exciting style of working that empowers individuals (e.g. Coplin 2013; Kelliher & Anderson 2008) and others that it is simply a sign of a society that is in decline and exploits individuals (Ehrenreich 2001; Standing 2014). This study provides rich detailed accounts from portfolio workers, drawing on their experiences and insights, to aid understanding of, and add to the body of work exploring, the changing world of work.

Although insights obtained through the discussion of key themes can be used to theorise the portfolio working concept, distinct bodies of literature seem to evaluate the themes very differently pointing to the complexity of analysis required and a need for additional studies that are open to other aspects emerging. This study develops further insights through investigating the experiences, personal situations and identities of the individuals working in this way. The study of identity can provide a useful, more sophisticated, analytical framework to facilitate a better understanding of how individuals experience portfolio work. On a practical level, this may help portfolio workers to develop more satisfying working lives and more constructive relationships with the organisations they work for, and it may help organisations to use portfolio workers more effectively.

The next chapter explores relevant aspects of the literature on identity and identity work to prepare a conceptual framework for analysing what it is like to be a portfolio worker and the impacts that portfolio work has on individuals.

The more identities a man has, the more they express the person they conceal.

John Le Carré (1974: 238)

Chapter Three: Work and Identity

3.1 Overview

Chapter One summarised some of the main causes of changes in modern working practices and Chapter Two distinguished between the traditional and new career concepts identifying key themes and prevalent discourses in relation to portfolio work. This chapter now focuses on a body of work that explores people *at work.* Organisations are considered to provide an arena where people can address the questions of who they are now, who they were, and who they might become, i.e. their identities present, past and future. For portfolio workers, however, without one organisation to provide reflexive and social resources for the long run, temporary identity workspaces will be used instead (Petriglieri et al 2018).

This chapter draws on several concepts that are particularly relevant to portfolio workers who may lack a workplace-based identity (Standing 2011). These concepts include identity construction, identity work, identity coherence, identity conflict, and identity regulation. Investigating the experience of portfolio workers involves exploring what people's work means to them and an important element of this is how they consider they fit into contemporary society. Society cannot be separated from the self, and the self cannot be separated from society; the two are inseparable, interrelated, and interdependent and the link between ourselves and how we fit into society and work is – *identity* (Watson 2008a).

3.1.1 The importance of work

> 'What kind of work do you do?' is such a classic question that it is
> repeatedly asked in social conversation. This question is significant because
> it underscores the fact that paid work – employment – is generally
> considered to be a central defining feature of our identity. It is also one
> important means by which we judge others. (Bratton 2015: 39)

Bratton is one of many academics who have highlighted the importance of work in

relation to identity. Brown and Coupland (2015: 1322) take it further suggesting

that work is

> generally a significant aspect of employed individuals' lives which provides
> them with the discursive resources from which they (re) author
> continuously versions of their selves.

The term 'employed' is open to interpretation. The UK Government defines

employed individuals as those that are in paid work, whether as an employee or

self-employed, on a government supported training or employment programme or

doing unpaid work in a family business (gov.uk 2018b). However, a wider

interpretation (e.g. Cooley 1963) includes doing whatever the individual, in their

current situation, most wants to do. This might include, for example, Handy's

(1995a) unpaid homework, gift work and study work. There is also a legal

interpretation of the term, covered by contract law and statute, which covers

employees' rights and employers' responsibilities. Whichever definition is used, it

is clear that the concept of employment is so socially and culturally embedded that

it has a major impact on the identity of individuals.

Individuals employed full-time in a traditional career (see 2.2) can draw on their

organisational employment, using job titles (Grant et al 2014) for example, to

author a version of their selves, whereas those working on a variety of contracts,

such as portfolio workers, have more narrative autonomy to actively author the version of their selves they want to present to their audiences.

Work is having an increasing impact on identity as it is a way of assisting an individual to establish where they stand in the social structure (Budd 2011), helping them to make sense of who they are and why they do what they do. Identity is not a 'given' that can be allocated; it is something that must be arrived at through interaction (e.g. Paltridge 2012). In addition to (usually) providing an income, work is also a source of meaning, both psychological and social (Budd 2011), and is 'central to most people's lives' (Werth & Brownlow 2018). The concept of identity is crucial because it forms a core element of issues relating to work, not only meaning – which is contingent on identity (Alvesson & Willmott 2002) – but also motivation, commitment, loyalty (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003), control, individual and group behaviour (Alvesson et al 2008) and other aspects highlighted in the previous chapter.

3.1.2 The importance of identity

Identity matters because it is how people communicate who they are and define, and negotiate, their place in society. There are three main conceptualisations of identity: the self within a group; the self in relation to shared characteristics and the self in relation to others (Stryker & Burke 2000). The self in relation to others is of significance to portfolio workers whose multiple jobs in different organisations may make it more challenging to create a coherent career narrative. Research on identity explores individuals' understandings of who they are; how they fit into social situations; how this evolves over time; how they control identities or how they are controlled; and how they either acquiesce to, or resist, the imposition of

various identities (Alvesson et al 2008). Most identity studies concern the use of policies and practices to try to ensure that individuals comply with, and conform to, organisational norms and values (Huber & Brown 2016). What is unclear in relation to portfolio workers is the extent to which they control their own identity, and the extent to which it is controlled, and to what degree they have the capacity to exercise agentic choice over their working lives. There are likely to be 'portfolio staff with portfolio identities' (Barnett & Di Napoli 2008: 203), which could lead to conflict when trying to manage multiple identities to create a coherent career narrative.

To obtain work, portfolio workers are likely to need to carry out identity work to present a positive external identity and produce an acceptable 'personal brand'. Vallas and Cummins' (2015) study of identity norms found that a discourse of 'personal branding' has risen rapidly since 2000 and is now widespread (Vallas & Christin 2018). This builds on original work by Goffman (1959/1990) on 'impression management' whereby individuals try to either create a new image or maintain, manipulate or protect an existing one, shaping how others see them (Bolino et al 2016), and working on their self project (Giddens 1991). Goffman (1959/1990: 9), however, states that he studied 'social life that is organized within the physical confines of a building or plant' to arrive at a framework 'that can be applied to any concrete social establishment, be it domestic, industrial or commercial'. For portfolio workers, they are situated within a variety of social establishments therefore a chameleon-like approach (Gherardi & Murgia 2013) to identity rationalisation may be needed. The main challenge of impression management and personal branding is likely to be in working out what impression or brand to create, and pitch (Goffman 1967/2005: 45), in both multiple existing, and potential

future, situations (Ransome 2010). It may also be particularly challenging for those that are structurally constrained by aspects of their identity such as minority groups (see 3.2.6) to create the requisite brand.

3.1.3 The current environment and identity

Economic pressures and social changes, such as globalisation and changing family forms (Lawler 2014), have led to demands for flexibility and adaptability amongst workers, and this impacts on their experience of work and their identity. As Elliott and Lemert (2009: 60) suggest

> In a world of short-term contracts, endless downsizings, just-in-time deliveries and multiple careers, the capacity to change and reinvent oneself is fundamental.

This reinvention requires identity work which has therefore become more pertinent to employment relationships (Alvesson & Willmott 2002). The ability to develop new identities, and shift between identities, has become integral to living in contemporary society (Elliott & Lemert 2016). This has led to the rise of new forms of worker identity such as 'enterprising selves', 'flexible subjectivities' (Vallas & Cummins 2015: 294); 'self-entrepreneurship', 'chameleon precariousness' (Gherardi & Murgia 2013: 98); and 'portable selves' (Petriglieri et al 2018).

The growth in the number of identity studies, and the interest in them, reflect the times we are living in. As Alvesson (2010: 200) states:

> the constant pressure on individuals to adapt and be responsive means that the social preconditions for building character and identity are not there anymore and consequently people experience difficulties finding meaning and direction in life.

This social instability (Frosh & Baraitser 2009) may lead to an increased desire amongst workers for some sort of work-based identification to provide order and

structure to their lives (Ashforth et al 2008). This can be difficult to achieve with the increasing fragmentation of organisations (Giddens 1991) so an alternative holding environment may be developed (Petriglieri et al 2019).

In a traditional full-time job, where workers are working for only one organisation, they are likely to identify strongly, whether positively or negatively, with that organisation as a primary source of identity construction (Alvesson et al 2008; Watson 2008a). Working within multiple organisations means portfolio workers will have a choice of which organisation to identify with. This may assist with demonstrating the flexibility and adaptability desired in the contemporary workplace (Chan 2014; Greenhaus et al 2010; Leong & Ott-Holland 2014), and building social and cultural capital, but it could be difficult to portray just one clear, coherent, work identity. Identity, 'holds a vital key to understanding the complex, unfolding and dynamic relationship between self, work and the organization' (Alvesson et al, 2008: 8-9). In addition, 'the work-practitioner relation' has been described as 'bilateral' (Ashcraft, 2013: 12-13) highlighting that people derive identity from work, and work derives identity from the people associated with it.

3.1.4 Why the study of identity is important for portfolio workers

Studying identity provides a way of understanding and explaining interactions between organisations and workers (Brown 2015). As Gherardi and Murgia (2013: 92) contend, 'Having a succession of jobs prevents the construction of a coherent professional and social identity', and portfolio workers have both a succession of jobs and an evolving and changing portfolio of jobs. Identity work may provide them with a way of navigating their combinations of jobs into a coherent identity

enabling them to construct a marketable 'brand' to attract further work. Ross (2015), in his research into the identity construction of young people in Europe, suggests that they build their identities in a 'kaleidoscopic' way. The overall pattern changes in response to different contexts and internal and external pressures, but it is constructed from the same basic materials, with some being more pronounced in certain contexts and less obvious in others, but still resulting in an overall coherent pattern. Ibarra (2015 no p.no.) highlights the unique problem of portfolio workers whereby 'there is no easy label, no shorthand' and they end up explaining their style of working with a 'laundry list' of jobs and roles. She suggests that there is no 'heroic myth' of a progressive narrative, unlike that of a traditional career where the linear progression results in a senior role or, as she describes it, the 'learn, earn, return' pattern. For portfolio workers, therefore, having not only a succession of jobs, but also multiple contemporaneous jobs and roles, often at different levels of seniority and perceived importance or status, identity construction and maintenance is likely to be of vital importance. Identity will also impact on their perception of the key themes of time, the psychological contract, power and control, autonomy and empowerment, precarity and security, and flexibility and work-life balance outlined in Chapter Two.

The majority of research into identity to date has 'examined the vicissitudes of identity in the context of traditional careers' (Petriglieri et al 2018). It has also mainly concerned specific hierarchical levels and occupational groups including, for example, priests (Kreiner et al 2006), nurses (Willetts & Clarke 2014), business school academics (Knights & Clarke 2014), management consultants (Gill 2015; Costas & Kärreman 2016), older self-employed creative workers (Hennekam 2015), hospital porters (Fuller & Unwin 2017), call centre operators (Brannan et al 2014),

freelance translators (Gold & Fraser 2002), blue collar miners (Lucas 2011) and

MBA students (Petriglieri et al 2018). There has, however, been little research into

identities of those, such as portfolio workers, that cut across these categories and

simultaneously occupy both different occupational groups and different

hierarchical levels. Miscenko and Day's (2016) review of 642 published articles on

identity, specifically chose to focus on identity studies that fall within the context

of 'traditional work' only, i.e. work with defined pay, working hours, hierarchical

organisational structures and specific job descriptions thus excluding portfolio

workers completely. More recent research has investigated multiple work

identities in the context of 'plural careerists' (Caza et al 2018) and 'portable selves'

(Petriglieri et al 2018) but not portfolio workers.

Full coverage of all contemporary ideas covered in the wide-ranging research and

analysis of identity is beyond the scope of this thesis. Brown's (2015: 25) review

pinpointed the most significant disputes in respect of the debates on theorising

and researching identity as

> the extent to which identities are (i) chosen by or ascribed to individuals;
> (ii) generally stable, evolutionally adaptive or fluid; (iii) coherent or
> fragmented and possibly contradictory; (iv) motivated (or not) by a need
> for positive meaning; and (v) framed (or not) by a desire for authenticity.

He then goes on to highlight the importance of discussing these aspects

collectively rather than individually. In this thesis, identity is considered,

discussing these aspects collectively, but strictly in the context of individuals

simultaneously working for a variety of organisations. Discussion concerns

identities construed through discourse (Coupland & Brown 2012; Huber & Brown

2016), i.e. those that are created by individuals talking about who they are and how

they act. This is termed the 'social identity' (Lawler 2014) and concerns identity created in relation to group membership.

3.1.5 Identity construction

Using interviews as the main research method for this thesis (see 4.5), means that the identities constructed were effectively co-produced (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015). An interview is fundamentally an identity project where researcher and participant will negotiate, using discourse and narrative, the identity presented (Alvesson 2011). It was necessary to share, and refine, the interpretation, understanding and perception of the identity of a 'portfolio worker' and whether participants self-identified as portfolio workers, to provide empirical evidence to develop the definition of portfolio working provided in Chapter Seven. In stable and routine life situations the identity narrative flows more evenly (Petriglieri et al 2019) but in the more dynamic, changeable, portfolio working situation more work is likely to be required to construct a coherent (Brown 2015; Petriglieri et al 2018) and authentic (Caza et al 2018) identity. This thesis therefore takes an interpretivist approach (Chen et al 2011; Chowdhury 2014) focusing on identities in practice, and how they are created, and maintained, within a variety of contemporaneous organisational settings.

3.2 What is Identity?

Identity is a complex, multi-faceted concept that has attracted a range of definitions, developed within different disciplines. As Lawler (2014:7) suggests:

> Part of the slipperiness of the term 'identity' derives from the difficulties of defining it adequately. It is not possible to provide a single, overarching definition of what it is, how it is developed and how it works.

To review the literature on identity, and relate it to portfolio workers, it is however necessary to arrive at some sort of definition, since '*identity exists by how it is defined*' (Saldaña 2013: 62 italics in original). Identity is the answer to the question 'Who am I?' It is a question that can be answered only by the individual being reflexive and considering the context (Ashforth et al 2008) within which the question is asked. Answering the question 'Who are you?' would be likely to generate a response from an individual that would be tailored depending on who was asking the question (Caza et al 2018; La-Pointe 2010). Responses might include name, job title, occupation, relationship to another individual, or some other, short, one sentence, response. This would only be a small part of the identity that was presented and could be an attributed identity rather than one that is fully engaged with (Woodward 2004).

In answering the question 'Who am I?' a more reflexive, detailed, narrative response would be required. The answer is not as simple as who we think we are but also how we achieve our identities (Lawler 2014). We all have multiple, overlapping identities (Brown 2015; Delanty 2008; Floyd 2014) which can be based on various attributes including gender, ethnicity, nationality and occupation. For many years, in several disciplines – including psychology, philosophy and sociology – it has been recognised that these multiple identities will impact on the behaviour of individuals within organisations (Ramarajan 2014). These social categories however do not reflect the complexity of identity as they might not reveal the way in which different people *live* and *experience* these categories and make sense of their positions within them (Lawler 2014). For portfolio workers, defining their, often complex, overlapping (Delanty 2008) combination of multiple identities could be challenging. It is not only the number and combination of

multiple identities that is of interest but also how important these various identities are, in terms of emotional significance, and people's 'understanding of their selves' (Caza et al 2018). The value of various identities will depend on both their relative significance in relation to others and the context and time at which they are being assessed (Bourdieu 2000).

There are three key aspects of identity likely to be of particular significance to portfolio workers operating within multiple organisations. The first is the self-identity (see 3.2.5), which is who the individual reflexively believes themselves to be, and this is likely to be impacted on by the context within which the individual is situated. The second is the identification with organisations which concerns the extent of the relationships individuals have with organisations (see 3.2.6), whether they closely affiliate themselves with the organisations they work within or distance themselves from them. The third is the personal brand which involves the creation and manipulation of an impression intended to influence others' views of who they are, although this might not reflect the individual's core self-identity as is acknowledged by Goffman's (1959/1990) impression management and Giddens (1991) reflexive project of the self (see 3.1.2 and 3.2.6).

3.2.1 Managing multiple identities

To analyse the management of multiple identities, Roccas and Brewer (2002) categorised four different structures for multiple group membership as shown in Table 3.1.

Structure	Description
Intersection	where an individual might be a member of two different social groups that intersect making them a member of the third group created by that intersection e.g. a female and a surveyor, then a female surveyor thus excluding men and non-surveyors
Dominance	where there is one overall identity that other identities are subordinate to e.g. an artist and a teacher who only identifies with other artists
Compartmentalisation	where a specific context will generate a specific identity e.g. a musician when with other musicians, and a lecturer when with other lecturers
Merger	where multiple identities are balanced and the individual identifies with all of them equally

Table 3.1 Four structures for multiple group membership
Source: Adapted from Roccas and Brewer (2002)

Ramarajan (2014: 626) refines these groups into two different types of identity network: *independent* where identities are 'weakly related or not related at all' and *clustered* where the various identities are 'more or less related compared to others.' This binary division was also exhibited in Hennekam's (2015) research. She found that her participants experienced psychological stress having to combine the identities of creatives and business people and dealt with this either by separating the identities (independent or compartmentalisation) or by creating synergy between the two roles (clustered). However, Caza et al's (2018) research into the authenticity of plural careerists (which many portfolio workers are) proposes that they carry out 'aggregating' whereby permeable connections between identities are created by establishing a linking theme. For portfolio workers, with numerous

work identities, elements of all these categorisations might be exhibited depending on the context and the specific audience the identity is being presented to.

3.2.2 Elements of identity

Budd (2011:14) defines identity, in relation to work, as a 'method for understanding who you are and where you fit in' which is a question requiring detailed and reflexive consideration. Watson (2008b: 322) takes this a stage further defining identity as

> The conception which each individual develops, in relation to others, of who and what they are. A person's identity has two components: self-identity being an individual's own notion of self; and social identity being the notion others have of who and what that individual is.

Watson (2008b) separates the two elements of identity and makes the important point that identity develops *'in relation to others',* so as well as simply 'Who am I?' the question can be extended into 'Who are we?' i.e. what social group do we fit within, and what group are we not part of. A group, in relation to identity, extends beyond the widely accepted organisational definition of many individuals that are psychologically aware of one another and perceive themselves to be a group (e.g. Mullins 2016) to include some shared emotional involvement in the definition of the group, and some level of consensus about what the group is, and the extent of their membership of it (Tajfel & Turner 1979).

Ybema et al (2016: 387) suggest that 'We (and others) understand who we are by signifying who we are not', i.e. constructing our identities involves distinguishing ourselves from others by the expression of similarities and differences (Jenkins 2004; Ybema et al 2009). Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) classify the expression of differences as 'anti-identity work', i.e. distancing oneself from specific role

assumptions and expectations. It is important to note that identity is not a fixed construct, but dynamic; it will shift in response to both internal and external pressures. As Storey et al (2005: 1037) advocate, 'Identity is a composite, a result of a variety of experiences actively understood by the individual' making the point that identity is not passively experienced and forced on to an individual but incorporates the individual's own interpretation of the variety of experiences that impact upon them. As a result, Törrönen (2001: 313) describes identity as a 'collage of subject positions' having no 'stable unity'. The process of identity formation is thus a continuous process (Borden 2008; Watson 1994), 'complex and multifaceted' (Ybema et al 2009: 301), and 'shaped by a wide array of personal, social, and environmental factors' (Borden 2008: 152). Czarniawska (1997: 49) suggests 'both the narrator and the audience are involved in formulating, editing, applauding, and refusing various elements of the ever-produced narrative'. Because 'narrator' and 'audience' (Czarniawska 1997) will be drawing on different discourses, the result is likely to be '"narratively plausible" alternative, competing and conflicting accounts of the same social phenomenon – identity' (Ybema et al 2009: 317), rather than a clear definitive answer.

Identity concerns not only how an individual sees themselves, but, just as importantly, trying to ascertain how others see them in terms of similarities and differences (Collinson 2003). This is challenging because it is not only the observable existing similarities and differences that are important but also those that we create by identifying and reproducing them (Ybema et al 2009). As we do not exist within a vacuum these similarities and differences form an integral part of who we are, and who we are not. They are created collectively, as an outcome of

the interaction between individuals and their groups, by narrative and discourse

(Brown & Coupland 2015; Inkson et al 2015).

3.2.3 Identity and discourse

It is important to note that these discourses do not *expose* the phenomenon of

identity but are a core constitutive element in *creating* it. The notion of discourse,

for the purposes of this study, follows Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003: 1171-2)

explanation of it as

> a way of reasoning (form of logic), with certain truth effects through its
> impact on practice, anchored in a particular vocabulary that constitutes a
> particular version of the social world.

The key element of the above definition, from the perspective of this research, is

that discourse creates '*a particular version of the social world'*. Discourse, in this

context, is likely to be relativist, i.e. it will consider previous experiences and

history and use those to inform the situation today (Budd 2011; Daskalaki 2012;

Dunn & Neumann 2016).

Portfolio workers, as 'narrators' (Czarniawska 1997) or 'actors' (Ybema et al 2009)

will be producing their identities for a variety of 'audiences' (Czarniawska 1997) or

'analysts' (Ybema et al 2009) in different organisational settings. Identity may

therefore be an even more fluid concept for portfolio workers in multiple settings

interacting with numerous work audiences.

3.2.4 The fluidity of identity

As identity is such an elusive concept, developing a form of typology can provide a

useful method of considering alternative positions and interpretations to aid the

analysis of identity. For example, Alvesson (2010) identifies seven images of

identity: self-doubters, strugglers, surfers, storytellers, strategists, stencils and soldiers. The one category that is likely to apply to *all* portfolio workers is storyteller due to the absence of a clear organisational identity flowing from one permanent full-time job. The portfolio worker has to construct a socially acceptable identity creating meaning 'through crafting a personal narrative' (Alvesson 2010: 199) then maintaining a carefully curated image. Alvesson (2010) suggests that this narrative creation is a method of dealing with the uncertainties of life. The individual takes the lead in creating the story of their life, using input from others with whom they interact. Watson (2008a: 256) specifically refers to portfolio workers as having the opportunity to 'transcend the institutions of regular full-time employment and … create a personalised work biography' but also points out that 'On the other hand they may have to settle for "being disposable" and "just a temp".' Here he alludes to the self-actualisation to exploitation continuum but makes no mention of the structural constraints that might limit the ability to exercise agentic choice. The challenge is constructing a life story to create an individual's identity, which is widely considered to be a combination of self and social identity, which reflects both what the individual wants it to be *and* what the individual wants others to see.

3.2.5 Self-identity (or self-concept)

The individual's notion of self-identity is constructed through social processes (Ross 2015), but it is not imposed upon the individual. It is not allocated but is 'something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual' (Giddens 1991: 52) and through 'interaction with others' (Watson 2008a) in various environments.

Giddens (1991: 53) defines self-identity as '*the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography*' (italics in original) or, as Watson (2008b: 131) later defines it, '*the individual's own notion of who and what they are*' (italics in original). Self-identity could be perceived as a more authentic identity, i.e. the person we are *being* as opposed to the identity we are *performing* (Caza et al 2018; Lawler 2014). The notion of self-identity cannot, however, be formed in isolation of all external factors; it is a result of a continuous life-long project including commitments to education, work, consumption choices, social life (Webb 2006) and feedback from those with whom the individual interacts. At the same time as we are interacting with others, and defining ourselves in relation to them, they will be arriving at their own opinion of our identity which might, or might not, echo the identity we intend to portray, and may even directly contradict it (Ross 2015).

Self-identity typically refers to aspects that differentiate the individual from other group members and includes unique personal attributes (Alvesson et al 2008) that can only be identified by interaction. Traditionally, one of the main sources of interaction and feedback is the organisation that an individual works within. Over the past few decades, however, for the reasons outlined in Chapter Two, there has been a move away from single organisational control of employees as traditionally seen, for example, with Ford and Cadbury (Clegg et al 2016). Workers now increasingly must exert self-control over their interaction, and gathering of feedback, and are therefore creating their own self-identities. This identity construction is a complex mechanism that is always in process (Coupland & Brown 2012) and requires work on the part of the individual who can no longer rely on an organisation to help to create their identities. Petriglieri et al (2018), in their research into MBA students constructing 'portable selves', distinguish between

internally and externally anchored portable selves which can be loosely allied to self-identity and social identity.

Unlike social identity, which is more relational to others, self-identity allows the individual to choose to be whoever they want to be, subject to structural constraints, experimenting with different identities in different settings (Cohen 2014) and selecting those that seem to fit best. Again, this cannot be done in isolation as others may not perceive the identities that the individual is trying to portray. It is also difficult to keep 'trying on' (Webb 2006) different identities without 'the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*' (Giddens 1991: 54 italics in original). This is where identity work takes place.

Certain elements of identity are bestowed upon an individual such as ethnicity, disability, or migrant status. An individual can take specific actions to reduce, or increase, the impact of these elements on the overall identity presented by making a choice between, or exploiting the variety of (Watson 2008b), discourses to craft a preferred identity. The extent of these specific actions, and scope of potential identities, however is likely to depend on structural constraints and the degree to which the individual has been able to build social and cultural forms of capital. Self-identity requires continuous reflection, adjustment, manipulation, reconciliation and revision to achieve a coherent biographic narrative (Giddens 1991). Over time, self-identities will evolve and the changing emphasis between alternative self-identities will be made sense of by narratives produced by the individual and shared with others (Cohen et al 2004). Although self-identity is a continuous process that is ever evolving it tends to be a little more settled than social identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003) as it is constructed from a more

stable set of meanings (Brown 2015) such as values and norms developed through life. Social identities based on work, family, role, etc. can change very rapidly in response to changing external factors. This relative stability, however, can be problematic as clinging to the stability of an espoused self-identity can make the individual less flexible and adaptable therefore clashing with the requirements of today's rapidly evolving organisations (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003).

3.2.6 Structure and agency

The continuous adjustment and revision of identity, to develop the required self-identity, depends on the capacity of the individual to make choices about what aspects of their identity to reveal and conceal. The self becomes a 'reflexive project' (Giddens 1991) that is sustained through narrative, which is delicate and fluid, and requires a considerable amount of identity work to sustain.

This reflexive project of the self is based on the premise that the individual has the agency to act independently and make choices about what to include and exclude within their self-identity. As Giddens (1991: 75) suggests 'We are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves'. However, this agency is limited by the structure within which the individual operates. The worker does not have a completely free choice over who they can be and how they can work; they will be constrained by how they are socially positioned. It is possible that portfolio workers have structural advantages providing them with the capacity to manipulate their self-identities and choose which parts to conceal and reveal. This may be more difficult for those that have structural limitations on their identities that are harder to conceal, such as disability, ethnicity, social class or sexuality, particularly as appearance is a central element of the reflexive project of the self (Giddens 1991:

99-100). Workers with structural limitations are more likely to have to cope with the external social environment within which they work whereas those with fewer constraints, and greater agency, may be able to proactively reconstruct, this social structure continually increasing their capacity to present different identities.

Workers with fewer structural limitations are also likely to be able to contribute to their self-project by adding skills and abilities that help not only to reshape their self-identities but also to build social, cultural, physical and economic capital. This building of capital is likely to lead to an increased ability to manipulate identity and to exercise agency in terms of choice of working patterns.

3.2.7 Social identity

As outlined above, self-identity is the individual's own idea about who they are. It is effectively a lens through which they see, and reproduce, their own reality. Self-identity is formed over a life time and is informed by the classifications open to individuals such as profession, family, organisation or other positions. The selected self-identity will reflect the various identities the individual is aware of and the context in which they are being portrayed. Social identity, in contrast to self-identity, is more concerned with the reflection of the views of others, i.e. the *'cultural, discursive, or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be.'* (Watson 2008b: 131; italics in original). Social identity is therefore

> relational: defined relative to other people or groups. I find out who I am by knowing what I am not: understanding where and with whom I do (or don't) belong. (Scott 2015: 2)

This is based on the individual's *perception* of their group membership 'particularly in terms of value and emotional attachment' (Alvesson et al 2008: 10). Unless the individual values the identity they will not form a deep connection with it

(Ashforth et al 2008). Social identity hence relies on affiliation with, or exclusion from, interaction with a group of other individuals. What an individual might think of themselves, in identity terms, is of equal importance to what others think about them (Jenkins 2004). Social identity is wholly dependent on the validation of others (Knights & Clarke 2014), but it is based on the individual's subjective opinion of how they fit in. If they feel they fit well as a group member they will comply with behavioural expectations and norms of the group, but if they do not feel a strong group affiliation they may focus more on their self-identity perceiving themselves as unique individuals rather than group members and rejecting group behavioural norms (Scott 2015). Self-identity focuses on 'idiosyncratic attributes' of the individual, whereas social identity focuses on shared membership of groups (Ashforth et al 2008).

Social identity is likely to be of importance to portfolio workers as they often do not have a settled group, such as the work groups experienced by workers in 'traditional' employment. There can also be quite a mismatch between their self-identity and social identity, due to the variety of job roles taken, which can cause discomfort (Scott 2015). Traditionally organisations exerted a considerable amount of control over their workers and offered job security and employment durability in exchange for employee commitment and loyalty (Barley et al 2017). As part of this psychological contract (see 2.5.2) workers tended to obtain much of their identity from their role within that organisation; the organisation effectively formed an anchor for identity (Thomas & Higgins 1996). Portfolio workers, who work within multiple organisations, could choose to anchor their identity with their profession, their lifestyle, their family status, one of their employing organisations, or even identify predominantly as a portfolio worker. This could

result in discomfort due to denying their self-identity, carrying out identity work,

replacement of a problematic role with another more comfortable one, or finding

an alternative 'personal holding environment' (Petriglieri et al 2019). Social

identity, like self-identity, is a continuous process. It involves agreement and

disagreement and negotiation to create meaning (Nicol 1999). Although social

identity is commonly formed within the workplace, and studied within

organisations, there are other groups that contribute toward social identity, and,

as Beck (2000: 58) advocates,

> The idea that social identity and status depend only upon a person's
> occupation and career must be taken apart and abandoned, so that social
> esteem and security are really uncoupled from paid employment.

It is an aspirational idea, but, in practice, a person's occupation and career still

form a large part of social identity although it is possible that, as NSWAs become

more widespread, this may change. Boswell et al (2012: 455) still believe that 'the

employment arrangement can serve as a status distinction like other social identity

group markers (e.g., race, gender)', and Ashforth et al (2008) agree, suggesting that

occupational role and organisational membership are other categories that might

be used to construct social identities. The interpretation of social categories, in

this context, follows Tajfel and Turner's (1979: 40) conception of them being

'cognitive tools that segment, classify and order the social environment'. For

portfolio workers, as employment tends to be in multiple locations and

fractionalised, the importance of other roles, outside organisations, may have more

of an impact on social identity. This view is supported by Conway and Briner's

(2002) research into psychological contracts for full-time and part-time workers,

which suggests that non-work roles for part-timers might have more of an impact

on their social identity than work commitments. Petriglieri et al's (2019) research on workers operating independently of organisations also identified alternative holding environments.

One of the criticisms of social identity theory is the idea that it results in a single, predominant identity which might adversely impact on the level of scholarly attention to multiple identities (Ramarajan 2014). It is important to move beyond this idea to embrace the concept of multiple identities and the identity work required for those in discontinuous careers (Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly 2014; Ibarra & Barbulescu 2010).

Most scholars (e.g. Bratton 2015) agree that identity is an ongoing process, rather than an achievement (Brown 2015), but this leads to further questions. How is the process of identification achieved? How does the perception develop? How do these identities come into being? How is the perception of 'belongingness' achieved? The answers to these questions involve, what is termed, identity work.

3.3 Identity Work

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003: 1165) define identity work as

> people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness.

The definition is developed in Alvesson et al's (2008: 15) later work where it is described as

> the ongoing mental activity that an individual undertakes in constructing an understanding of self that is coherent, distinct and positively valued.

Both definitions highlight the ongoing nature of identity work and the need for coherence but the later definition includes the requirement for the resultant self to be positively valued. Coherence also occurs in Watson's (2008b: 129) conceptualisation of identity work as

> the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives.

Watson thus introduces the concept of 'struggle', also highlighted by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), but all three highlight the need for 'coherence'.

3.3.1 Identity and coherence

Many portfolio workers form part of what Standing (2011: 2) describes as the 'precariat', and he points out that the 'creative tension' between being victims of institutional norms and heroes rejecting those institutional norms results in a lack of coherence. Habermas and Bluck (2000), in their research into life stories in adolescence, highlighted the importance of coherence as a structural element of narratives, identifying four types of coherence: temporal coherence – dating and cross referencing of events; causal coherence – providing causes for life events; thematic coherence – identifying similar themes throughout life; and the cultural concept of biography – a normative cultural notion of what should be included in a life. Although applied to a lifetime in this piece of research, these categorisations are equally applicable to working lives.

Brown (2015: 27), in his review of identity and identity work, supports this typology when he states that coherence

refers variously to individuals' sense of their own continuity over time,
clarity in awareness of the connections between their multiple identities, a
sense of completeness or wholeness, and embrace of the essentially
integrated nature of their selves.

Identity work can enable an individual to develop coherence by searching for, and creating, patterns and sense, finding a 'common thread' (Caza et al 2017) in the evolution of their identity, and then accepting, and positively affirming, that identity. This view is supported by Giddens (1991) whose concept of the reflexive project of the self assimilates events, experiences and context into the creation, and maintenance, of a coherent narrative. The 'struggle' that Watson (2008b) refers to is likely to be involved in the process as the individual works out how to achieve the optimal amount of coherence; too little may make the narrative difficult to follow whereas too much may make the narrative too limited.

Beech et al (2016: 506), when investigating the identity of indie musicians, contended that identity work

is widely regarded as a process through which people strive to establish,
maintain or restore a coherent and consistent sense of self.

The above observation highlights both the process and the coherence themes running through the other definitions. Beech et al's (2016) work, however, concluded that the struggle indie musicians underwent formed an integral part of their identity. It seems likely that this struggle would also form part of a portfolio worker's identity because of the constant need to juggle multiple identities, in different organisational settings, that may conflict. Beech et al (2016: 520) summarise that, rather than accept the widely held view that coherence forms an essential part of identity work, the definition should be revised to 'people's

ongoing efforts to create, confirm *and disrupt* a sense of self.' This implies that incoherence might also form part of identity work.

The suggestion of incoherence is supported by Daskalaki (2012) who, in her research into cosmopolitan identities of transnational communities, suggests that the impact of expatriation/repatriation on creating an identity may never result in a complete identity; it will remain 'unbounded, multiple and incoherent' (Daskalaki 2012: 433). This might also be applicable to portfolio workers who can try out new roles, and therefore 'try on' different identities to see how they fit (Ashforth et al 2008; Webb 2006), or carry out 'career exploration' (Meijers & Lengelle 2012) without relinquishing their existing one and going through the more dramatic process of identity transformation (Lawler 2014). The coherent narrative of their existing identity could be disrupted, to explore new possibilities and experiment with different identities, whilst retaining the ability to retract to their existing identity. It is not possible to randomly decide to become another identity as identities can only be created within social relations that facilitate identity creation (Lawler 2014). The various settings within which portfolio workers operate provide the context within which they can carry out their 'outward facing' (Watson 2009) identity work whilst they carry out their own 'inward facing' assessment of their own lives to achieve an integrated self-identity. The various settings might also provide the 'tools' to continuously 're-story' their career narratives enabling them to make sense of changes in their work, presenting failures or misfortunes as openings and opportunities (Meijers & Lengelle 2012), and overcoming potentially negative connotations of job loss (Ibarra & Barbulescu 2010).

3.3.2 Identity construction

Ybema et al (2009: 301) state that 'the formation of an 'identity' appears to involve the discursive articulation of an ongoing iteration between social and self-definition' which is concordant with the 'three-step' view of the relationship model outlined by Watson (2008b: 128). In his work on managerial identity, Watson's (2008b: 128) model (see Figure 3.5) conceptualises the interaction between discourses, identity work and identities, and depicts identity work as a two-way process. Although the individual makes a choice from a multiplicity of possible social identities, they also have the capacity to feedback into any social identity and modify or interpret that social identity in their own way. Simplistically the diagram demonstrates how identity work involves discourse leading to self-identity.

In Gill's (2015) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) investigation into identity and status anxiety in management consultants, the model is extended to allow for the psychological implications of identity work. It is suggested that identity work is more 'necessary frequent and intense' where 'strains, tensions and surprises are prevalent' due to the feelings that these external pressures prompt leading to introspection (Brown 2015: 25).

Identity work

A multiplicity of socially available DISCOURSES including various consultant discourses	A multiplicity of socially available SOCIAL-IDENTITIES including various notions of the consultant	SELF-IDENTITY (varying from consultant to consultant to the extent to which this incorporates elements of consultant social identities)

IDENTITY IMPLICATIONS (individual's experiences associated with the construction and maintenance of particular self-identities e.g. psychological implications such as anxiety)

Figure 3.5: The three-step relationship between discourses, identities and identity implications
Source: Gill (2015: 10) adapted from Watson (2008b: 128)

The model clearly separates social and self-identities, but the two are perhaps more intertwined, not just impacting on each other via identity work, but also sometimes integrated. Self and social identity rely on identity work in the form of both narrative and discourse to construct and maintain them. Gill's (2015) work deals only with various notions of the consultant, but for portfolio workers this could include various notions not only of the portfolio worker but also of each occupational, professional, organisational, and other identity anchor.

The diagram also suggests that social and self-identity are of equal importance, but this is likely to vary, from individual to individual, and depend on context. The relative importance of social identities to portfolio workers is an area of interest, i.e. what makes one aspect of identity more important than another? And what makes one organisation or profession more important to their identities than another? This is explored with empirical data.

How much effort is put into the identity work stipulated in the diagram will depend on the situation the individual is in and the implications. For example, if they are trying to remove themselves from one position to another they are likely to put a lot of effort into identity construction, but if they are happy in their existing role, and concomitant identity, they will be inclined to accept their identity, monitoring and maintaining it, rather than trying to change it. Minority groups may also need to put extra effort into identity work to ensure that any underrated aspects of their bestowed identities are outweighed by those that are highly valued.

Discourse is a concept that helps us to understand how sociocultural norms are dispersed through identity. Discourse provides the material and context we use to articulate our identity but also frames and sets the parameters within which we can create the various social identities (Alvesson et al 2008) we desire. There are social and cultural expectations that individuals are likely to try to meet to present the most valuable, and marketable, identity as they are in competition with others. It is also possible that individuals might reject the sociocultural norms and formulate an identity that rejects dominant norms. In either case, it is likely that the identity constructed will be influenced by the context. Once the chosen

identities are constructed and negotiated, narrative is then used to help to maintain them (Brown & Coupland 2015) during identity work.

Narrative is particularly suited to multiple identities due to the various characters, plots, and scripts that can be used to explain the various identities (Ramarajan 2014). A portfolio worker will have multiple organisational identities often including organisational positions that vary in terms of perceived importance and status (Clinton et al 2006). They might also have more than one professional identity therefore self-identity may be differently experienced and presented in different social domains (Savickas et al 2009). The importance individuals place on each identity will vary over time and be impacted on by circumstance. Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003: 1190) suggest that conventional social categories might not be the most important to individuals and 'encourage more open-minded efforts to explore the more vital aspects of how people define and re-define themselves'. Individuals are also more likely to consistently activate identities that are of greater personal importance to them across all settings than those they perceive as less valuable (Ramarajan 2014). Social identities can impact on self-identity, and vice versa, and the extent to which they impact on each other will depend on the context. The context should perhaps be shown as a background to Figure 3.5 as identity work does not take place in a vacuum (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003). It can either be carried out in a secure stable context where it will come to the fore during a crisis, or change from one situation to another, or, in a less secure, complex, and uncertain situation, such as that of many portfolio workers, be continuous (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003). The resultant identity is likely to shift depending on opportunities available which is particularly pertinent to portfolio workers.

3.3.3 Identity and experimentation

The extent of identity work carried out will vary depending on the circumstances individuals are experiencing at the time (Watson 2008b). Individuals can take on new roles and experiment with 'future selves' (Ibarra & Petriglieri 2010), 'provisional selves' (Cohen 2014), 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius 1986; Gratton & Scott 2016) or 'potential selves' (Trondman et al 2014; Wapnick 2015). They can carry out, what Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010) describe as, 'identity play' whilst searching for what Handy (2015: 163) conceptualises as the 'golden seed' of possibility which can lead to personal fulfilment. This experimentation with new roles can however cause discomfort due to 'imposter syndrome' (Caza et al 2018; Clance & Imes 1978). The transition to a new role, as Gratton and Scott (2016: 91) suggest, is:

> an uncomfortable place where past identity is beginning to disappear, but a new one has not yet been established – where the security of the past is left, but the success of the future remains unknown.

For portfolio workers however, the opportunity to experiment with new identities in addition to the existing identity, might reduce this discomfort.

Recognising that identity is widely considered to concern the establishment of a coherent identity, even if this coherence may include an element of incoherence in terms of the variety of different identities that could be demonstrated, it is then necessary to consider how these identities are formed.

Identity play

Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010) conceptualise the ability to pursue different opportunities as 'identity play' rather than identity work. The difference is that identity work is focused on maintaining a coherent, valuable and personally

important identity often to comply with external requirements. Identity play however is more about trying out different possibilities for fun, enjoyment, or to discover more about oneself. Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010) distinguish between identity work and play by considering the purpose – self-preservation or transition; place – setting within which the identity work/play is taking place; and the process – which if the purpose is self-preservation is likely to involve repeated interaction to develop a coherent identity, but if the purpose is transition is likely to involve wide experimentation without a real commitment to adopting any of them. Identity work tends to focus on what is happening now, based on previous experience, whereas identity play focuses on the future; the two can be linked together by narrative. For portfolio workers it may be much easier to undertake identity play due to the ability to carry this out at the same time as continuing with existing work identities, or making small adjustments to fit the opportunities available. Reid et al's (2016) study of a broad spectrum of creative workers in Perth, Australia, concluded that their participants' stories, or narratives, showed that not only was self-identification as a creative worker both personally and socially constructed but also that their identities shifted according to opportunities, and that they often adapted their identities to better fit their self-identity.

The above discussion demonstrates that identity work entails the construction of an identity, rather than taking on an ascribed identity (Webb 2006). Although elements of social identity will be ascribed by class, ethnicity, gender, etc., it is up to the individual to decide how important that element of their identity is and how important other identities, that can be achieved through education, experience, identity work and play, may be.

In the previous section there are two key elements referred to that have been used interchangeably which require further consideration and definition. The first is jobs and roles which are effectively imposed identities and the second is narrative and storytelling which provide the opportunity to create identity. The former is clearly predominantly an 'outward facing' (Watson 2009) identity but the latter can be both inward and outward facing.

3.3.4 Jobs and roles

One of the easiest, and most obvious, ways of creating both a self and a social identity is to utilise the job titles provided and roles carried out. A job title is bestowed by an organisation and can be a method of identity regulation (see 3.5) as it identifies the position within the organisation filled by an employee, i.e. their position in relation to others. A role, however, is the behaviours associated with a job so a role places the emphasis on the person occupying the position (Marshall 2000) rather than the position itself. Although individuals are likely to find it difficult to modify a job title without organisational approval, they have much more opportunity to modify job roles, and job roles influence identity (Andersson 2005). A job role

> may be seen as a vehicle that mediates and negotiates the meanings
> constructed in relational interactions, while itself being subject to ongoing
> reconstruction in these relational processes (Simpson & Carroll 2008: 34)

Job roles can be 'formed (and enlarged, modified, marginalized, rejected) in identity work' (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003: 1177) and are also 'multiple, shifting and discontinuous' (Simpson & Carroll 2008: 33). In addition to being less rigid as a concept, roles are less likely to be connected to one setting than job titles. Portfolio workers might, for example, carry out very similar roles, in different

settings, with different job titles, at different times. It seems possible that the

closer the roles are across different jobs, the less 'role strain' (Scott 2015) or identity

conflict, there is likely to be. Every identity will, however, involve 'negotiating

intersections with other simultaneously held identities' (Alvesson et al 2008: 10).

For portfolio workers being able to pick up a role, and drop another, makes roles

flexible aspects of identity (Simpson & Carroll 2008). A job is, however, what

Jenkins (2004: 22) describes as a 'nominal identity' but the job title provided in a

job description can be, and is, interpreted and enacted very differently by different

individuals. What these individuals experience in that job is termed, by Jenkins

(2004), the 'virtual identity' and, ideally, both identities will need to be explored.

For portfolio workers, with multiple jobs and roles, the nominal identity might

have increased importance as part of the portfolio because it provides an easily

accessible signal to potential clients or employers of suitability for other positions,

helping to build up a coherent identity that will generate more of the work

required.

3.3.5 Narrative and storytelling

Identity construction relies on narrative and storytelling to create a coherent and

plausible identity, i.e. to make sense of an individual's life. Rather than using the

two terms interchangeably, Watson (2009) distinguishes between 'narrative' and

'storytelling'. Narrative is described as 'accounts of events in the world which are

organised in a time-related sequence' whereas stories are 'narratives that are more

highly developed' involving characters, plots, morals, etc. Narrative identities can

be authored by both individuals and groups using materials from available

discourses (Brown & Coupland 2015) within which they can engage in identity

work to actively construct their required identity. Discourse does not however give

individuals a free rein to construct whatever identity they wish; there are limits in terms of the socio-historical context in which they are operating, the resources available to them, and the range of possibilities open to them (Ybema et al 2016) and these are likely to be more limited for minority groups. A possible advantage of portfolio working, in terms of producing a coherent narrative, might be that workers, potentially, have a wider network within which to carry out identity work (Smith 2016). Both narratives and stories are generated by individual and group interaction and can be used to help to make sense of how an individual sees themselves.

3.3.6 Sensemaking

This sensemaking (Weick 1995) is not necessarily an accurate reflection of an individual's working life (narrative) but a carefully crafted and curated interpretation (story). Weick (1995: 60-61) proposes that sensemaking

> preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something that resonates with other people, something that can be construed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to construct. In short, what is necessary in sensemaking is a good story.

Sensemaking is a crucial component of identity formation and maintenance providing comfort and reassurance to individuals that the identity being enacted is appropriate for them and contributes to the 'good story' they are telling. Sensemaking can be used as a retrospective method of understanding and justifying the present situation (Maclean et al 2011: 20).

However, as Brown (2015: 32) advocates

there is much that still needs to be done to understand in-depth how sensemaking connects to identities and the role of identity work in processes of external interpretation and meaning making.

Maclean et al (2011: 33) highlight three processes, embedded within the stories they were told by the business leaders in their study, which achieve this sensemaking: 'locating, meaning-making and becoming.' *Locating* concerns placing the individual in a certain time and space; *meaning-making* is the retrospective analysis of experiences and personal values; and *becoming* relates to the unfolding nature of the story being told. Alvesson et al (2008: 15) point out that 'much of the writing on identity work is on **becoming**, rather than **being**' (emphasis added). These processes are continuous as they respond to a constantly changing environment (Budd 2011) and may result in a tension between the aspirational identity and the identity forced upon an individual, i.e. where an individual's selected subjective identity clashes with the identity others have ascribed to them (Brown 2015). This can lead to sensebreaking which highlights gaps in the coherent story and is likely to lead to further identity work (Ashforth et al 2008). It is important to note that although most of narrative is retrospective storytelling, it is also with a view to determining future identity possibilities and aspirations. Highlighting the tension between the various factors contributing towards identity, Ybema et al (2009: 301) define identity formation as a

> complex, multifaceted process which produces a socially negotiated temporary outcome of the dynamic interplay between internal strivings and external prescriptions, between self-preservation and labelling by others, between achievement and ascription and between regulation and resistance.

Certain events may provoke work on identity creation including new work roles, other changes in social identity and identity threats which can result in individuals

authoring preferred versions of themselves (Brown & Coupland 2015). Meijers and Lengelle (2012: 172), in their research into the use of narratives to develop career identity, suggest that certain practical experiences, which they describe as 'boundary experiences', will challenge existing identities and require reframing of these experiences to co-construct a revised identity enabling individuals to 'navigate the world of work responsively and flexibly'. This career identity will depend on the specific purpose of the narrative and the audience for it, as well as the place and time in which the narrative is taking place (La-Pointe 2010). The identity that is formed during this sensemaking process will be only one of many contemporaneous social identities, and the interaction of these multiple social identities and self-identity is a challenge which, in some cases, can lead to conflict.

3.4 Identity Conflict

Most authors (e.g. Alvesson et al 2008; Choudhry 2010) assume that 'multiple, shifting and competing identities' are present at any one time. These competing identities may be complementary and supporting, reinforcing each other (Collinson 2003), or conflicting, where there is a clash between two or more of these identities in terms of expectations, values, goal or norms (Ashforth et al 2008). This conflict will need to be managed by compromise, negotiation or adjudication (Ramarajan 2014), deferring to whichever is the most powerful at that point in time. It might even involve concealing or ignoring an identity that is causing conflict with other valued identities.

Using boundary theory, Rothbard et al (2005), when exploring how people manage multiple roles, differentiate between segmentation and integration. In their overview they refer to segmentation as the separation between work and non-work

time and integration as the blurring of role boundaries to facilitate multiple

identities. Kreiner et al (2006) also made a similar distinction between

differentiation and integration. This theoretical framework can be extended to

apply to portfolio workers who may segment their different organisational work

identities – which is likely to happen where there is a high contrast in role

identities (Andersson 2005) – or integrate them, where role identities are similar.

They might also place themselves in various positions along that continuum.

Rothbard et al (2005) suggest that integration might help to reduce, or resolve,

some of the conflict that can result from holding multiple identities. For a

portfolio worker it may be easier to segment, or ignore, some identities as they are

likely to have enough other identities, that they value more highly, that they can

accentuate. As Alvesson et al (2008: 14) suggest 'individuals could take any number

of discursive spins, perhaps leaning this way in one moment and that way in

another'. This could mean that acquiring a new identity involves either shedding

an old one or perhaps changing the meaning of existing ones (Ramarajan 2014).

For a worker in just one full-time role, it will be far more difficult to ignore the

identity promoted by that role. The more identities an individual is trying to

maintain, the more possibility there is of conflict occurring and it is the outcome

of these conflicts that is of interest when investigating the process of identity

construction. Positive outcomes could include enrichment and negative ones

could include stress, or, perhaps, the anxiety highlighted in Gill's (2015) research.

There may be 'tensions and contradictions' between multiple identities that will

result in a variety of temporary selves which will fluctuate depending on the

context (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003). In certain contexts, one identity may

dominate over others, and this is likely to differ between settings and professions,

i.e. a situational or chameleon identity (Choudhry 2010). Conflicts can be managed by the individual creating their own self-identity by trying to integrate the various identities (Rothbard et al 2005), or they may be managed, using identity regulation, by third parties that have a vested interest in the resulting identity.

3.5 Identity Regulation

Organisations have historically been keen to encourage workers to identify with the organisation. The more the individual feels 'at one' with the organisation, the more commitment the worker is likely to exhibit (Klein 2013). To try to encourage workers to identify with the organisation, identity regulation is employed.

Identity regulation refers to the intention of social practices to impact on identity creation or reconstruction. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) suggest that organisations can use processes such as induction, training and promotion to mould individuals into the identities they require. Further, when an organisation is strongly identified with by individuals, the corporate identity impacts on self-identity. For example, employees describing themselves as Googlers, Amazonians and Microsofties is a clear espousal of organisational identification and belonging. Identity work is the positive, usually proactive, process of identity creation and maintenance, whereas identity regulation involves the manipulation of social practices to modify the identity of the individual.

Identity regulation for portfolio workers, who have several different organisations to identify with, is not well represented in the literature. The majority of the literature on identity work is related to organisations and roles and relationships associated with them (Petrieglieri et al 2019).
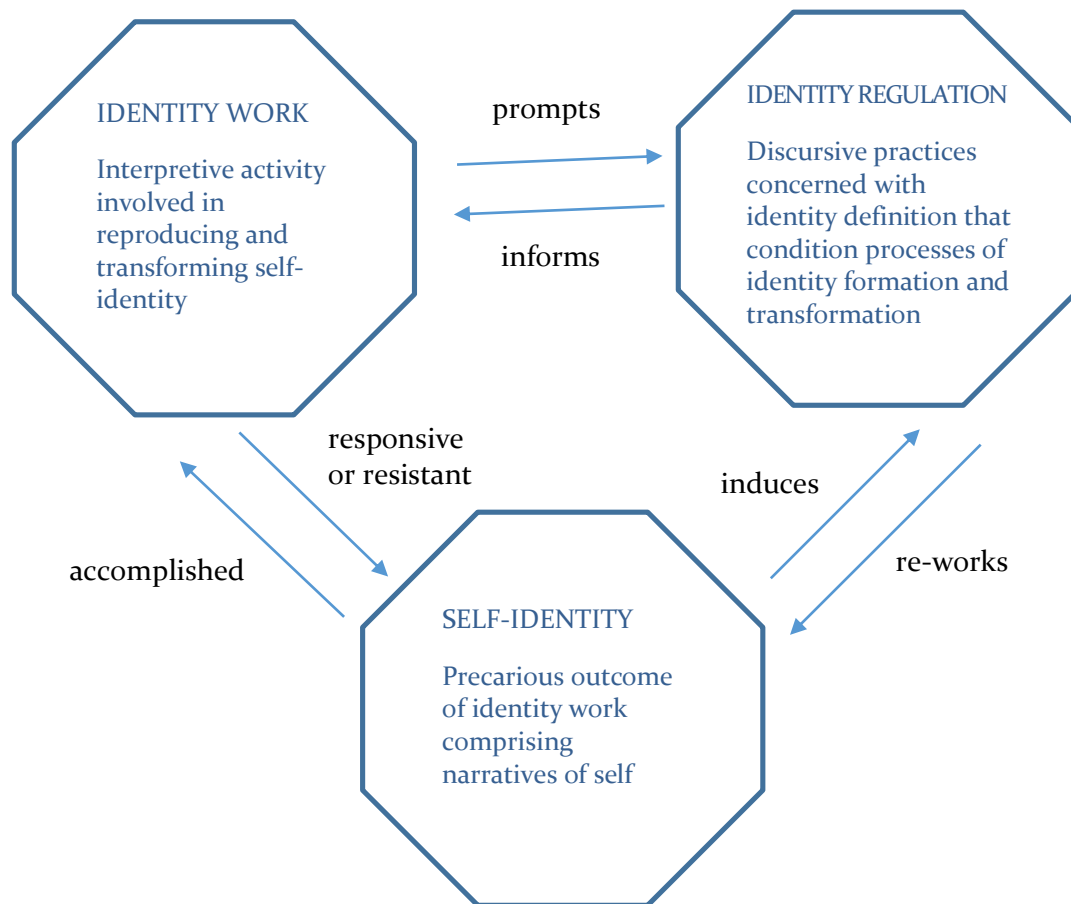
Figure 3.6: Identity regulation, identity and self-identity
Source: Alvesson and Willmott (2002: 627)

Alvesson and Willmott (2002) conceptualise the relationship between self-identity,

identity work and identity regulation as shown in Figure 3.6. This supports

Watson's (2008b) model but extends it to show discursive practices having a two-

way relationship with both identity work and self-identities. Alvesson and

Willmott (2002: 627) suggest that 'The three elements in our model are equally

important'. This is perhaps the case in a relatively stable environment working for

one organisation, but when portfolio working within multiple organisational

settings it seems unlikely that one organisation's identity regulation will have the

same impact as identity work on self-identity. This is because, for example,

multiple organisations will inevitably have different induction, training,
behavioural norms and values.

For portfolio workers therefore, identity regulation may be difficult to achieve. As
many portfolio workers' contractual arrangements will be relatively insecure, they
will need to develop suitable identity strategies to deal with organisational
expectations. These strategies might include utilising three different selves to
survive: 'conformist selves' where individuals adapt to the demands of the
organisation, 'dramaturgical selves' where individuals perform the appearance of
conformist behaviour and 'resistant selves' where individuals, often covertly, resist
conforming by working slowly, and displaying cynicism and sarcasm (Collinson
2003). Portfolio workers may find that their identities, rather than being regulated
predominantly by organisational practices, may be regulated by other aspects such
as professional memberships, occupational requirements, social expectations,
societal norms, economic considerations, networks or individual notions of
success and self-actualisation.

3.6 Key Themes in Relation to Portfolio Workers

The literature review, addressing identity and identity work, highlights some key
themes and concepts to explore in relation to portfolio workers where their
application, and interpretation, is likely to be different to those for 'traditional'
workers. An overview of these is presented below.

3.6.1 Identity anchors

Individuals make use of organisations as part of their ongoing identity work, but it
is a reciprocal process. Organisations provide an income, a purpose, as well as

identities, meanings and a sense of belonging (Clegg et al 2016). They might also generate insecurity and anxiety (Collinson 2003) where an individual's performance is measured by systems that accentuate this. Individuals not only supply labour, their actions also influence and mould the organisations they work within. Vallas and Cummins (2015: 295) support the view of this interdependent relationship when they highlight that

> scholars have often viewed employee identity as an outcome of the work situation, with little attention to the independent role that identity norms might play in the reproduction of the employment relation itself.

Some individuals will identify very strongly with one or more of their social identities, and in some cases this can become more powerful than their self-identity. The more strongly an individual identifies with an identity, the more difficult it is to exit that identity (Ashforth et al 2008). This is more likely to happen, in organisational terms, when working for one organisation only. Working for multiple organisations, as portfolio workers do, is likely to result in a weaker identification with one organisation due to the often short-term, or peripheral nature, of their working relationship. Their identity is therefore more likely to be established outside one organisation. This is, however, not always the case. Murgia et al (2017: 7) point out that 'the experience of precariousness then becomes inextricably bound up with job self-identification which incorporates the risk of self-exploitation.' This means that precarious workers, which most portfolio workers are, might work particularly hard, or even overwork, to try to create or maintain an identity within an organisation. Murgia et al (2017) go on to highlight the importance of the informal network to those working in temporary roles, stating that being in the network affords access to contracts/projects and income,

as well as identity (ibid). Here the network is providing an opportunity for portfolio workers to belong to an informal group helping to answer the key identity question of 'Who are we?' (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003; Watson 2008b). It seems likely that the network may be of greater importance to the portfolio worker than the organisations they work within. A key theme to explore therefore is what their main anchors of identity construction are; the organisation (Kreiner & Ashforth 2004), the occupation (Ashforth et al 2013), the network (Murgia et al 2017), lifestyle, challenge, dedication to a cause (Schein 1996) or some other 'holding environment' (Petriglieri et al 2019). The anchors selected will form the basis of their identity work.

3.6.2 Identity work and play

Identity work is widely considered to involve the creation of a coherent identity. Personal branding and impression management (Goffman 1959/1990) are natural extensions of a coherent identity whereby an individual presents a positive and marketable identity. As Drucker (2005: 1) states, 'knowledge workers must, effectively, be their own chief executive officers' suggesting that individuals need to run themselves like an organisation, rather than relying on the organisation to do this for them. This is particularly relevant to portfolio workers who will need to carry out ongoing market research to find out what organisations want from them, adapt their identities to generate the required response, and then promote these identities as their personal brand. A potential benefit of the portfolio career is that it is possible to incorporate the flexibility, adaptability, learning, growth, novelty and change required in the current economic and social environment into the individual's identity producing a variety of possible selves (Gratton & Scott 2016; Ibarra & Petriglieri 2010; Markus & Nurius 1986) and to identity narratives

specifically tailored to the relevant audience. It may also be possible to achieve synergy between alternative identities so that one supports, rather than conflicts with, another. To develop an externally valued identity, or personal brand, individuals need to be able to change not only their view of the world but also their view of themselves (Gratton & Scott 2016). This identity growth has two elements: obtaining feedback to analyse and establish specific strengths and weaknesses, and the development of self-awareness. It therefore involves both knowing who you are, and knowing how to learn more about who you are (Hall 2002). The adaptability required for identity growth could impact on the identity of portfolio workers. It could lead to a stronger core self-identity where individuals focus on their own values and needs, rather than those of the organisations, and take jobs and roles that fit with them. Alternatively, it could result in a loss of self-identity where the constant need for adaptation and change leaves the individual wondering who they have become. A key theme to explore, therefore, is how identity relates to portfolio working, in terms of its facilitation of work, coping with insecurity and uncertainty, and its contributions to work itself.

3.6.3 Identity conflict

The idea of segmenting or integrating (Rothbard et al 2005) different identities led to the classification of different identity management strategies in Ramarajan and Reid's (2013) review of the management of work and non-work identities. They identified four non-work identity states (Ramarajan & Reid 2013: 626): 'concealed, revealed, integrated and compartmentalized'. Although these relate to non-work identities, these states are also likely to be applicable to those managing multiple contemporaneous work identities. Segmentation or integration of multiple identities is unlikely to be a binary choice; it is more likely that identities will fall

somewhere on the continuum between the two extremes. The level of

segmentation/integration, and the number of identities, is likely to impact on the

level of conflict occurring, and it is the management, negotiation, and outcome of,

these conflicts by portfolio workers that is of interest.

3.6.4 Coherence or fragmentation?

If coherence is not achieved, this can lead to an identity crisis (Jenkins 2004). A

common theme is lost or confused identities where individuals are not too sure

who they are any more, or are switching quickly from identity to identity. As

portfolio workers are likely to have many different identities this could contribute

towards an identity crisis. Alternatively, it could encourage them to carry out more

identity work focusing on their most valued identities, or perhaps investing more

in the portfolio worker identity with its connotations of adaptability and flexibility.

Portfolio workers are likely to be managing a larger number of multiple identities

than an employee working for just one organisation, making coherence harder to

achieve (Brown 2015). They might have a similar number of social identities but

these may need to be displayed and demonstrated, and made sense of, in different

ways within the disparate organisations in which they operate. It may be necessary

to let some identities go, or accentuate others, depending on the setting, which

may be easier to achieve with multiple roles. Although there has been a

considerable amount of research on the interaction of work and non-work

identities (e.g. Ramarajan & Reid 2013; Rothbard et al 2005) and on interactions

between, for example, professional identity and organisational identification

(Ramarajan 2014), these studies are mainly based on individuals working within a

single organisation rather than those with multiple identities working within

multiple organisations. Brown (2015: 33) highlights this, saying 'Less common are

empirical studies and theory pieces that investigate the relationships between identities and their interactions between individuals, dyads, groups, organizations, professions and communities' or what Ramarajan (2014: 626) describes as 'independent' or 'clustered' identities. A key theme to explore is therefore the extent to which multiple work identities in multiple organisations are integrated to form a coherent identity or segmented with strict boundaries between them.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

The literature reviewed highlights a variety of different aspects to identity. There is a consensus that identity creation and maintenance is a continuous process carried out to create a valid, and valuable, identity. Much existing identity research is based on hierarchical groups, and occupations, within single organisations in the context of 'traditional work' (Miscenko & Day 2016) rather than those working as part of the 'precariat' (Bratton & Gold 2017; Standing 2011) or with multiple occupations (Petriglieri et al 2019). In addition, most existing research into portfolio workers has been carried out by academics in traditional careers.

This chapter has discussed the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings for investigating some of the implications of working in multiple organisations in terms of anchoring identity, balancing potentially conflicting identities and creating a coherent identity that is of value to employing organisations. This provides the basis for answering the second research sub-question concerning how the experiences of portfolio workers impact on identity.

The importance of investigating these aspects is supported by Brown (2015: 31-32) who suggests that 'research might examine usefully the importance and effects of people's (possibly individually and culturally variable) needs for self-coherence on

processes of identity work' and 'what happens when individuals' subjective identity work clashes with others' ascriptions of identity to them?' Ramarajan (2014) argues that future research should consider how people manage the experience of multiple identities and their outcomes, whereas Alcover (2018) recommends investigating how organisations manage people with multiple identities. Miscenko and Day (2016: 221) too recommend that 'future research on multiple identities should focus on deepening our understanding of the interaction between different work-related identities.' La-Pointe's (2010: 8) research concludes by calling for 'research on the struggles in career identity construction that can arise as a result of constraining hegemonic career discourses or the plurality of competing identity positions.'

Empirical evidence has been collated to explore these concepts in depth and provide insights into the challenges of identity work without the common anchors, or coherence, of one occupation or one organisation. It is, however, important to be cognizant of the fact that identity is simply a framework that can be used to create specific patterns and models to assist with interpreting the various positions, relationships and meanings encountered when working within multiple organisations. Brown (2015) points out that not everyone agrees that identity is the best way of analysing people related processes as identity may not refer to all relevant aspects of the individual, focusing only on those that are immediately apparent or easily accessible. Identity is also often used as a purely descriptive category rather than as a diagnostic device so it is important to focus on the analytical element of identity and appreciate its temporal nature. Past, present and future identities must be explored to understand in depth the experiences of

portfolio workers. The methods applied in this study in order to obtain these insights are discussed in the next chapter.

Far from there being one truth alone, there may be several truths, none of which it would be possible to prove or disprove

Sarah Perry (2017: 173)

Chapter Four: Methodology and Research Methods

4.1 Overview

The purpose of this study is to identify and explore what portfolio work is like, based on accounts of the experiences of a number of portfolio workers. The research adopts an emergent interpretative epistemological position and an abductive reasoning approach to identify 'meanings and motivations behind people's actions' (Chowdhury 2014: 432) and to explore 'how people feel, perceive and experience the social world' (Chen et al 2011: 129). The literature reviewed (see Chapters Two and Three) highlights some polarised views of this style of working and a need to know more. One of the main challenges was finding suitable methods of obtaining data to investigate this working pattern. It was felt important to 'let the data drive the research' (Phillips & Hardy 2002: 64) rather than applying strict constraints.

This chapter provides a reflexive account of the theoretical position adopted and explains the methodological approaches used to underpin the study. It outlines the aim of the study and specific research questions. It then describes and evaluates the methods of data collection, defines the selection process of participants, and explains the approach to data analysis to contextualise the emergent themes. Finally, it provides an overview of quality procedures utilised in the research design. The methodology was designed to achieve robust, in-depth, information,

to facilitate a thorough exploration of individuals' experiences of this style of working, and the creation of further knowledge of the phenomenon.

4.2 Research Questions

This study involves the exploration of portfolio working to give a voice to this statistically-hidden group and increase the understanding of this style of work amongst individuals, organisations and policy-makers.

The aim is to answer the overarching question:

> *What is it like to be a portfolio worker, based on individuals' accounts of their experiences?*

Emerging from this question there were many potential sub-questions of interest, which changed during the research process. Eventually, the decision was made to focus on the following four areas as, based on the literature review and empirical evidence, these appeared to be of importance:

1. What is portfolio work?

2. How do experiences of portfolio workers impact on identity?

3. Who are portfolio workers, what do they do, and why?

4. What does it mean to portfolio work?

The research questions are designed to explore the reasons for starting, and continuing, to portfolio work and what factors impact on this decision. Jenkins (2004: 22) points out that

> It is possible for individuals to share the same nominal identity and for that to mean very different things to them in practice, to have different consequences for their lives, or for them to 'do' or 'be' it differently.

Each of the research questions is designed to find out what portfolio work means to those working in this way, and how they make sense of it.

4.3 Philosophical Research Approach

As the research question involves an investigation of the experiences (van Manen 1990) of individuals, a broadly ethnographic approach was initially considered. Ethnography entails an immersion in the field by the researcher, investigating everyday life, considering the participants' perception of reality, and exploring interdependencies between elements of their experience. The aim is to arrive at a construction, rather than a description, of the phenomenon investigated (Denscombe 2007). However, ethnography usually requires the researcher to be immersed in the community being studied which, for this dispersed community, would be virtually impossible. I would, however, argue that I am already immersed in the community as I am also working in this way. This does, however, present difficulties in managing the impact of my own experiences which I tried to deal with reflexively by keeping a lived experience diary (van Manen 1990). This autoethnographic element draws on my personal experiences, comparing them with my participants' experiences, then analysing them to try to understand the way we live and what it means to us (Adams et al 2015).

A phenomenological approach investigates appearances (Moran & Mooney 2002), studying what appears to be, or what is seen, by both the subjects and the objects. The study of the 'what-it-is-likeness' of experience (Zahavi, 2011: 24) tries to 'unfold meanings as they are lived in everyday existence' (Laverty 2003: 4).

Phenomenology investigates the world as it is lived by individuals and is based on the understanding that without people's experiences of a social 'reality', it cannot

exist. Multiple perceptions and understandings of reality are likely to occur due to the different experiences of individuals. No one reality is more 'real' than another; they can only be differentiated from each other by how thoroughly investigated they have been.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a form of phenomenology that has become more popular in recent years (Smith et al 2009). IPA investigates the world as it is lived by individuals and is concerned with exploring 'in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world' (Smith & Osborn 2008: 53). IPA is particularly useful when investigating 'complexity, process or novelty' (Smith & Osborn 2008: 55) and is considered suitable to examine any experience 'which is of existential import to the participant' (Smith 2011: 9).

This research aimed to 'delve into experiences' (Burrell & Morgan 2001: 233) and then represent these experiences as faithfully as possible whilst acknowledging, and incorporating, both the researcher's own conceptions and the likelihood of participants distorting the truth to maintain their self-worth (Reissner 2010). As Smith and Osborn (2008: 53) state: 'The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world', and therefore there is a two-fold interpretation process closely allied to the hermeneutic branch of phenomenology.

Phenomenological research involves stating the position of the researcher and identifying the 'myriad ways personal experience influences the research process' (Hughes et al 2012: 210). This requires 'bracketing' (Gray 2013; Husserl 1931; Smith et al 2009) of current understanding based on previous experience to try to achieve results that are not impacted on by preconceptions. IPA however accepts that the

central role of the analyst is an essential part of making sense of the experiences of the participants (Smith & Osborn 2008) and is effectively an extension of hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger 1927/1962). The experience is 'coupled with a subjective and reflective process of interpretation' (Reid et al 2005: 20).

The meaning of portfolio work is likely to result in a variety of, potentially contradictory, perceptions and understandings; therefore there is a need for a thorough investigation with the aim of identifying new or deeper meanings. This involved considering the 'interpretation and the meaning of what is interpreted' (Silverman & Ihde 1985: ix) with the aim of grasping 'the essential meaning of something' (van Manen 1990: 77). An advantage of this approach is that the researcher embraces, and proclaims, their own experience, making this a fundamental element of their research (Laverty 2003). A close relationship between the researcher and the participants is encouraged, as it can result in far more detailed data because the researcher, based on prior knowledge, is likely to know more about the situation being researched and will potentially have a better idea of exactly what to question. For example, Humphrey (2007: 15) noted that she could produce 'a complex narrative' which would not have been possible had she been a complete outsider to the settings she worked within. There are clear advantages in researching a situation where the researcher has some contacts, knowledge and experience. However, there is a need for considerable reflexivity to ensure that the researcher is sufficiently 'critical of, the substance, origins and ramifications' of assumptions made (Johnson & Duberley 2000: 177). An advantage of being an insider-researcher in this context is that, even after twenty years, I was still unsure about my own overall views of this working pattern.

An IPA approach involves applying an interpretive lens to a participant's experience (Reid et al 2005: 20). IPA is underpinned by phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography (Smith et al 2009). The benefits of an IPA approach, for this topic, is that it enabled me to illustrate, inform and master emerging themes by using direct quotations from participants' accounts (Smith et al 2009). It also allowed for changes in my own views and ideas during the research process (Smith & Osborn 2008). A criticism of IPA is that, as it is based on what participants are saying, using direct quotations to support findings, it is ideographic, or individualised, making it difficult to draw generalised conclusions. Another disadvantage of IPA, in relation to this research, is the typical size of datasets analysed using this method. Specifically, Smith et al (2009: 52) suggest that that four to ten interviews would be appropriate for a professional doctorate but it was felt that this would be insufficient to generate a satisfactory understanding of an in-depth, and diverse, range of participants' experiences of portfolio working across job roles, demographic groups, and time spent portfolio working.

It was therefore decided to use an IPA *informed* approach, with the intention of co-constructing knowledge with participants about how they make sense of their experiences of portfolio work, by identifying some recurrent themes which may be capable of application to a wider population. IPA was considered to be particularly suited to this research as, rather than trying to find the essence of experience (Husserl 1931), it has the 'more modest ambition of attempting to capture particular experiences as experienced for particular people' (Smith et al 2009: 16). It also analyses what participants say to try to establish how they *make sense* of their experiences rather than how *they construct accounts* of their experiences

(Smith 2011).This however does mean that the extent of these experiences will be limited by the selection of the sample. As IPA participants are normally contacted via referral, opportunities, or snowball sampling (Smith et al 2009) the resulting sample is likely to be relatively homogeneous, potentially excluding minority groups.

IPA assumes that 'what people say in an interview to some extent reflects their actual lived experience' (King & Horrocks 2010: 205). Most identity research involves discourse analysis, using interview data to access how participants 'construct accounts' of their experiences, whereas IPA analyses interview data to learn about how participants are 'making sense' of their experiences (Smith 2011: 10). This analysis is not only based on what participants *say* in the interview but on an in-depth investigation of the, often complex, *meanings* of what they are saying. This was facilitated by producing detailed transcripts (see 4.8.1) and considering all features of them to try to extract the meanings that were not necessarily clearly accessible. These meanings were then cross-checked against other data to identify any inconsistencies.

IPA is a flexible and adaptable approach which can employ a wide range of data collation methods.

4.4 Data Collation Methods

The method selected needed to be, as White (2009: 97) suggests, 'driven by the desire to answer particular research questions, not by preferences for particular methods of data collection and analysis.' Researching the experiences of portfolio workers required a qualitative research method as the intention was to understand the individual career stories and attitudes (Inkson et al 2015) of portfolio workers.

Ethnography tends to use participant observation or interviews as the main approach. Although initially attracted to carrying out participant observation, the preliminary scoping studies I carried out made it clear that this would not be an appropriate method as many portfolio workers spend considerable amounts of time travelling between work sites, particularly if working overseas, or working from home for different organisations on the same day. From a pragmatic point of view, this would have made observation very time consuming, costly, and incompatible with my own portfolio work. Also, arranging access with multiple, changing, employers, and clients' confidentiality, would be problematic. The data obtained from participant observation would also be unlikely to provide the 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973/2000) needed to fully answer the research questions. Based on personal experience, much of the time is spent working on a computer, on different pieces of work for different clients, which would not be 'amenable to observation' (Bryman 2012: 494). By contrast, interviewing facilitates 'access to a wider variety of people and situations' (Bryman 2012: 496). The scoping studies involved informal discussions with a number of contacts, in different fields, currently working in this way. What was notable was that every individual had very strong views, albeit often contested and contradictory. They also showed a willingness to express them, a prerequisite for participants (Reid et al 2005), which supports the need for research in this area.

An IPA informed approach requires a 'flexible data collection instrument' (Smith & Osborn 2008: 57) which could include, inter alia, interviews, diaries, written narrative accounts, focus groups and email discussions. Most IPA studies are conducted through semi-structured interviews (Smith 2011) as they facilitate rapport, flexibility, exploration of new areas by probing, and they tend to yield

richer data (Smith 2008). Interviews were selected as the main source of data with other supporting methods.

The methodology was reviewed as the research progressed and a lived experience diary was used to record personal experiences of portfolio working. Although time consuming, one major advantage of multi-methods (Saunders et al 2009: 152) is that they can assist with the identification of common categories, patterns and themes across all data. Multi-methods also provided depth and richness of data, highlighting areas of inconsistency requiring further investigation, and assisting with appreciating the complexity of meanings. This made it possible to thoroughly address the research question.

4.5 Interviews

Interviews have become 'one of the most common ways of producing knowledge' (Brinkmann 2018: 576) being widely employed (Bryman & Bell 2015; Thomas 2011). They can, if done well, provide the opportunity to 'collect and rigorously examine narrative accounts of social worlds' (Miller & Glassner 2011: 145). The qualitative interview attempts to 'understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meanings of their experiences, to uncover their lived world' (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015: 3) and is suitable 'when the subject matter concerns aspects of human experience' (Alvesson 2011: 127). There are a variety of styles of interview, and for this study individual semi-structured interviews were selected as the main source of data. These balance a level of consistency with flexibility of responses (McDonald et al 2008) and facilitate adjustments in the research, during the process, to incorporate participants' responses and achieve the 'co-construction of knowledge' (Alvesson 2011: 15; Silverman 2014). Semi-structured

interviews also allow for a questioning or probing approach (Smith & Osborn 2008) to extract meaning from answers that are either superficial or unclear and are considered the 'exemplary method' for IPA (ibid: 57). It is important, however, to note that the responses in the interviews were self-accounts of individuals in a contextualised situation, i.e. where I was asking them about their views of portfolio work. Therefore, their responses were confined to this specific aspect of their experiences, using a discourse related to this, rather than other aspects of their work and lives.

4.5.1 Ethics

There are many ethical questions to be considered at the outset of an interview study. A good starting point is 'What are the beneficial consequences of the study?' (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015: 91), or, how will the study contribute toward 'improvement of the human situation investigated'? (Kvale 1996: 111). The intended contribution of this study is simply to increase knowledge of portfolio working to assist in developing strategies that might improve the experience, and therefore the productivity, of both portfolio workers and the organisations that employ them. Increased understanding of this style of work, and clarification of its definition, can also be used to underpin policy-making decisions (Mandl & Biletta 2018: 14). A further contribution is to give a voice to an often unheard, and statistically-hidden, minority.

The research information sheet and consent form (see Appendix I) were approved by University of Essex's Ethics Committee on 17 September 2015. Consent from participants only, not organisations, was obtained, as it was their experience that was of interest, and interviews took place in their own time rather than the time of

any organisations that they worked for. Each participant was provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research, their anticipated input to the study and full contact details should any questions have arisen prior to the interview. A consent form was then provided at the interview for signature (See Appendix I).

4.5.2 Challenges of interviews

Some of the key issues relating to data gathered from semi-structured interviews are that data collation and analysis is too reliant on the researcher's views and interpretation; participants are likely to be more 'self-conscious and reflective' than in other circumstances (Watson & Watson 2012: 701); it is impossible to generalise from the results; and there is a lack of transparency on participant selection (Bryman & Bell 2015). Each of these problems can be addressed, if not fully solved, by sufficient reflexivity and the support of other methods (Bryman & Bell 2015; Denscombe 2007).

To overcome the limitations of the reliance on previous researcher experience, I developed an on-going relationship with participants to check back that my understanding and interpretation of their interview responses reflected their intended meaning. I also used complementary investigative methods such as diary entries, textual analysis, visual methods and focus groups to see if the same common themes emerged from all methods and if there were any inconsistencies or contradictions.

It was possible to think in terms of 'theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalizability' (Smith et al 2009: 51), identifying some key 'recurrent themes' (ibid: 107) that could be applied to other individuals in similar contexts. Despite

the drawbacks of interviews, I am confident that they were the most appropriate method of obtaining data on the experiences of portfolio workers as 'there are a wide range of issues that are not amenable to observation' making interviews 'the only viable means of finding out about them' (Bryman 2012: 494). For example, the different perceptions of the different job roles that emerged from the pilot interview are unlikely to have been identified during observation. As Alvesson (2011: 22) suggests, the interview appears to be 'a valid source of knowledge-production, although the social process and local conditions need to be appreciated and actively managed by the interviewer in order to accomplish valid results.' Although interviews form the main basis of the research, elements of observation also contributed to the context in terms of, inter alia, where participants chose to be interviewed, their style of dress and speech, and their online profiles.

4.5.3 The interview plan

The specific research questions identified (see 1.6) were used as a general guide to allow 'new and perhaps more interesting research questions' (Alvesson 2011: 119) or 'alternative avenues of enquiry' (Bryman 2012: 473) to emerge during the data collation process. I was initially drawn to an unstructured interview approach as this should provide a detailed insider account of portfolio working but as some clear themes had already emerged from the literature review and the focus group, a semi-structured exploratory interview (Cassell 2015) or, more specifically, what Brinkmann and Kvale (2015: 27) describe as a 'phenomenological life world interview' was therefore adopted. This contained a 'sequence of themes' and 'suggested questions' (Kvale 1996: 124) but incorporated the openness and

flexibility required (Alvesson 2011) to allow the conversation to develop naturally, and themes to emerge, facilitating an in-depth investigation of the phenomena.

The framework, or 'interview guide' (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015: 129; Bryman & Bell 2015: 486; Silverman 2013a: 205), was developed, based on key themes identified during the literature review, to facilitate collation of the material required to investigate the broad area of interest. Despite being fully aware of the need for brevity (Bryman & Bell 2015), it was challenging to try to encompass all the areas of interest I felt should be covered, and a lengthy list of areas and questions was developed for the pilot interview (See Appendix III).

I ensured that most questions were open-response questions as these 'are suitable when detailed information is required' (Ekinci 2015: 4) and are likely to encourage the 'co-construction' (Alvesson 2011; Roulston 2010) of knowledge. I tried to use predominantly attitudinal questions as these can offer deeper insights (Ekinci 2015: 44). I spent some time re-ordering the questions, for example, putting personal questions at the end of the framework, in case the participant might not 'feel comfortable to share personal information before seeing the other questions' (ibid: 46). I also moved the narrative element of the questions towards the end of the interview as I wanted to understand where the participant was at this point in time; there is likely to be a different perspective reporting retrospectively than in the current context (Bryman & Bell 2015).

This framework was used at a pilot interview but was amended as the research progressed. The initial framework imposed an overly structured format when many themes emerged spontaneously, in the natural flow of the interview, facilitating the investigation of some of the contradictory statements in more

depth. Alvesson's (2011: 45) opinion that 'an advanced framework is the most important support for interview based research' had to be balanced with the need for flexibility and full responsiveness to the participant in the interview.

I realised after the pilot interview that most of my interview experience has been either when recruiting staff or when making summative professional competence decisions; both of which require a detailed framework and an audit trail of equitable and fully justified reasons. I therefore had to develop a more conversational and free-flowing interview style, keeping in mind that an interview, in this research context, is simply 'an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest' (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015: 4), rather than a more formal measured interaction.

Some themes naturally emerged during the interview so I decided to focus on just two key questions, which were the positives and negatives of working in this way, and let the conversation develop naturally around these areas. There is, however, a balance to be struck as, although less structure might result in 'new and unexpected views', there is a possibility of the interview going in 'irrelevant and unproductive directions' (Alvesson 2011: 52). I accept that, as Seidman (2006: 93) states, 'there is no recipe for the effective question' and, having completed the pilot interview, decided to explore statements made by the participant in more depth, rather than rely on a long list of questions. The literature review had highlighted some areas of difference between portfolio workers and 'traditional workers' and using these as prompts, if needed, I tried to develop a conversation about portfolio work to co-construct knowledge of the phenomenon. I attempted to build a rapport with the participants by sharing any of my own experiences that

supported theirs, although there was a balance to be achieved to ensure that I did not talk too much and that I followed the participants' interests rather than my own. This co-construction of empirical material required constant checking back to ensure that my interpretation reflected their intentions. For example, when participants used words like 'career', 'standard', 'status' or even 'freshness' I asked them to confirm what the term meant to them. I also checked for contradictions, such as a participant (Derek) stating that they felt they had about the right amount of work but later in the interview saying that Christmas was 'going to be terrible' due to overwork, so that these could be explored during the interview. The interview became a reflexive space for participants both during the interview and in interactions after the interview. In some cases I emailed the participant, after the interview, for clarification on ambiguous points. This checking back facilitated a greater understanding of the meaning of aspects of importance to the individual.

I tried to avoid direct questions as this elicited richer information (Watson 1994: 75). I asked candidates what their ideal portfolio would look like to try to ascertain what was important to them rather than asking the direct question 'What is important to you in life?' as that might have led to rehearsed and socially desirable responses.

4.5.4 The interview location

Roulston (2010: 100) suggests the researcher simply needs to 'find a place and time to conduct an interview in which both the interviewer and interviewee feel safe and comfortable'. Responsive interviews are considered to 'work best when conducted in a place of work, a play environment or at home' (Rubin & Rubin

2012) and as the research covers the experiences of participants it was important for it to take place in their 'natural settings' (Gray 2013: 30). For portfolio workers, however, their 'natural setting' can be difficult to identify because they usually do not have just one place of work. The location, therefore, varied with each participant. All interviews were held at a location chosen by the interviewee as it was felt that this choice could be of material significance as it might provide an indication of where the participant felt most comfortable.

4.5.5 The interview process

The process began when I started compiling the sample of potential participants. The intention was to compile a sample covering a wider range of individuals than that of the most recent research into portfolio work (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Wood & Michaelides 2016). I made initial email requests to ascertain whether participants would consider taking part in my study and whether they fulfilled the descriptor of a portfolio worker (see 2.4). This was the first stage of building up the rapport (Bryman 2012; Seidman 2006), 'trust, and commitment' (Alvesson 2011: 14), and positive atmosphere (Kvale 1996) required for successful interviews.

If participants fitted my parameters, I provided more detail on the research topic as the first stage of obtaining 'informed consent' (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015: 93; Flick 2007: 69). Most participants had little, if any, knowledge of my research topic, or even research in general, and full details were supplied to ensure that fully informed consent was given. I issued an information sheet (see Appendix I) together with a covering email stating that I would like to remain in contact with them during the study for clarification of responses and to share, and seek their views on, any initial findings. After transcribing the pilot interview I found that

there were some notable contradictions and being able to email and question these enabled me to elicit the 'detail, depth and nuanced understanding' (Rubin & Rubin 2012: 150) required to fully address the research question.

As many of the participants were recruited through seven organisations I was familiar with, it was likely that I would know some of the interview locations (see 4.5.4). Most participants requested alternative settings to their main place of work and it was interesting to explore their reasons for this. A difficulty with recruiting through the organisations I worked with is that, although a wider range of professions was accessed, than previous research into portfolio workers (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Wood & Michaelides 2016), there was still an element of homogeneity in the sample (see 4.7).

All interviews were recorded, and subsequently transcribed by me, so that I could concentrate on what was being said. Notes were also taken in case of failure of the recording (Czarniawska 2014) and to document further pertinent information. Most interviews took approximately one hour; the shortest was just over half an hour, due to an interruption, and the longest, one hour twenty minutes.

Having carried out the pilot interview, it was clear that the interview was used as a forum in which to express dissatisfaction with various organisational issues, sometimes making it difficult to focus on developing the main themes of the research. It is therefore necessary to be cautious about treating the data collected as providing 'stable meanings held about situations' (Alvesson 2011: 25).

In some cases, both parties had worked within the same organisations, and within similar fields, making it possible that the participants could be 'politically aware and politically motivated actor(s)' (Alvesson 2011: 29). Rather than treating the

data created in the interview as 'fact' it had to be considered only as a method to 'generate ideas' and 'provide illustrations' (Bryman 2012: 137). The ability to continue the dialogue by way of an email follow up, sharing key themes from transcripts, helped to ensure that the interpretation was as close as possible to the intention of the participant. In all interviews an effort was made to develop a continuous relationship throughout the life of the research project and this was particularly important in light of the additional supporting research methods that were used.

4.6 Supplementary Methods

Multi-methods involve using more than one data collection technique to provide better opportunities to answer the research question by complementing the material obtained. In this case, the methods still came within a 'qualitative world view' (Saunders et al 2009: 152) but provided the opportunity to evaluate the data in more depth and with more confidence. As Silverman suggests (2013b: 152) it is important to 'recognise that talk, documents and other artefacts as well as interaction can offer revealing data', and some supporting methods were used to provide complementary information.

4.6.1 Focus groups

A focus group involves gathering a group of 'individuals representative of the population whose ideas are of interest' (Rubin & Rubin 2012: 30). For this research, the focus group was used to help to develop interview questions by: exploration (King & Horrocks 2010), identification (Howitt & Cramer 2014) and clarification (Silverman 2013a) of significant issues. The focus group also provided the 'opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic' (Morgan 1997: 8)

and the level of interaction offered some guidance as to the importance of the key factors identified and gave me the opportunity to study how 'individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon' (Bryman 2012: 504; Bryman & Bell 2015: 514). The strength of opinion evidenced in the focus group also gave me confidence that my research topic was of importance. It was hoped that the focus group might also provide access to some key informants for individual semi-structured interviews but, interestingly, few of those in the focus group knew other portfolio workers.

Smith et al (2009: 71) express reservations about using focus groups for IPA as the main source of data but the focus group was only used as a supplementary source of data (Morgan 1997). The focus group ran as an optional add-on to an annual conference at an organisation that employs a large number of portfolio workers. Although the organisation offered no assistance with recruitment of participants, they did provide use of a room in which to hold the focus group. On reflection, one difficulty with this approach was that there may have been elements of performativity whereby participants decided which identity to use to orient themselves within the group but this was an interesting aspect of the research. Other challenges of focus groups include less researcher control, difficulty of analysis and group effects (Bryman 2012: 517) but as the intention was to use the focus group as a complementary method to the main research method these difficulties were not considered to have a major impact on the findings.

Smith et al (2009: 73) suggest that four to five people is a good size for a focus group although up to 10 is advised for general qualitative research (Morgan 1997). It was difficult to control numbers when asking for volunteers but it is considered

to be 'important to over-recruit' (King & Horrocks 2010: 67) to allow for 'no-shows'.

This was evidenced by seven participants confirming attendance but only four

taking part, due to other work commitments, on the day.

The focus group provided some useful guidance on key factors of importance to

the participants but much of the time was taken up with participants running

through their employment history which highlighted the importance of reflexive

narrative to their identities.

4.6.2 Diary entries

Diary entries (Bryman 2012) have the benefit of the immediate recording of

actions, reactions, conversations and thoughts, overcoming the risk of memory

recall; gathering information that could be used to support interviews; and

obtaining information that might be missed, or forgotten, in an interview

situation. They can provide 'rich sources of data which detail how people make

sense of their everyday lives.' (Silverman 2014: 299). A few participants were asked

whether they would consider keeping a diary for a week but, for various reasons

were unwilling to do so. The most common reasons were lack of time, or never

having one week the same as another. Wood and Michaelides (2016) used diary

entries from portfolio workers for their investigation into 'negative spillover' and

used weekly observations over six months. They believed the pattern of people's

work and non-work responsibilities reflected a seven-day cycle (2016: 119) and that

a week was 'a meaningful unit of analysis for the respondents', which it may have

been for their participants, who were restricted to a narrow range of occupations.

Many of my participants thought in terms of hourly, monthly, quarterly or even

yearly working patterns. Although some of them did have regular weekly patterns,

many had yearly plans whereby, for example, four times a year a specific piece of work would need to be done which might not have been covered in a one week diary. Wright Mills (2000) suggested that researchers should use their 'life experience' in their work, continually examining and interpreting it. I therefore decided to keep my own lived experience diary. I did not complete an entry every day, but only when an event that generated strong feelings, either positive or negative, occurred. This selective diary entry approach accords with Wright Mills' (2000: 196) suggestion that

> Whenever you feel strongly about events or ideas you must try not to let them pass from your mind, but instead to formulate them for your files and in so doing draw out their implications, show yourself either how foolish these feeling or ideas are, or how they might be articulated into productive shape.

The lived experience diary was intended to function as an aide-memoire, to highlight events of importance to me in my portfolio working life, and to assist with the high level of reflexivity required for the IPA informed research approach. It became more than that. I found that completing the diary, as I was transcribing interviews, meant that I was actively putting into practice various suggestions and findings that were emerging from the interviews. I was also reflecting upon them in relation to my own experience; this, in turn, facilitated self-discovery, personal growth and had therapeutic value (van Manen 1990). This reflexive space provided me with support at low points like severe pressure of work and, at the other end of the spectrum, unexpected loss of a job.

4.6.3 Visual methods

There has been a growing interest in the use of visual materials in qualitative research (Bryman 2012), and I applied a visual method as a supplement to

'researcher-provoked data' (Silverman 2014: 357). Building on my own experiences of portfolio working, when I sometimes forget all the jobs I have at any point in time, I decided to ask each participant to sketch a diagram of their current portfolio. The purpose of this was threefold: as an icebreaker at the beginning of the interview to help the participant relax; to ensure that no roles were forgotten; and to provide an artefact that might assist the participant in reflecting on and talking about their experiences. On more than one occasion, during the interview, the drawings helped participants to remember other job roles they had either forgotten, or omitted, because they thought they were not important or because they were voluntary unpaid ones. The sketch was also used to focus the discussion and represent, visually, what the portfolio working concept meant to them, providing evidence to develop, support, and supplement the interview findings (Rose 2016). An additional purpose, that had not been anticipated, was that participants used the drawings as a reflexive space and were able to draw links between their roles having never previously thought about it as, for some, their portfolios had evolved rather than being strictly planned. This visual element proved very successful as it was often referred to during the interview to illustrate the point being made. The drawings also provided some valuable insights and a useful cross-check when transcribing the interviews.

4.6.4 Textual analysis

Text in this context refers to data 'recorded without the intervention of a researcher' (Silverman 2014: 276). The internet has become an essential medium of communication and was used in two ways for this research: as a way of researching potential participants prior to approaching them and to provide information on the identity they were presenting. When searching for potential participants, and

prior to the interview, I found that their LinkedIn[5] profiles, in some cases, reflected the identity they presented in the interview whereas others conflicted. One participant who, at the time of interview, had a full-time role, plus three part-time ones, made no mention of his full-time job at all on his LinkedIn profile as it was a job taken simply for the money and did not reflect his future career plans. It was clear that some LinkedIn profiles had been written to 'convey an impression' (Bryman 2012: 555) by creating a specific social identity. The main purposes of having a LinkedIn profile for most workers are to retain work contacts, network and obtain work; the wording is usually drafted with this audience in mind. There is therefore a 'powerful performative element and a strong sense of the very public nature of this process and of the specific audience to which the story is being told' (Cohen 2014: 23). Textual analysis of these profiles, to search for commonly used words including, inter alia, skills, experience, job titles, personal qualities and categorisations, in addition to obvious omissions, helped to add depth to the analysis of the interview material.

4.7 Participant Selection and Characteristics

The high level of reflexivity described in relation to interviewing was also needed when deciding who to interview, and 'why they might want to be interviewed' (Riach 2009: 363). 'Researcher-driven recruitment' (Bryman 2012: 511) was used to recruit focus group participants using an open invitation to all attendees at the

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[5] LinkedIn is a social networking site used mainly for business and professional networking.

annual conference of one employing organisation. This was convenience sampling

(Bryman 2012; Bryman & Bell 2015) designed to generate some initial themes.

Participants for semi-structured interviews were selected purposively. The

participant information sheet referred to the term 'portfolio worker', but I

intentionally did not define it to see if participants self-identified as portfolio

workers or not. For the purposes of this research, I specified that all participants

had to have at least two contemporaneous paid jobs so that I could explore the

challenges of working for multiple organisations.

For IPA, it is suggested that the sample should be 'as uniform as possible according

to obvious social factors' (Smith et al 2009: 50). I considered recruiting all

chartered surveyors, or all HE teachers (the two main fields I work in), but felt that

a wider variety of settings would offer richer data and would potentially lead to a

greater range of insights. This view is supported by Alvesson (2011: 126) who states:

> many interview researchers could work harder or more creatively in order
> to get access to more viewpoints and richer material by using a better
> variety of interviewees. It is often too easy to focus only on people in an
> easily identified group.

As all participants were portfolio workers they were, arguably, a homogeneous

social grouping, but there were other social groupings represented within the

sample due to the wide range of occupations, employment bases and hierarchical

levels represented. The focus was on achieving a wider range across these social

groupings than previous research into portfolio work (e.g. Clinton et al 2006;

Wood & Michaelides 2016). This focus did however mean that other social

groupings such as social class, race, ethnicity, migrant status, disability, etc. have

not been specifically addressed.

Participants were selected initially with a purposive approach (Denscombe 2007: 17) through personal contacts with seven organisations. I then used snowball sampling (Bryman & Bell 2015) to access a wider range of participants from a hidden population (Caza et al 2018). Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of the participants during the research process and Figure 4.2 the completed sample. It can be seen from these figures that participants were spread across a variety of organisations but more of them came from the two organisations employing a large number of portfolio workers which led to an element of homogeneity within the sample. The only organisational input to the snowball sampling was through one contact (see Figure 4.2), made through two different organisations, who was unable to take part herself as she is employed on a permanent full-time basis. She agreed to send an email from me, seeking participants, to all staff within her employing organisation. All other participants were recruited personally, and independently of the organisations they worked for. Participants were asked to 'suggest people that are especially worthwhile to talk to' (Alvesson 2011: 51). There is a potential limitation with participants selecting who they decided were 'especially worthwhile' but the benefits of accessing a wider range of participants, and generating more diverse empirical material, was felt to outweigh this. The findings are also more transferable than they would be if all participants were recruited from one setting or one profession. Being a fellow portfolio worker, participants felt 'safe enough to talk freely' about 'their experiences and feelings' (Kvale 1996: 125) and there was less need for 'background research on participants and the contexts in which they live and work' (Roulston 2010: 103). I could also understand what was said 'in the interviewee's own terms' (Bryman 2012: 473). In a few cases, there was an existing relationship between interviewer and participant

which could have impacted on the reliability and validity of the data obtained due to our relative identities (Clarke & Knights 2015) and personal agendas (Watts 2015). There might also have been a potential issue with the 'social desirability' (Ekinci 2015: 157) of answers provided and appropriate field notes were taken to identify this.

It was difficult to state, at the outset, the number of participants to interview. Focusing on a relatively small number would facilitate more intensive study (Gerring 2007: 20) so I decided to start with a few participants, identified through existing contacts, use 'snowball sampling' (Bryman & Bell 2015: 434), and see how the research developed.

All interviews took place between June 2015 and December 2016 and a total of 36 were completed. When a wide range of participants had been interviewed, clear themes began to emerge. More interviews were no longer adding anything new to those themes so it was considered that the amount of data generated had achieved 'theoretical saturation' (Bell et al 2019: 394).

A summary of the range of characteristics of the participants in the study, including the four focus group members, is provided in Table 4.1 and full details are provided in Appendix IV. The characteristics used to classify the participants were selected based on addressing either identified limitations (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Wood & Michaelides 2016) or generalised conclusions (e.g. Ibarra 2015; Mandl & Biletta 2018) of previous research. This means that aspects such as race, ethnicity, disability, migrant status and social class, although present in the sample, have not been specifically considered for the purposes of this research.

Figure 4.1: Snowball sampling during the research process

Legend:
- Green = Interviewed and transcribed
- Yellow = Interviewed
- Orange = Appointment for interview made
- Red = Agreed to interview in principle
- Blue = Potential participants
- Purple = Unwilling or inappropriate

V3 1/5/16

Figure 4.2: Completed snowball sampling

A could not take part as in traditional permanent full-time role but recommended others in the organisation

FINAL VERSION 9/3/17

Category	Range
Age	25 to 71 years old
Sex	17 female, 23 male (including focus group)
Time portfolio working	5 months to 50 years
Number of contemporaneous paid jobs	Two to eight
Household income	£13000 to £200000
Career stage	First job after university to post-retirement job
Education and professional qualifications	No post-compulsory education to PhD and fellowship of professional organisations
Marital status and household composition	Single, still living at parental home to married with grandchildren
Contracts	Zero hours, fixed term, on demand, traditional permanent part-time, temporary part-time, self-employed, freelance, full-time permanent
Industries	Real estate, education, health, law, photography, engineering, hospitality, sport/fitness, music, art, business, sales, management, accountancy, theatre, project management, IT, childcare, retail, construction, consultancy, media, politics, social work, tourism

Table 4.1: Characteristics of research participants

4.7.1 Age

Table 4.1 demonstrates the range of age groups represented in the sample, which was weighted towards older people (as shown in Table 4.2) reflecting the wider population (see 1.3.1). The youngest participant was 25 years old; no participants younger than this were recruited as it was felt that they would mainly be those working in multiple jobs purely to earn money, with a very limited choice of work. Six participants were past the current state retirement age.

Age at time of interview/focus group	Number of participants
20 to 29	2
30 to 39	4
40 to 49	9
50 to 59	13
60 to 69	10
70 and over	2

Table 4.2: Age distribution of participants

Although the sample does tend towards older workers it does not support Ibarra's (2015: no p. no.) view that 'portfolio working is for the old, when one has given up on striving and is preparing to hand over the reins to a younger generation' as two thirds of the sample were below retirement age.

4.7.2 Marital status and household composition

The participants were divided into categories based on marital status and dependants. The reason for segmenting in this way is to try to capture whether these factors impact on the opportunity to portfolio work, as it has been claimed that portfolio work might only be open to the 'privileged few' (Clinton et al 2006).

Marital status and household composition		Number of participants
Single	No dependants	4
	With dependants	2
Co-habiting	No dependants	5
	With dependants	2
Married	No dependants	12
	With dependants	8
Divorced	No dependants	2

Table 4.3: Marital status and household composition

Although the majority of portfolio workers are in a household with another earner, there is a reasonable representation across all categories. There is no obvious link between portfolio working and marital status and household composition based on this analysis.

4.7.3 Education

My sample does include some highly educated individuals, two with PhDs, seventeen with post graduate qualifications and three studying part-time. There are also some with professional qualifications such as chartered surveyors, a civil engineer, teachers, and a lawyer. However, it also includes some with no post compulsory education at all, suggesting that portfolio working is not limited to the 'highly educated' (Clinton et al 2006: 197).

4.8 Data Analysis

IPA concentrates on what people's conscious experiences are and accepts that the analysis will be 'a joint product of the participant and the analyst.' (Smith et al 2009: 80). Any claims of IPA informed analysis will therefore be both tentative and subjective (Smith et al 2009). There is a need for 'clarity and transparency' (Howitt & Cramer 2014: 445) of data analysis so that the reader can form an opinion on the impact of prejudice and how systematically and rigorously this has been dealt with. A key commitment of IPA is that 'analysis should be developed around substantial verbatim excerpts from the data' (Reid et al 2005: 22) therefore detailed transcripts were required.

4.8.1 Transcription

All interviews were fully transcribed by me as soon as possible after the interview had taken place. Smith and Osborn (2008: 65) suggest that

> For IPA, the level of transcription is generally at the semantic level: one needs to see all the words spoken including false starts; significant pauses, laughs and other features are also worth recording.

Transcribing all elements made it possible to identify when, for example, participants had to pause to think about their responses and when they were excited and eager to contribute.

Transcribing myself was a time consuming, but useful, exercise providing the first stage of the immersion in, and active engagement with, the original data recommended by Smith et al (2009). It enabled me to develop a greater familiarity with the empirical material and to start identifying some important emergent

themes. I also used some of the data to help to construct, and manage, my own work portfolio more efficiently.

It was necessary to transcribe whilst further interviews were being carried out, partly for pragmatic reasons, but this approach is also supported by Silverman (2013a: 233), who states that 'Data analysis should not only happen after all your data have been safely gathered.' and Bryman and Bell (2015: 495) who state that

> there are good grounds for making analysis an ongoing activity, because it allows the researcher to be more aware of emerging themes that he or she may want to ask about in a more direct way in later interviews.

In subsequent interviews, I was able to ask additional questions based on 'emerging interpretations and insights' (Alvesson 2011: 13) to maximise the chances of achieving reliable, authentic and true data.

4.8.2 Process of analysis

On the basis that familiarity with the data is a vital prerequisite of IPA, I decided to use a computerised Nvivo system as it was easier to cross-check for emergent themes with multiple transcripts than listening to multiple interviews. I started by using Seidman's (2006: 117) suggested approach to reduce the text, i.e. 'to read it and mark with brackets the passages that are interesting', but there was a difficulty here in that I was immediately making decisions on what was interesting, and what was not, and I found myself selecting passages that reflected my own preconceived ideas.

I therefore restarted the process, and analysed in different stages, beginning at a simplistic descriptive level then moving on to interpretation of the interview data. Although the analysis involved distinct planned cycles of coding, and is shown in

Figure 4.3 as a linear process, the reality was more iterative as a variety of different

ways of thinking about the data (Smith et al 2009) were explored with the overall

aim of producing an understanding of the experiences of portfolio workers.

4.8.3 Stages of analysis

I applied the six steps of analysis outlined by Smith et al (2009: 82-101), combined

with Saldaña's (2013) approach to coding, to identify some emergent themes and

'connective threads' (Seidman 2006: 128) amongst the experiences of participants.

These steps required an inductive and iterative process (Reid et al 2005)

combining an understanding of the insider's perspective with an outsider's

analytical viewpoint to make sense of participants experiences. The basic approach

to coding is outlined in Figure 4.3.

First cycle: In Vivo coding

Second cycle: descriptive coding

Third cycle: thematic coding

Fourth cycle coding: metaphors and similes

Fifth cycle coding: 'surprises'
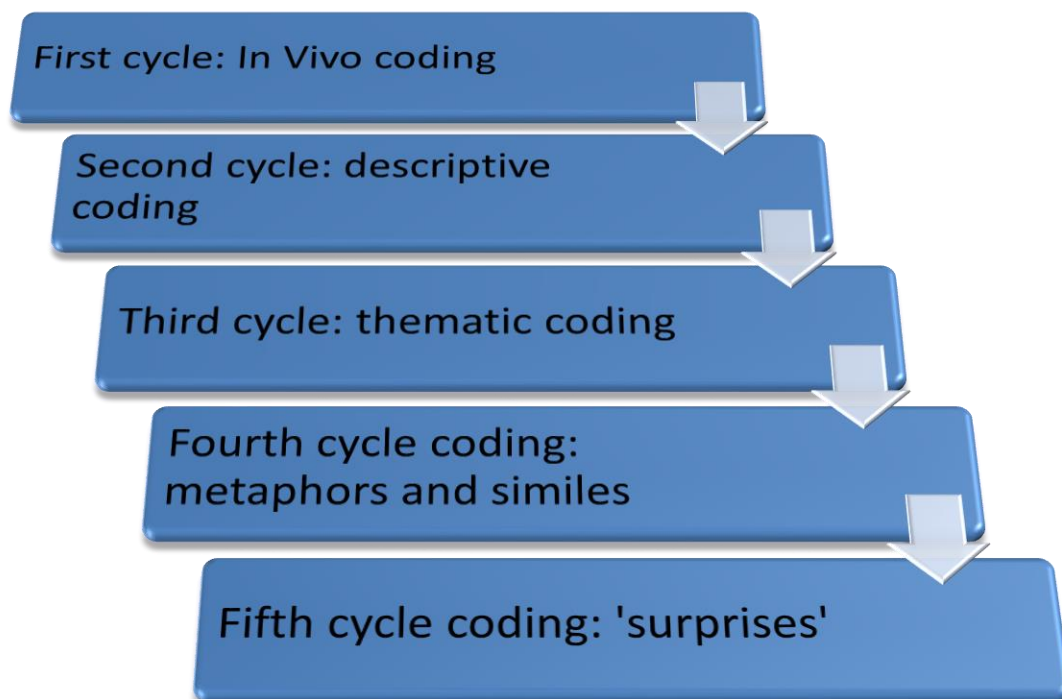
Figure 4.3 Stages of coding interview data

The first stage was to analyse the interview data. Having achieved a familiarity with the data through transcribing, reading, and re-reading, it was clear that the open questions asked about portfolio working had highlighted various commonly occurring, and frequently mentioned, meanings about this working pattern.

The Nvivo computer programme was used to carry out first cycle In Vivo coding (Saldaña 2013: 4) of the interviews. This identified the 50 most frequently occurring words used by participants. This method of coding prioritises and honours the voices of the participants and was used to detect any emergent patterns that were 'initially undetected' (Saldaña 2013).

Second cycle coding involved manual structural coding to identify the top five most commonly used words, or descriptions, relating to meanings of portfolio working. Unlike the first cycle In Vivo coding, which uses the exact words of participants, these descriptive codes summarised the main topic of the extract.

First and second cycle coding resulted in 104 different codes. This was then followed by a process of consolidating initial codes, where there were sufficient similarities, to reduce them to 93 initial codes (see Appendix V).

The next step was thematic coding that resulted in six key themes plus an 'other' category to capture less common codes. These key themes represented 'commonalities across the participants' accounts' but also accommodated variations within the data (Reid et al 2005: 23). The 'other' category contained only nine codes which gave some comfort that the six superordinate (Smith et al 2009) themes were appropriate containers for the codes.

The first three cycles of coding seemed to be reductive, rather than generative, simplifying the data which resulted in a loss of richness and depth. As Alvesson (2011: 34) cautions,

> when all our energy is put into producing, codifying, analysing and reporting such material, it is easy to miss or marginalize a careful appreciation of the uncertainty of the material for the (false) comfort of a naïve empiricism.

Increasing familiarity with the data highlighted the extensive use of metaphors and how many were commonly used by multiple participants (see Appendix IX). Metaphors are claimed to 'connect realms of human experience and imagination… guide our perceptions and interpretations of reality and … facilitate and further our understanding of the world' (Cornelissen et al 2008: 8) as well as providing enlightening insights (Veal & Hao 2007) and are another form of coding recommended in IPA (Smith et al 2009). To generate deeper understanding, and a more conceptual approach, I therefore decided to carry out a fourth cycle of coding, identifying both metaphors and similes used by participants. Similes were included as they are a way of encouraging the interviewer to seek common properties (Veal & Hao 2007) thus assisting with the understanding of the participants' experiences.

To generate further insights, a final cycle of coding using Seidman's (2006: 129) approach was carried out considering:

> What surprises have there been? What confirmations of previous instincts? How have their interviews been consistent with the literature? How inconsistent? How have they gone beyond?

These questions led to the identification of subordinate themes within the superordinate themes, and those most commonly mentioned were identified as

important to focus on because they provided an indication of elements that were important in the discourse surrounding portfolio work. The main surprise in the data was how many of the themes concerned identity – in terms of the similarities and differences between traditional and portfolio work – therefore this became one of the research questions. Reading and re-reading the data and analysing it in different ways enabled me to identify the key conceptual themes.

The coding process was initially reductive, due to the pressure to condense over 360000 words of data from interviews into a limited number of key themes. Reflecting on the reductive nature of coding during the process led to re-reading the data to identify any other aspects that could be used to analyse the data. This highlighted both the prevalence of metaphors and some areas where the data appeared to contradict the literature. Although very time consuming, this five stage coding process was necessary to ensure that as many interpretations of the data as possible were accessed facilitating a more in-depth analysis.

Having coded the interview data, I then reviewed the supplementary data obtained from the focus group, my lived experience diary entries, the sketches provided by participants at the start of the interview, and textual analysis of LinkedIn profiles. This material was analysed with a view to supporting, contradicting or enriching findings from the interview data. The interview sketches, that had been originally designed as an icebreaker, became more than that, providing a way of expressing ambivalent meanings and becoming an important methodological tool.

The sketches provided a reflexive space for participants, highlighting thoughts and meanings that had not previously been recognised, and identifying potential future possibilities (e.g. Ron p.158 & Ronan p.165). The lived experience diary entries were

used to highlight similarities and differences between my own experiences and those of the participants but it also became a reflexive space for me. The lived experience diary impacted on my interpretation of the meaning of this style of working for myself and provided ideas and resources that I was able to incorporate into my own narrative assisting with the development of a more valued identity and helping me to decide that I never want to return to a traditional career.

This further analysis highlighted that there were distinct types of portfolio worker under the generic descriptor, and I therefore decided to develop a typology of portfolio workers based on a thematic coding of this core and supplementary data. I shared this with my participants to achieve the co-constructed knowledge (Alvesson 2011; Roulston 2010; Silverman 2014) that helps to improve the quality and reliability of the data obtained.

4.9 Quality Issues

IPA informed analysis relies on making sense of experiences for both participant and researcher. Reid et al (2005: 20) suggest that a successful analysis is 'interpretative... transparent... and plausible' and to achieve this there are various aspects that need to be specifically addressed.

4.9.1 Reliability and validity

The quality of research can be assessed by how reliable and valid the conclusions are, but these criteria can be difficult to judge in relation to qualitative research. This is particularly true in relation to an IPA informed approach as it is specifically concerned with obtaining multiple accounts of a social reality which will inevitably differ. Trustworthiness and authenticity have been suggested (Guba & Lincoln

1994) to be more appropriate criteria for assessing qualitative research. Trustworthiness can be achieved by 'respondent validation' (Bryman 2012: 391) which was achieved by cross-checking with the participant that the common themes and categories reflected what their intended meanings were. Participant validation was also used to confirm the portfolio worker typology developed in the next chapter.

A combination of qualitative methods was used, including details from other sources (Roulston 2010) such as sketches, focus group data, LinkedIn profiles and my lived experience diary. This facilitated in-depth analysis that generated insights into the extensive identity work carried out by participants whereby interview material was sometimes directly contradicted by that from other sources.

4.9.2 Reflexivity

Whilst carrying out this piece of work it became clear that I needed to think much more deeply and be 'more self-critical about the assumptions, work, results and claims' (Alvesson 2011: 105) made if the data generated was to provide a faithful representation of the experiences of portfolio workers. As a portfolio worker myself it is inevitable that my interpretation will reflect my personal experiences but it was important to be able to 'appreciate the similarities, as well as the differences, between the people we have been studying and ourselves' (Silverman 2013b: 21). I therefore focused on the participants' accounts to allow themes to emerge from them. I then identified similarities and differences between participants' accounts and applied a questioning and probing approach throughout; challenging emerging themes, rather than just accepting them, and ensuring that they were fully supported by direct quotation from participants'

interview responses. I have also specified my approaches to analysis to achieve a high level of transparency allowing the reader to understand how the data has been constructed and interpreted. I have used reflexive tools such as my lived experience diary, and visual elicitation and textual analysis to supplement, and address the limitations of, interview data. The partiality resulting from my previous experience can also be viewed as a positive aspect that can be used to 'augment and intensify' (King & Horrocks 2010: 126) my research. A high level of both epistemological and personal reflexivity should have helped to achieve the authenticity desired and allow readers to decide on the transferability of the findings to other contexts.

4.9.3 Working with participants

The interview creates co-constructed knowledge, therefore the relationship between the parties is of prime importance requiring a good rapport, trust and ideally a shared interest in the outcomes of the research. Busy participants were not only giving up their own time but also, hopefully, talking freely and fully about their personal experiences. I recognised their contribution and treated them as equal partners in the construction of knowledge, although I was also aware of my position of power as the interviewer, and the fact that despite my efforts at creating an equal and open interview environment, this power relation could have impacted on the responses provided. One of the main reasons for carrying out this research was to give portfolio workers a voice, so I had a responsibility to faithfully represent their views. To try to ensure this happened, I questioned any areas of contradiction during, or after, the interviews.

When writing up results it was important to anonymise the participants' responses because, as found in the pilot interview, they were often critical of their employing organisations and colleagues. As participants came from a variety of organisations, and a snowball sampling technique was used, it has been relatively straightforward to preserve anonymity by using mainly self-selected pseudonyms for participants and not naming the various organisations.

4.9.4 Methodological choices and implications for research

The research question (see 1.6) required a suitable method of finding out what it was like to be a portfolio worker. The decision was made to focus on individual accounts of experiences as the most suitable method of gaining an insight into this type of work as it could be carried out independently of organisations and was logistically achievable.

An IPA informed approach was selected to tease out ambiguous and nuanced interpretations that may not have been immediately obvious in observation or even from the wording used in interviews. The selection of participants based on existing contacts, extended by snowball sampling, is likely to have led to an element of homogeneity in the sample although it did extend beyond the identified limitations of previous research. Using complementary methods including a lived experience diary, textual analysis and visual analysis provided the opportunity to explore, in more depth, any corroborations or contradictions that emerged in participants' accounts.

The methodological choices result in research that interprets the experiences of one particular group of portfolio workers only. This means that generalisations about experiences for *all* portfolio workers cannot be made which is a limitation of

this study (see 8.3). It does however provide an indication of what it is like to portfolio work, for this specific group of individuals, and how it can be made sense of, thus adding to the body of work investigating this particular style of working.

4.10 Concluding remarks

Due to being a part of the participants' life world, to make my research worthwhile and sufficiently credible, a detailed record of the complexities of experiences and interactions, including the subject position I adopted and why, the location of the interviews and the timing and context of them, was necessary. It is important to present not only direct reports of what is said by participants, to extract common themes and experiences, but also to try to indicate what is not said. This entailed the adoption of a highly reflexive approach throughout the process including during the development of methodology, carrying out fieldwork and presenting findings and conclusions. As the participants' experiences can only be assessed as they emerge through conversations, this reflexivity includes an awareness and appreciation of my own prejudices, situated in history and in a variety of subject positions. The next chapter analyses who portfolio workers are, what they do, and why, using empirical material to consider their characteristics, and their main reasons for starting, and continuing, to portfolio work.

There's no such thing as a career path – it's crazy paving, and you have to lay it yourself

Peter Hawkins (1998: 12)

Chapter Five: Who are Portfolio Workers, What do they do, and Why?

5.1 Overview

The first chapter outlined reasons for the growth in numbers of portfolio workers and the context they operate within. The next two chapters reviewed literature relating to portfolio work highlighting the definition, key differences from traditional work, and the importance of identity to this working pattern. This chapter now considers who portfolio workers are, what they do and why they portfolio work.

The narratives constructed by participants reflect their own interpretations and perceptions of who, and what, portfolio workers are and why they work in this way. Participants came from a variety of industries and backgrounds (see 4.7) yet common themes emerged. Previous experiences seem to have a major impact on the decision to portfolio work so I decided to develop an empirically-based typology to take into account these past experiences, and the primary motivations, of participants. This contributes to the existing literature by extending the understanding of why people portfolio work and what it means to them.

To contextualise the experiences of participants, I needed to find out what their portfolios contained. The foundation was the sketch, used as a supplementary visual method (see 4.6.3), at the beginning of the interview. This sort of creative

activity can be the 'starting point for developing thoughts about personal experience and identity' (Gauntlett & Holzwarth 2006: 82), which proved to be the case as many participants had reportedly never really thought about the evolution of their organically developed portfolios.

As discussed in Chapter Two, portfolio work is considered from an emergent interpretivist perspective. This means that the definition of portfolio work, and its meaning to individuals, will vary based on different perceptions, feelings, experiences and motivations (Chen et al 2011). Although few participants self-identified as portfolio workers, most had consciously decided to build up work portfolios rather than work in one main job. None of the participants had a portfolio of 'bad jobs' (Trunk 2006) but had proactively constructed a portfolio by choice within their individual structural constraints. This 'choice' is explored in detail, identifying common characteristics across the participants, which resulted in the development of a typology (see Appendix VI).

5.2 Why Portfolio Work? A Typology of Portfolio Workers

The findings suggest that 'in everyday reality, it is often non-work factors that are at the heart of career choice and experience' (Hassard et al 2012: 577). For many participants the motivation to start portfolio working was due to one single, discrete reason such as redundancy, failure to obtain a suitable 'traditional' job or having children. For others the choice was due to a combination of contributory factors (Cohen 2014). These included factors such as dissatisfaction with their existing traditional role, identifying a new opportunity to explore, transitioning to a different career, or retirement, undertaking further training or spending more time on something other than work. These factors combined to lead to an overall

impetus to, either incrementally or immediately, make the change from 'traditional' employment to portfolio working.

To gain a greater understanding of the portfolio working paradigm it is important to find out why individuals have decided to work in this way. I did not want to ask the question outright because, as Cohen (2014: 20) quickly realised, when asking why people moved from employment to self-employment,

> these direct questions yielded very little interesting or insightful data. Respondents answered in bland, general ways drawing on rationales that they had quite obviously rehearsed many times before.

I therefore let the reasons emerge from their more general discussions of their career journey as they constructed, negotiated and made sense of their own career stories.

To try to identify what the main factors causing a move to portfolio working were, a thematic coding of key reasons was created demonstrating that there were eight main reasons cited for moving to portfolio work, with some listed in combination (see also Cohen 2014). The main reasons given were redundancy; transition either to retirement or to a different industry; being bored, unfulfilled or dissatisfied with their existing role; having other commitments conflicting with their full-time role; a 'life shock'; wanting to undertake more training and development; an opportunity arising; or having a 'passion' to pursue. In most cases, more than one of these reasons applied. In addition, the findings suggest that the type of worker will impact on the meanings they attach to portfolio work. This inspired me to construct a typology of portfolio workers (see Appendix VI).

One of the limitations identified by Clinton et al's (2006) research into portfolio workers is that all their participants had alternative employment options when they started portfolio working. This research addresses situations where some participants felt they had no other options, albeit for a variety of reasons, and this typology seeks to pinpoint these reasons providing 'alternative reference points for thinking' (Alvesson 2010: 196).

The typology contributes towards existing literature on portfolio work by taking into account past experiences, and the primary motivations, of portfolio workers. This enriches understanding of the portfolio working phenomenon by identifying why portfolio workers work in this way and what it means to them. This, in turn, opens up the discussion beyond the dichotomy of exploitation and self-actualisation. The typology also provides an indication of how the individual perceives their identity within the generic portfolio working label as identities exist based on how they are defined (Saldaña 2013).

The categories are based on my own interpretation of the reasons for starting portfolio work, clarified with the participants during interviews. The key questions underlying the typology that often emerged during the interview, or were asked if they did not, were why participants started portfolio working and why they continued to do so. The typology is intended to identify their motivation behind undertaking portfolio work, their attitudes towards it, and what it means to them and identifies seven different categories (See Appendix VI).

My interpretation also suggested that some participants exhibited multiple categories because there are multiple needs that portfolio work can satisfy. It is possible that some participants presented themselves in a certain way in the

interview, or might not have self-identified as a category that I put them into. To ascertain whether these categories were meaningful, from the perspective of the participants, I emailed the typology to them all and asked them to confirm if they felt any categories were relevant to their situation. The typology reflects participants' own self-narratives, which were then presented back to them for verification, providing them with a tool they could use to narrate a positive and coherent career identity. This co-construction highlights the generally positive meanings of, or at least positive presentation of, this style of working that emerged from the way individuals performed in their interviews as most categories had positive connotations. The typology shows not only why portfolio workers started working in this way, but also provides an indication of what it means to them; the role that portfolio work has in their lives; how they relate to it; and how they are making sense of it (Smith et al 2009). The majority of participants responded to my email and confirmed my own view of what category they fell into (see Appendix VII). Only three self-identified with a category completely different to mine, which indicates the usefulness and validity of the typology.

5.2.1 Involuntaries

These workers had not chosen to portfolio work but had been made redundant, moved geographically, or were simply unable to find a full-time traditional permanent position. They had gradually combined a number of part-time, temporary, or contract roles as an alternative. Many *Involuntaries* move to another category, or even return to a traditional position, after a period of time.

Sam and Ron had both left university, been unable to find jobs in the traditional career they wanted and turned to portfolio work: Sam to try to gain relevant

experience and build coherence (Brown 2015) to assist in getting a full-time position and Ron to financially support his voluntary work. Sam initially had one part-time job, then acquired two more that were related to his future aspirations. He had only been portfolio working for five months, and within less than two years he had managed to secure the full-time post he desired. Sam's sketch, produced at the start of the interview (see Image 5.1), is very ordered which perhaps reflects each role being specifically acquired, not just to earn money, but to help him secure the full-time position he aspired to. It is interesting that, in contrast to most participants, he does not put himself in the sketch at the centre of all these roles, perhaps distancing himself from roles that he never intended to undertake long term.
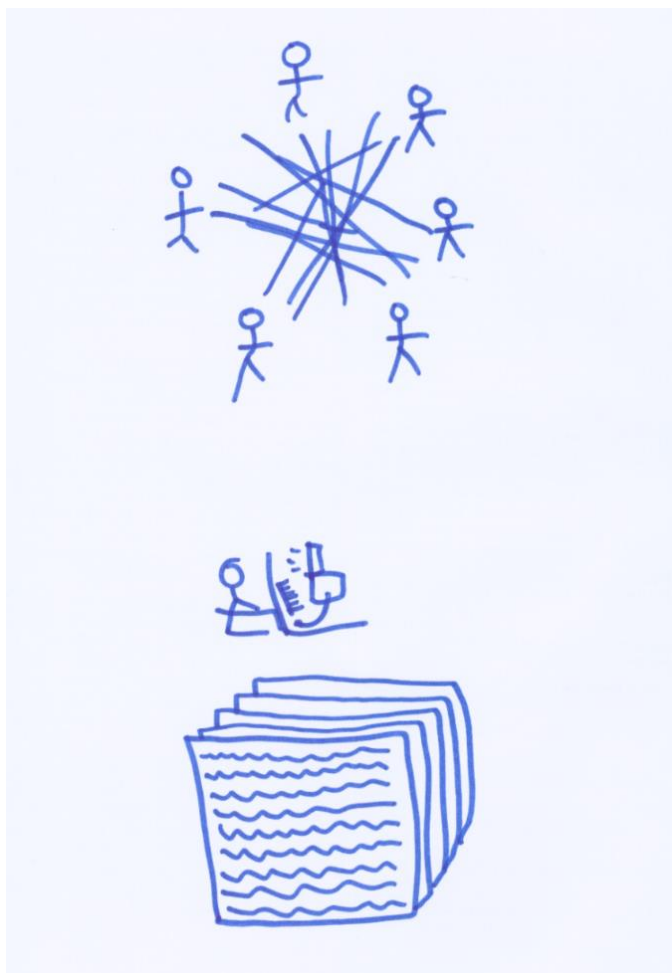
Image 5.1: Sketch produced by Sam at start of interview

Ron however discovered that he liked the portfolio style of working and intends to stay working in this way permanently. At the time of our interview he was working in a full-time job he had taken to obtain the salary that he needed to do other things he was 'truly interested in' or had 'a passion for'. During discussion it became clear that his main motivation was simply to get evidence of a regular salary to obtain a mortgage. He was also working in two part-time jobs and four voluntary roles. Three months after our interview he emailed to tell me that he had resigned from his full-time position stating:

> After months of thought I have decided to take the plunge and go at it alone. I guess sitting down with you back in January made me realise my work situation and that working at [organisation] isn't a career ambition of mine.

The interview appears to have provided Ron with the reflexive space to consider his professional ambitions and motivations which he had, perhaps due to pressure of work, not had time to do previously.

Much of the previous research into portfolio workers has focused on workers at middle to senior management levels (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Cohen 2014), but my sample also includes workers, such as Sam and Ron, at junior levels demonstrating that portfolio working can be developed at all hierarchical levels, albeit for different reasons. Sam and Ron had both entered portfolio working potentially pre-career but most participants entered post 'traditional' career. Those entering portfolio work post-career provided a variety of explanations for doing so.

5.2.2 In-transitions

These workers were either in the process of moving, or had already moved, from a traditional, full-time, permanent employment contract to portfolio work but had

not yet achieved the working life they aspired to. A variety of reasons were provided including redundancy, caring responsibilities, illness, exploring new opportunities or seeking a more flexible working pattern. The *In-transitions* highlighted the benefit of being able to gradually introduce changes to their working lives, on an incremental rather than a wholesale basis, sometimes working in their existing full-time role, in addition to a new part-time role, to build up work and adapt before leaving their full time position, as Ron did. Many *Involuntaries* moved to become *In-transitions* as they expanded their work portfolios. Most *In-transitions* were either moving to a different type of work or towards retirement.

Patrick, when relating exploiting an opportunity at the start of his career, stated that he was 'planning on doing some portfolio work' in order to reduce his exposure to risk by keeping his full-time job whilst also working part-time in a new field, i.e. 'identity play' (Ibarra & Petriglieri 2010).

Other participants started portfolio working to move into another area of work or to find out what the opportunities were more easily than trying to secure a full-time permanent position. Felicity found that portfolio working was a good way of both finding out what was available and to accelerate her second profession. She said:

> the advantage of taking portfolio and building that up is it allows you to get a sense of what's out, around in an area so this – it, when this was going well I knew that within a certain radius of where I lived, this is what was available… it was a really good way to accelerate my teaching career – in an eight year period to stretch it to feel like more and in a way it's, taking on bits, and working as a portfolio worker gives you the ability to, to get a sense of where the institutions are before you commit.

Felicity is also using portfolio work as identity play (Ibarra & Petriglieri 2010), giving her the opportunity to try out different organisations before committing to them in a traditional full-time permanent job. As she was pursuing a second profession all in one field, she was at an early career stage in a new industry (Mainiero & Gibson 2017). For many portfolio workers, however, careers no longer follow the early, mid, late career stages (e.g. Cohen 2016: 100).

One of this study's contributions to the literature on 'new' careers is demonstrating that, in the case of NSWAs, specifically portfolio workers, the traditional distinction between early, mid and late career no longer applies. A portfolio worker might simultaneously experience early and late career in different organisations they work for. For example, although Henry was in late career as a manager, when he added teaching to his portfolio, he considered himself early career in teaching (in terms of qualifications, experience and salary scale) describing himself as a

> little minion down at the bottom somewhere – I'm sure nobody would notice if I were run over by a bus tomorrow.

This suggests he does not feel valued, experiencing a low relative status in his early career position. Caroline, who was combining late career stage in her original career with early career stage in her new teaching career, also showed signs of frustration at her status when she said:

> because I'm just a humble foot soldier here – you know, a nobody really and I, I, I mean I have to say things like why do they introduce you as oh you're an hourly paid teacher, why do they put the hourly paid in front of your job title? (laughs) when they introduce you to people here? l just don't understand the point of it – is it because you're deemed to be inferior? ... I just find it just very odd and I, you know, I again I do feel that um, you know, you know that er – basically that whilst you are invited to attend meetings and expected to attend them actually I don't really think they,

> they anybody's interested in what contribution you've got to make (laughs) because you're hourly paid as they keep pointing out.

I shared Caroline's frustration at being early career in one profession but late career in another but found that the late career appointments balanced the frustration in the early career roles. I found myself liking the high status of a late career role in May 2016 at a conference.

> Went to the [professional organisation] conference and was mentioned in the Chairman's speech as the new Chief Examiner and had to wear a Chief Examiner's badge! It was really nice to have high status again, although I do feel a bit of a fraud. Although people say that status is not important, it does give a nice warm glow of achievement, particularly when people were shaking me by the hand and congratulating me! Diary entry 19/5/16

The next entry, five months later, was after I had just been told that I was no longer able to have a fourth contract with an educational organisation, where I had worked on three previous contracts in an early career role, despite all terms having been agreed and having started work on it. The rules had suddenly changed. Fortunately, a late career role came up that compensated:

> it made me really happy to be appointed to a prestigious, high status position which wipes out the annoyance of losing my [institution] contracts that I was considered, despite having done them successfully for two years, to now be too junior for. Diary entry 7/10/16.

This suggests that portfolio workers are able to satisfy disparate needs from different jobs. Henry and Caroline can afford to take their low paid part-time teaching jobs due to the income obtained from other jobs within their portfolio. Felicity chose to take multiple part-time jobs to find out what the various institutions in her area were like before making a commitment to one of them.

This combination of low and high status, and early and late career, roles makes it difficult to classify portfolio workers easily and can lead to conflict. It also makes it

challenging for them to produce a coherent career narrative. In each position, in a chameleon-like fashion (Choudhry 2010), they have to not only fit their surroundings but also ensure that they are signalling an appropriate social identity. Beck's (2000) suggestion that social identity and status should no longer be dependent on an individual's occupation or career is a worthy aspiration but one that has yet to be widely embraced. The label of 'portfolio worker' is one way of overcoming the negative connotations of having a collection of jobs across the hierarchical spectrum. The In-transitions expressed a clear intention to move from where they were now, to where they perceived they wanted to be in the future, by undertaking identity play (Ibarra & Petriglieri 2010).

5.2.3 Insatiables

Other participants used identity play, more frequently, to provide variety (Clinton et al 2006; Cohen & Mallon 1999; Hindle 2008) and challenge (Barley & Kunda 2004; Mainiero & Gibson 2017) because they might have become bored, unfulfilled or dissatisfied with their existing role. They might also have come across an opportunity that they want to explore but would be unable to do so in an existing full-time role. Alternatively, they might have moved to portfolio work initially as *Involuntaries* or *In-transitions* and found themselves liking the opportunity to be more experimental and flexible in their work roles.

The participant with the most roles in their portfolio was Lara who had nine different sources of work (see Image 5.2). She is a physiotherapist by profession and practises for three different organisations and from home. She also works as a Pilates teacher, an adoption counsellor (voluntary), an adoptive family trainer

(paid) and manages a let property bringing in additional income. She is mother to two children, aged five and nine, and wife to a husband in the army.
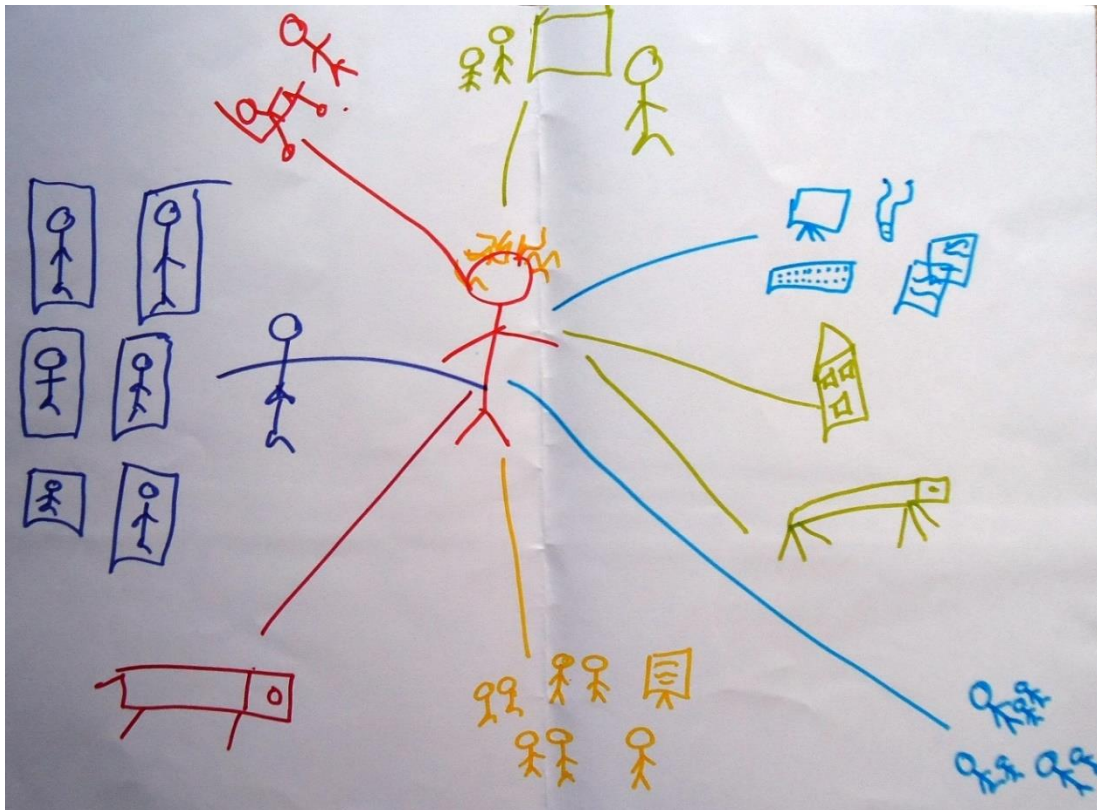
Image 5.2: Sketch produced by Lara during interview

Lara had built her portfolio career around her core profession but had then added new roles to it. This was partly to satisfy her desire to give something back but also her 'secure' role – case managing insured patients – required a minimum of eight clinical hours a week. She took a position that enabled her to achieve these core hours, then a further position on a hospital bank, working only one day every couple of months, to obtain her mandatory training at no cost. She places herself firmly at the centre of these roles in her sketch, and is of the opinion that

> you have to be sort of experienced in what you do before you embark upon something like it [*referring to portfolio work*]. You have to have experience, especially in something vocational like physio.

Lara's view is therefore that portfolio work can only be carried out post-career which contrasts with Sam and Ron's decision to do it pre-career. Lara used her previous experience as a basis from which to create a portfolio enabling her to achieve security, experience, free mandatory training and the variety and interest she felt she lacked in her previous part-time position at the hospital where she still does her mandatory training. She believes that her portfolio means that her work is 'not boring' and that 'the variety's good'.

The participant in the sample that had portfolio worked for longest was Ronan who said he had worked in this way for 50 years since leaving school at 16. However, when he reflected on his career, it appeared that he first started a work portfolio at nine years old and had never stopped. He said:

> I've been working since I was nine, since I had my first guitar – because as a youngster I found ways of, of making money so I could buy better guitars – so I, I would do any greengrocery round, any newspaper round – I learned through my uncle who was an electrician how to fix people's televisions when I was 12 – to try and make money, I made things so I could sell things so – it, I, it, I was formed from a teen, from a child.

Ronan left school at 16 to work for a famous music company and combined this with undertaking sponsored education through to PhD level and playing bass guitar for world-famous bands. He then built a portfolio around his two interests; guitar playing and electromechanical sciences. When he reduced his touring commitments, due to family responsibilities, he set up a 'guitar surgery' including guitar making, repairs and lessons, and added authoring a technical review column for a guitar magazine, amplifier design consultancy, teaching (at school and

university level) and charity work. Ronan's sketch demonstrates how he makes sense of his portfolio. Like Lara, he places himself at the centre and, after initially sketching all his current jobs, he went back and highlighted in red the key themes of his work to stress the coherence (Brown 2015) between groups of roles.
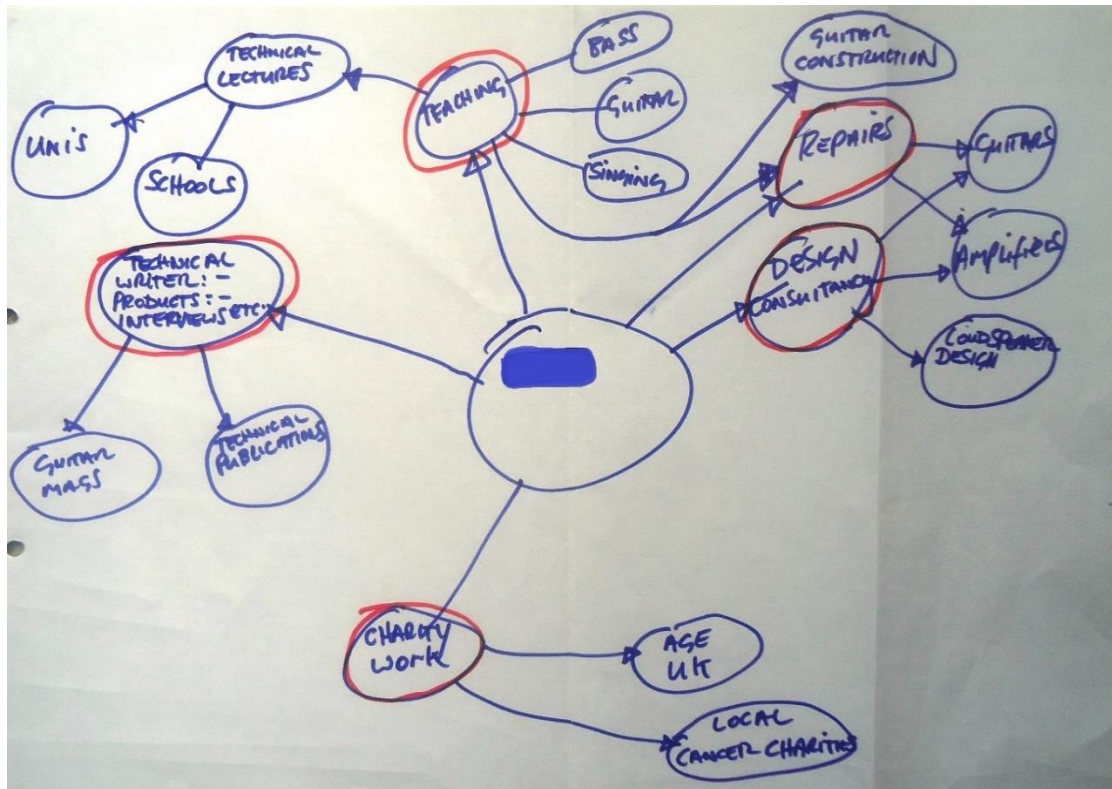
Image 5.3: Sketch produced by Ronan during interview

Ronan also drew attention to the organic nature of portfolio careers and how they can be made sense of retrospectively to work out future directions. He said:

> this is very rare for me to actually talk about myself and – this functions, you know, sort of like a focus day for me thinking oh what do I actually do then? I sort of know all the time, it's there but to pull it up and think ooh actually that, that's actually quite useful. This has triggered off a couple of other ideas for me today (laughs) to go forward.

It appears that, like Ron, Ronan also found the interview provided him with the reflexive space to consider his working life and identify potential new challenges.

Insatiables seem to thrive on continuous challenges and variety. Working in this way facilitates the exploration of new opportunities. Although Ronan's diary seems to have no space for any more work he still appears to be keen to develop 'new ideas' to provide him with the challenge and variety he seeks. Expanding his work portfolio will however have to be carefully balanced to avoid becoming inundated with too much work.

5.2.4 Inundateds

These are workers who felt unable to continue with one full-time role due to having too many other non-work activities (Wilkinson & Redman 2013) that conflicted with it. These mainly included child or elderly care (Bailyn 2006), but also a desire for a better work-life balance. Many of these workers could probably have tried to negotiate part-time work in their existing full-time position but, for a variety of reasons, few did so and chose to find their own way.

Madison, who had a full-time teaching job in addition to two part-time fitness instructor jobs, had recently managed to negotiate her full-time job down to four days a week. She said:

> well I'd been full time for a long time, and I've done all this other stuff for a long time and – there was an opportunity, a window of opportunity … and there's a lot of things changing at the [organisation], a lot of things and I just got to the stage really where I would quite like – to just take – have a little bit of time, cos I, I'm, I'm non-stop

During the discussion she mentioned that she had an elderly mother, recently diagnosed with dementia, so she wanted to have sufficient time to spend with her. The most common reason for being inundated seemed to be caring responsibilities and the *Inundateds* were exclusively female which is perhaps because they were the ones who had been designated as primary carers. Esme, although not a

primary carer, had found that her full-time position left her with insufficient time to spend with her new grandchild. While some men had childcare responsibilities they did not state that they had been overwhelmed by it and although Ronan had changed his working pattern, it had been to support his wife as the main carer, rather than because he felt inundated.

5.2.5 Indestructibles

Another reason for changing working patterns was evidenced by workers who underwent some sort of 'life shock' and were unable, or unwilling, to return to full-time work afterwards. They are distinguished from the *Involuntaries* as they could have returned to work in one full-time job but their 'life shock' had changed their attitude to work. Some of the 'life shocks' mentioned by participants included a brain tumour, a nervous breakdown, a kidney transplant, a severe stutter, a late diagnosis of dyslexia, mother having a stroke, and divorce. This category is supported by a similar finding from Cohen's research (2014: 71) whereby she suggests that 'death and illness had caused [the participants] to re-evaluate their life choice and priorities, in some instances triggering new career directions'.

Henry, at the end of the interview, when asked if there was anything else he felt it was important add said:

> you ought to know that the reason I am – how I am, is because I nearly died er in 1987 and um I, I was always an easy going person but it did change my view on life so um that has had a bearing

The changing view on life he referred to was to start taking what he described as 'jobs I've wanted to do'. This recalibration of expectations of work seemed to be shared across all participants that had experienced a 'life shock'. In most cases, this required some additional training.

Stanley carried out some additional training to enable him to move from a full-time job to a collection of part-time ones following a kidney transplant. He said:

> If I really had to could've struggled on for a bit but – ... I kind of realised I could start to do more classes – I then trained in doing classes - - so now I just do classes and one-to-one – I gradually ... over years shifted away from the gym and did more classes and then built my private stuff up – and then, you know, all of which is better paid than gym work

Stanley's kidney transplant had resulted in five years of being unable to work. He started a phased return to work and expresses the 'struggle' of working then the awareness that there was another way of working that would suit him better, not only in terms of reduced hours, but also financially. To achieve his 'shift' from his traditional full-time permanent employment to a portfolio of work, he had to invest in additional training, as did many other portfolio workers.

5.2.6 Investors

These are workers that decide to undertake more training or development to gain new skills and experiences (Gratton & Scott 2016; Inkson 2015), and improve their employability, either by way of attending a specific part-time course or by taking on new roles to enable them to gain the required work experience. Investors can use this training and development to help to craft their portfolio by adding more jobs to it or by turning some temporary roles into more permanent ones.

Most participants moved to become *Investors* having previously been in another category. Lauren, for example, said, of her return to education:

> There were a couple of things happened. My Mum had a stroke at work at 50 um and I had a horrible couple of years working and I, and it was at that point I sort of made the decision that I was going to do a PhD and everything just sort of led to me moving out of a full time job which I had found just not a very nice environment for a long time

Here Lauren, has identified a 'life shock' (*Indestructible)* combined with dissatisfaction with her existing role *(Insatiable)* as the combination of factors leading to her undertaking an additional qualification *(Investor)* which in turn led to a portfolio of jobs to support the qualification. This demonstrates a movement from one category to another, or a combination of categories, over time.

Other participants, such as Derek, took temporary roles to improve their employability. Derek resigned from a permanent post to take a shorter term contract with a view to improving future prospects. He said:

> I thought, even if it was only for six months, it would get me six months experience as a team manager which would then put me in a stronger position to get another team manager job

Following redundancy later in his career, this experience proved to be a salient factor in him creating his portfolio career. He was able to move to a project management contract that could be combined with his desire to continue working as a disc jockey. A number of participants were able, like Derek, to combine a job undertaken primarily for income with one mainly for enjoyment.

5.2.7 Impassioned

These workers are driven primarily by a passion for a particular type of work, or perhaps hobby (Inkson 2007), which cannot be pursued full-time for financial or other reasons. Portfolio work enables them to support their passion with other less exciting work. Passions cited by participants included politics, British team coaching, music, children's sports coaching, charity fund raising, teaching and playwriting. A third of all participants used the word 'passion' in their interviews to describe an element of their work portfolio but this was usually relatively poorly paid or voluntary work. Julia, for example, said:

> I would feel that I'm being unfaithful and untrue to myself – cos it's
> something I am still passionate about - - and so it would feel wrongful to
> stop working in that industry

making it clear that the job she described as her 'passion' was an integral part of

her self-identity.

5.3 Insights from Typology

The typology above was shared with participants, several of whom stated that they

found it a useful categorisation although Elena wrote:

> I dislike categories and especially putting myself into categories (!) but if I
> had to I would say impassioned/insatiable.

These were exactly the categories I had put her in. Of the 40 participants

(including all focus group members), 37 responded. Out of these 37, 21 had self-

identified the same category, or categories, that I had. A further 13 had one or

more descriptors in common.

There was one notable exception where I consistently got the categories wrong

(see Appendix VII). I had assumed that any participants over the age of 60, or who

had taken early retirement, were *In-transitions* on their way towards retirement.

Most of them, however, did not self-identify with this category. Sandy (aged 67),

for example, identified as *Involuntary* transitioning to *Insatiable*; Caroline who

took early retirement (aged 58) identified as *Insatiable/Impassioned*; Duncan (aged

65) identified as *Impassioned;* Anthony who had taken voluntary redundancy (aged

57) identified as *Involuntary/Impassioned/Insatiable;* and Amy (aged 64) as

Insatiable. Although Rick (aged 68) did identify as *In-transition,* he also identified

as *Insatiable.* This suggests that my ageist assumption of transitioning to

retirement was wrong, and age does not stop a worker wanting to search for new

challenges and opportunities (Gentry et al 2009). Most of the older workers had selected *Insatiable* in their descriptors suggesting that perhaps portfolio working provides the opportunity to satisfy the need for new challenges and opportunities that is not available in the later stages of a traditional career. It is, however, also possible that participants are rejecting the less favourable descriptors such as *In-transition* to retirement preferring to self-identify as *Insatiables*. This preference may also reflect the wider context of a working world where initiative, adaptability, flexibility and versatility appear to be valued. Either way, the choice of descriptor is useful as a reference point against which to assess the participants' views of the portfolio working concept. The typology may be relevant not only to portfolio workers but also to employing organisations as facilitating the preferred identity is more likely to satisfy the individual.

The typology also helps to highlight how attitudes and meanings change over time. As the categories were based on my own interpretation it is inevitable that my experience impacted on the categories. When writing up, I realised that I could put myself into four of the seven categories but that these had evolved over time due to changes in personal circumstances (See Figure 5.1).
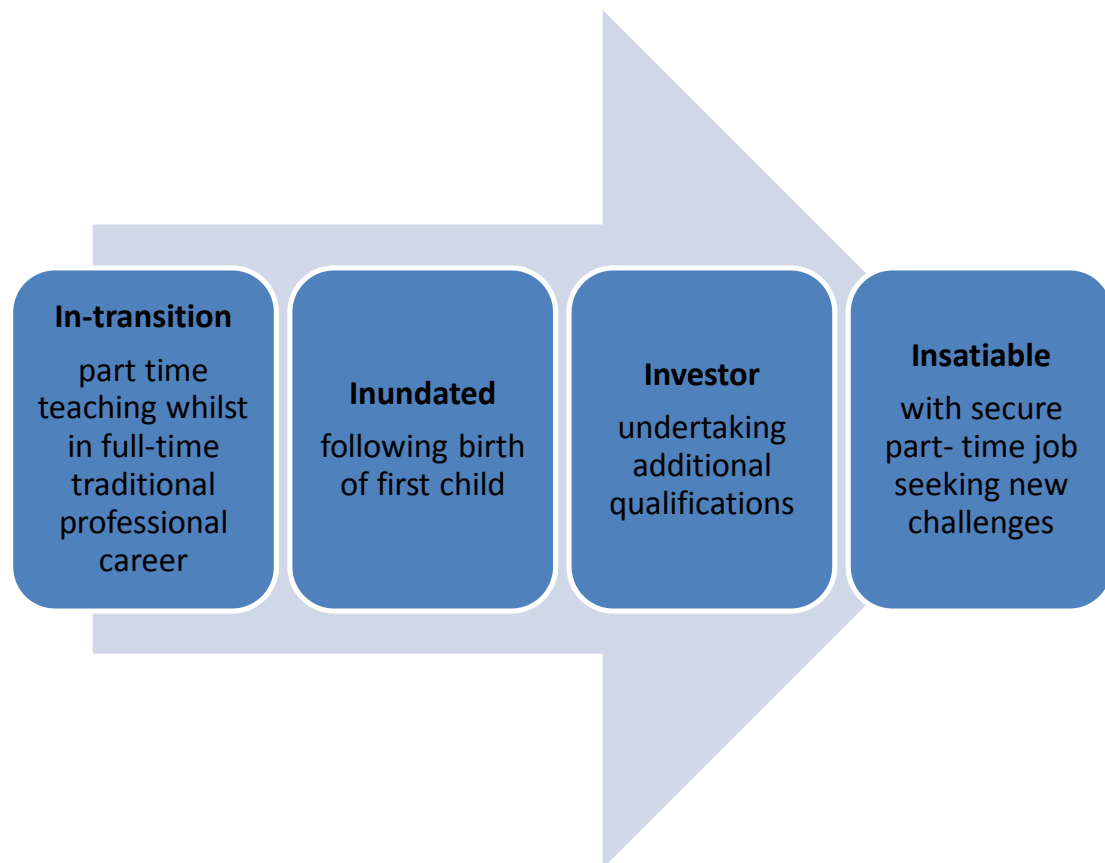
Figure 5.1: Example of evolution of portfolio worker typology categories over time

This temporal element, and navigation from category to category, was also seen with my participants, particularly those who started as *Involuntaries* then exercised agency and moved into another category. The typology also highlighted how some individuals could justify their move to portfolio work and, over time, carry out meaning-making. For example, the *Indestructibles* might have started due to their failure to work full-time but, over a period, found themselves able to do more, undertaking additional jobs, moving them into another category. Portfolio work has provided them with a vehicle in which to present their changes in a positive light.

5.4 What do Portfolio Workers do?

Previous research into portfolio workers has tended to focus on a specific type of portfolio worker. Wood and Michaelides (2016: 132) advertised for non-occupation specific participants but found that

> portfolio working is less common than imagined and restricted to a limited range of occupations, particularly those related to publishing.

Clinton et al (2006) interviewed 26 individuals across a wide range of industries, and, although nine of them included business consultant in their occupational area, the majority, ten out of the 26, also had an occupational area related to publishing. My own sample did not include any participants with roles directly related to publishing (see 4.7) and highlights that portfolio working is a complex, integrated, phenomenon that has interactions with, inter alia, age, educational qualifications, career stage, life stage and past experiences.

There were also some participants that had moved away from their traditional career on a full-time basis and were continuing to do it part-time enabling them to add new roles that were not so obviously complementary. Other participants had started a part-time job and then added other roles. Karen, for example, left her career as a chartered surveyor when she had children, set up her own business in baby mementoes, and later added an administrative post in the property education industry to her portfolio. Derek continued to run his own DJ business, initially alongside his social work career and subsequently with his new career in health authority project management. Monty managed to combine a position as a part-time tour guide, exploiting his passion for history, with his job as campus manager of a college. Desmond combined an established career as a video producer and

media trainer with a part-time post in local politics. Many participants had added part-time teaching to their portfolios following a full-time traditional career, stating that this was either to satisfy a long-held ambition or to give something back.

The participants therefore covered a wide range of occupations and combinations of work, although many of them had some element of teaching in their work. This could be due to utilising personal contacts in the snowball sampling approach or because teaching lends itself to portfolio work. The number of contingent workers in education has continued to rise, with 34% of HE lecturers reported to be on short fixed-term contracts (HESA 2018) and 53% on 'insecure' contracts (Chakrabortty et al 2016). The teaching of those within the sample included a wide range of subjects and levels including, inter alia, after school private drama lessons; secondary school music; post-compulsory management, construction, property, literature, psychoanalysis and electro acoustics; local team coaching; adult fitness classes; and national sport team coaching.

Although the sample addressed the occupational limitations of previous research it was still relatively homogeneous and the impact of aspects such as race, gender, disability and sexuality on the categories expressed by workers has not been specifically explored.

5.5 Who are Portfolio Workers?

The variety of catalysts for starting portfolio work typified above, shows that individuals are likely to draw upon different bases, similar to Schein's (1996/2017) 'career anchors', to build their self-identities, and these are likely to be intertwined with their reasons for portfolio working. In the absence of one clear work-based

identity (Standing 2011) there are other aspects, or identity anchors, that
individuals may draw upon to craft their identity, such as profession or occupation
(Gold & Fraser 2002), the organisation, or others (Petriglieri et al 2019).

5.5.1 Organisation

Some portfolio workers may still choose to base their identity around an
organisation, particularly where the organisation is their own such as Duncan's
eponymously named company. Others distance themselves from their main
employing organisations, such as Ron (*Impassioned/Insatiable*) and Gavin
(*Insatiable*), who, on their LinkedIn profiles, completely omitted their main jobs
(in terms of both time and income), distancing themselves from those
organisational identities, concealing them and accentuating other, more valued,
identities.

5.5.2 Occupation

In the absence of one clear organisational identity, many portfolio workers
emphasised their occupational identity but this was not straightforward. For those
participants with two occupational identities, they tended to use them selectively
depending on the audience. Patrick (*Insatiable*), for example, states:

> I just think that's how I see myself, even when I teach, I remind the
> students that I'm not – a teacher, really – I'm a business owner and I won't
> really treat you like students – I'll treat you like employees – you know, this
> is a vocational college, they've employed me here – because of my
> experience in construction – not because of – my desire to be a teacher –
> that probably sounds really bad (laughs) what I've said but I, I sell myself
> like that – in the classroom and I think that maintains that identity.

Patrick is carrying out identity work here to add value to himself as a worker. He
uses the words, 'sell myself', demonstrating an awareness that he needs to make
himself attractive to both employer and students. However, when pursuing his

other occupation, he does not mention his teaching at all as it could, potentially, put customers off due to the adverse impact it has on his availability. He therefore manipulates his identity depending on who he is presenting it to and the response he wants to generate.

Other participants also chose to hide some core occupational identities. Amy, for example, when asked what she would say if someone asked, 'What do you do?' said:

> I'd tell them I was a chartered surveyor – cos I always think of that as my primary profession – and I don't know why – um -
>
> *I was just going to say why?*
>
> I don't know really, er but I suppose it's cos my, it's my oldest one – and there, there is a restriction here – on advertising yourself as a judge – so the Ministry of Justice do not like people to – advertise the fact that they are a member of the judiciary, which I am - and so if I was – going to say to anybody what I did it would always be a chartered surveyor and trainer – I would probably not mention this at all.

Apart from the issue of advertising her position as a judge – her main job in terms of both time and income – it seems likely that, in common with other participants, Amy was tailoring her identity to promote the one that could result in offers of more work.

5.5.3 Family commitments

Many of the *Inundateds* chose parenthood, or caring for dependants, as their main identity anchor as this provided a 'socially legitimate' (Cohen 2014: 62) reason for portfolio working. Portfolio work offered the flexibility needed to combine child, or in some cases elderly, care with work. Emily (*Inundated*), for example, found a major advantage of portfolio working was the ability to manage her own hours and

work locally saying, 'specially when you've got children at school if one of them is ill or something - you can just go can't you?' This point was also made by Felicity (*Inundated/Investor*): 'the boys were at, you know, two-and-a-half and five so I needed it to be local.' Similarly, Juliet (*Inundated/Impassioned*) said about her portfolio work that

> it's very successful because it's fitted in with what, you know, mainly with my daughter because, as a single parent, I had, I love the fact that I have all the holidays off – I mean that's, that's a real winner for me and I should have said that actually with, with the first job, that's, that's another beauty of – that and the second one is that I don't work the holidays – which isn't so much relevant now I guess because she's older but certainly when she was, you know, quite young – that made, that had a huge impact for me because otherwise I'd have had to get childcare – to go and look after other people's children (laughs) and put my own into childcare.

For Juliet, her definition of 'success' is the ability to fit her work around her daughter's needs. Although childcare was mainly mentioned by female participants, Keith (*Impassioned/ Investor*) also found that 'when the children were home that was a, a big advantage because we didn't have to pay for childcare' and Ronan (*Impassioned)* also reduced his touring commitments and set up his guitar surgery to fit around family responsibilities.

An increasingly common issue today is elderly care (see 1.3.1), and Lydia (*Inundated/Insatiable)* felt fortunate to have been able to negotiate a part-time contract when it became clear that elderly care would make a full-time job untenable. She says:

> I applied for – um – that job [*pointing to sketch*] in a full-time capacity... but – just at the point of taking it up circumstances changed a little bit with my mother... so I withdrew from that but they asked me then if I would consider working part-time... which I – felt I would like to do because it was a contrast really so having come out of working in the [public sector organisation] for a long time... both my um son and my mother at the

moment are, would be reasons why I wouldn't want to work full-time um and I'm fortunate enough to not have to.

Although Lydia only worked part-time in this job, her total working hours were close to full time, but the work was variable with a minimum of 22.5 hours a week in her core job and additional project-type work on an ad hoc basis. This meant she felt able to adjust working times to fit with her other commitments achieving the work-life balance (e.g. Gerber et al 2012; Taylor 2017) she desired.

5.5.4 Lifestyle

Many participants appear to anchor their identity in the ability to achieve a better work-life balance involving flexibility and control of their working hours and work load. This workload can, however, be quite heavy. For example, Amy states that she works 'seven or eight [days a week] – like most people who work for themselves'. Henry (*In-transition*) also suggested he worked 'eight days a week'. Anthony (*Impassioned/Involuntary/Insatiable*) calculated his hours to be 58 a week not including travel time which came as a surprise to him. Duncan said 'well – there's seven days a week (laughs) I work for myself so that's it'. Emily highlighted the inability to 'switch off' even when not working saying:

> I think when you're running your own business you've always got it ticking on in your head – so you can't leave it at home can you?... you're lying in bed just about to fall asleep and you're oh I must ring so and so tomorrow yeah so that's, that's something you don't get when you work for somebody else do you?

Patrick also observed that 'you're never away from it'. Despite many participants working most days, most of them felt that they had flexibility over when and where they worked and were prepared to make career choices to obtain this flexibility. For example, Verity (*Indestructible/Inundated)* said:

> it was a way of earning that fitted in very, very, well with family at that time because it was evenings and weekends – so with very little children that weren't really doing a lot at evenings and weekends, it was perfect.

The concept of flexibility, and what it *means* to portfolio workers, will be discussed in Chapter Six.

5.5.5 Portfolio work

Despite the flexibility of employment, and combinations of occupational and organisational identities, none of the participants anchored their identity solely as portfolio workers, although some used it as a subordinate social identity to signal their difference. Patrick and Sebastian both identified themselves as portfolio workers but few of the other participants did. They did, however, have alternative terminology for this, such as Sandy's 'odd job man' and Emily's 'jack of all trades' neither of which implies a particularly positive work identity. It is perhaps an identity anchor that does not need to be used unless there is a specific reason for doing so. My lived experience diary includes an example of my own reason for using it:

> Today I sent in the last book chapter (as my co-author is unwell so couldn't finish off). The publisher came back and asked for my biography and it made me think about identity again. My co-author's, was a very simple "[name] is joint founding editor of the Journal of Property Management and former Director of Estate Management at De Montfort University, UK".

Whereas, as I emailed, to the publisher,

> I'm afraid as I portfolio work it isn't a very short one. I'll give you the one I used recently for something else and you can pick out whatever bits you like.

> *Jan is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She spent twenty years working, mainly in property asset management, for a variety of institutions including a small private practice, a public sector organisation, a landed Estate, a FTSE*

> *100 property company, and a US investment bank before moving into lecturing in Higher Education.*
>
> *Jan now portfolio works combining her property and education interests in a variety of part-time roles. She currently teaches for the University College of Estate Management, runs her own small property and educational consultancy business, is Chief Examiner for the Institute of Residential Property Management (IRPM), is a member of the regulatory panel of the Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA) and studies for a PhD in Management.*
>
> I guess saying I was a housewife with a number of part-time jobs wouldn't really cut it as an author of a textbook, but it is equally true I suppose. Diary entry 21/11/17

In this example, the collective identity of 'portfolio worker' was used because it was difficult to decide which of the occupational identities was the most valuable. Although it still reads like a 'laundry list' (Ibarra 2015 no p. no.), in this case it is wrapped up in the term portfolio work suggesting it has been consciously constructed giving it a greater social legitimacy than just a list of part-time roles. Whichever main identity anchor is selected at any one time, portfolio workers are clearly juggling multiple, often conflicting identities.

Duncan did not identify as a portfolio worker stating, 'I'm doing portfolio working, to use your expression'. This is perhaps because he has a very clear occupational identity and he sees his two roles as complementary, stating:

> these are in related disciplines it's not as if they're completely different, it's not as if I'm driving a taxi one minute and then being a tutor the next, or not. I mean some people have got totally unrelated roles... there is a definite synergy and it benefits both parties I think.

The complementary nature of his roles not only leads to a coherence (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003; Watson 2008b) that echoes that found in full-time traditional roles, but goes further by, in his opinion, adding value to both organisations.

Lydia, who works as an occupational therapist, school governor, national charity

manager, director of a voluntary organisation and has a dependent child and

elderly mother, also did not identify as a portfolio worker because her perception

was that the term applied to high fliers (Storey 2000) only. She said:

> I wasn't sure whether – I met the criteria because I think I, I guess –
> historically portfolio work is – I've always seen I think maybe in very, very
> high – high achieving? Highly paid? sort of contract work and I guess that's
> just from my experience of working with people who've come into
> organisations sort of in a very senior level who are working on – contracts
> who've tended to be self-employed and taking short-term work but – work
> in a particular way because it was financially more beneficial to them.

Lydia's view supports the widely held opinion (e.g. Gherardi & Murgia 2013;

Standing 2011) that portfolio workers fall into one of two polarised groups; the

exploited – those driven primarily by financial need and working in this way due to

necessity, and the self-actualised – not working purely for financial reasons but

choosing to work in this way to fulfil their potential. Most of the participants in

this study, however, fall between these two extremes being driven by more diverse

factors, and with more of a choice, than the exploited but perhaps fewer

opportunities, and financial benefits, than the self-actualised. Duncan, Lydia and

myself all presented, and interpreted, portfolio work differently.

5.6 Manipulating Identity

The literature typically discusses 'identity work' (e.g. Beech et al 2016; Costas &

Kärreman 2016; Petriglieri et al 2019) and the empirical material suggests that

portfolio workers carry out extensive identity work, making efforts to present

themselves in a socially acceptable way in different contexts by proactively

manipulating their identities to suit their audiences. When asked what they would

say, if asked 'What do you do?' many of them suggested that they would tailor the

response depending on the audience or respond with 'discursive spins' (Alvesson et al 2008: 14). Desmond (*Impassioned*) responded:

> I've always found that question really difficult – yep – really difficult because I don't do one thing and – probably, depending on who I'm speaking to, I will tailor the answer... I'll give them an answer that they, that, that, that will make sense to them... I won't spin something that's not true but I give them an answer that he'll understand, succinctly.

Desmond was not the only participant to openly discuss how he tailors his identity. Ronan stated that 'it depended on who was asking the question' as did Juliet. Madison (*Inundated*) too agreed that 'it depends on who I'm talking to'. Sandy said that his standard response is,

> I say I'm an odd job man usually... I don't – this sounds er (laughs)... well it's just that I, I tailor my response to who I'm talking to.

This identity work, which appears to be common practice amongst participants and a substantial part of what they spend time doing, seems to give them a chameleon-like ability to not only fit into an existing organisational context by reflecting their surroundings but also to socially signal the value they might have to potential employers. This manipulation, however, moves beyond the situational or chameleon identity theorised by Choudhry (2010) in her investigations into the multifaceted identity of interethnic young people. In her case, young people chose to display *either* Asian/Chinese *or* White identities depending on the circumstances. For portfolio workers, the choice of identities to display is extensive, and portfolio workers have scope to present these multiple identities in different ways due to a multiplicity of potential contemporaneous organisational, sometimes occupational, and other identities.

It seems likely that the reasons for this identity work will depend on their motives for portfolio working (see Typology, Appendix VI). In many cases it is due to not wanting to have to provide a 'laundry list' (Ibarra 2015) of jobs or be perceived as the 'jack of all trades' Emily described herself as. This is because neither of these is a coherent, socially acceptable, job description. It may also have a further purpose, demonstrating the flexibility and adaptability required of workers in today's world of work, building social and cultural capital, and potentially adding value to prospective employers. Despite the external forces (see 1.3), and the frequently expressed rhetoric of the need for a more flexible, adaptable, workforce, many organisations and institutions are still structured around the concept of the traditional hierarchical career. Although individuals are embracing the entrepreneurial, self-sufficient, identity they are struggling to fit into the societal norms built around the 'traditional' career so they engage in 'shorthanding' (Caza et al 2018), carrying out impression management by reducing their multiple roles into a socially acceptable package that their audience might understand. The following diary entry shows my frustration with the failure of even a simple survey to recognise the existence of portfolio workers:

> Today's portfolio worker thing was doing an [institution] survey and I had to decide whether I was a part-time employed, full-time employed, a student or self-employed. I put part-time employed as I am in two of my jobs that seem to take up most of my time, although, interestingly, I earn far more from my self-employment, and work full-time hours. This effectively could mean their survey results are not truly representative. The world really doesn't seem to recognise this marginalised group. Diary entry 12/5/16

Gavin was quite open about providing the identity he felt the audience wanted to hear, particularly when looking for more work. He says:

> the problem is, if I say, if I, if I say well I – lecture at, at the, at college, teacher, engineer and I work for all these technical companies, do consultancy, made videos, produce e-learning programmes, they just turn around and say no you don't it's just too much, so um I just normally pick on one... I would, I probably at the moment I'd just tell the truth, which is I'm a part-time lecturer... if I suspect that they have some sort of um business or um er – commercial – motive I, I focus in on what they want to hear (laughter)... it is just a part of a networking thing.

Clearly Gavin is tailoring his identity to his audience to build social capital to gain more potential work as Sebastian also does. He says:

> 'I think you have to – cut your cloth – be er, you know, for the role that you want, without a doubt – you have to position yourself in the right way'.

The ability to tailor their identity can also enable the *In-transitions* and *Impassioneds* to highlight their 'new', preferred or aspirational career, rather than their existing main one, or even conceal their main one altogether. Ron (*Insatiable/Impassioned)*, for example, dealt with the conflict between his desired occupational identity and his main job at the time by concealing it, as illustrated below:

> I'd say well I'm a, I'm an own, owner of a training f, um private training provider – I wouldn't, I wouldn't be, this would be the, my full-time, my actual full-time job would be the last thing I would say (laughs) – um –
>
> *Now that's interesting so why is that?*
>
> I guess these, these things mean more to me than – to that.

In this case, Ron is hiding the main part of his work identity, in terms of time and income, and showing only the parts that he values and wants his audience to see. This may not, however, be acceptable to some organisations who may have an expectation of portfolio workers presenting themselves as part of the organisation. Sebastian, for example, says:

> I represent myself as – somebody who's working for the company I'm
> currently working for so, in some ways, on LinkedIn that's quite negative
> cos it looks like I've had about a billion jobs.

My interpretation is that Sebastian believes having had many jobs is negative because the societal norm, and organisational expectation, is still loyalty and commitment from workers despite the rhetoric of organisations requiring the flexibility and adaptability that the experience of working in a lot of different jobs is likely to provide. Sebastian also picks up on the point that many organisations expect portfolio workers to demonstrate their organisational identity when representing them even if not working for them exclusively. It is possible to do this by amending the social identity displayed to audiences but can lead to difficulties particularly where the organisational identity is not one that the portfolio worker wants to fully embrace. The organisation may be providing a sense of belonging to the worker or they might be exhibiting ownership and control. This, however, might not align with the portfolio worker's objectives as seen in the diary entry below.

> Conference call with [name] during which they suggested I should have a
> [professional organisation] email address as it is my personal one on their
> Moodle site. I really can't bear to have a sixth one and – identity wise! – I do
> not want to be too closely associated with the mess that they may end up
> with on this course. As I'm immersed in studying identity I have become
> more interested in why I do what I do and, although I am happy to be
> associated with [professional organisation], I want it to be clear that I am a
> consultant rather than part of the organisation (although the CEO seems to
> be trying very hard to get me to be part of the organisation – for free!). I
> guess this is all part of my entrepreneurial self, wanting to demonstrate my
> flexibility, adaptability and, of course, availability should a better offer
> come along. The email address, apart from the sheer administrative
> complexity, seems to me to be trying to force me into an organisational
> identity that I don't want. Diary Entry 14/7/17

This entry highlights the conflict that can occur between the flexible, adaptable, available, portfolio worker and the required organisational identity. Portfolio

workers appear to have found a variety of ways of dealing with this conflict. In this case, it resulted in resignation from the role due to the implications it had for other roles within the portfolio.

As identity is relational (Scott 2015), the portfolio worker can use their chameleon, or situational, identity to both fit into various environments (Choudhry 2010) and to signal specific differences from others to provide unique value. The capacity to undertake this style of work, and the ability to manipulate identities in this way, produces additional value through the *process* of being this type of worker.

5.6.1 Managing Identity Conflict

In some cases, however, it appeared difficult to manage multiple identities, and participants demonstrated both of the two extreme approaches outlined by Rothbard et al (2005): separation or integration; and Ramarajan's (2014) and Hennekam's (2015) independent and clustered divisions.

Comparing the sketches drawn at the start of interviews by Felicity and Verity shows a clear difference between how they perceive their portfolios. Both participants have school-age children, but Felicity does not put these down as a 'job'. Verity, however, does, dividing the job into two discrete elements; housework and childcare work. She has used half of the page for her paid work and half for free work (Handy 1995b) clearly separating the two (see Image 5.5). Felicity's sketch (see Image 5.4), in contrast, ignores homework (Handy 1995b) completely but demonstrates how her other work forms a cluster of what she perceives as three complementary paid jobs and three voluntary jobs. Felicity's sketch also demonstrates the 'merger' (Roccas & Brewer 2002) where multiple identities are balanced, and the individual identifies with all of them equally, despite the

proportions of hours spent and income earned from each of her jobs being very different.
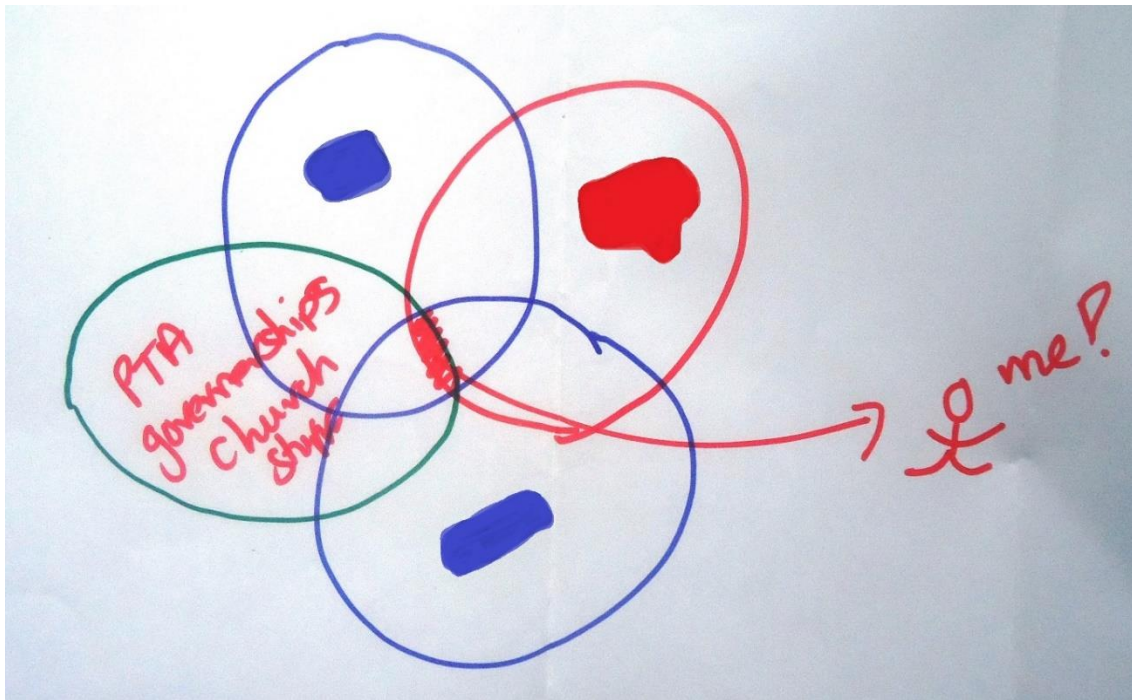
Image 5.4: Sketch produced by Felicity at start of interview
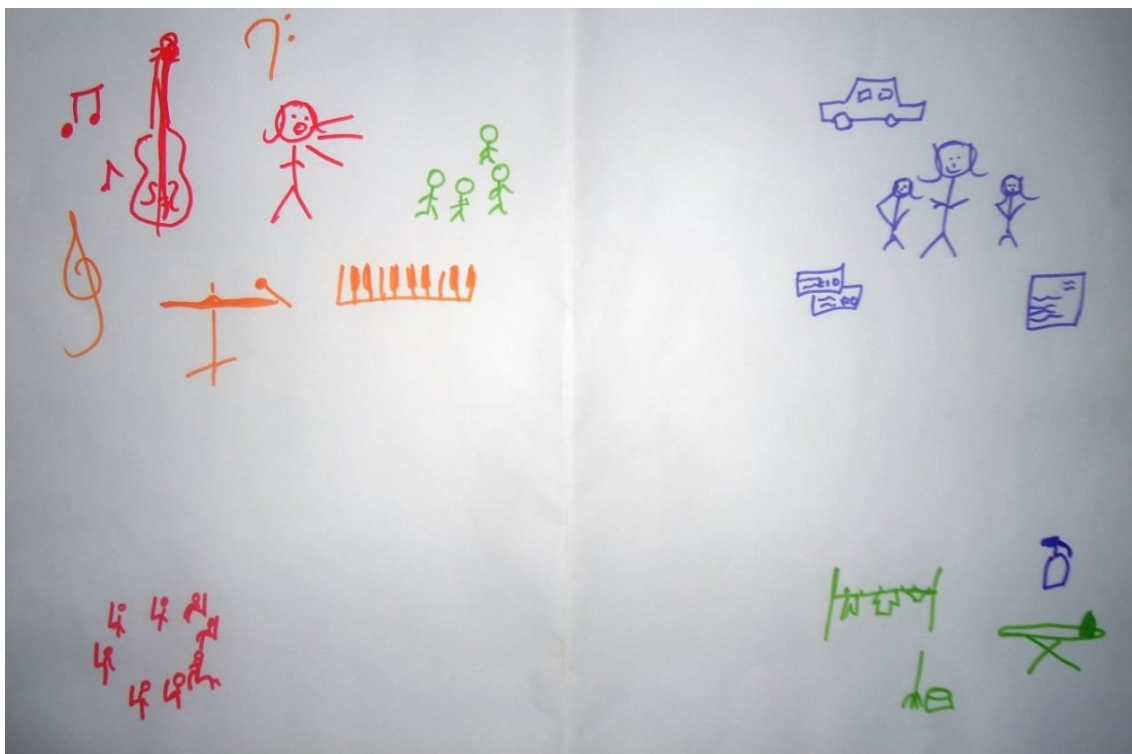
Image 5.5: Sketch produced by Verity at start of interview

Felicity's sketch demonstrates the interconnected, or clustered (Ramarajan 2014), nature of her different jobs, and concomitant identities, which is unsurprising as most of them involve education. Verity, however, has not clustered her two paid jobs although they both have a teaching element. Duncan also, despite having two very complementary roles that could potentially be expected to be clustered, completely separates the two, saying:

> when I first started here I made it very clear that if I'm here, I'm here. I don't work from home, I come in here – and when I'm here from eight o'clock in the morning until 6 o'clock at night I'm, I'm working for them – um and when I'm not here, I'm not and that's the only way I can make it work because otherwise I'd be – working from home, I'd be getting distracted or in my office, getting distracted about what I'm doing.

Portfolio workers appear to either cluster, or separate their jobs with clear boundaries, to deal with the psychological stress of combining identities (Hennekam 2015). The suggestion is that jobs with similar identities would be clustered, and jobs that are less related, or not related at all, would be independent (Ramarajan 2014).

The evidence, however, is that even where job identities are very similar some participants choose to separate them as two distinct roles (as Duncan does), rather than cluster them, to avoid distraction. Conversely, where job identities are diverse many portfolio workers try to cluster them, finding a common theme, but whether this is to avoid the psychological stress of multiple identities or to create a coherent career narrative is less clear.

The minority of participants had jobs with no obvious connection but despite this, when reflecting and telling their life stories, they were able to create integration, coherence (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003; Watson 2008b) or carry out

'aggregating' (Caza et al 2018) by forming links between jobs where there were no obvious connections. Raymond (*Impassioned/Indestructible*) works as a playwright and a freelance arts practitioner but, at the time of our interview, had just added to his portfolio a part-time administrator role to generate a regular income to compensate for the uneven income generated by his main occupation. Despite no obvious link between his arts work and administration he believes

> a lot of the creative skills actually helped me get the job because er so much of freelancing these days is about having a strong ad, administrative – side – of life and um, and so a lot of the creative stuff that I talk about admin-wise is what they were impressed with and they were really impressed by the fact that I was a playwright as well um I think they sort of essentially meant that – letter writing would be a non-issue to worry about.

Raymond highlights the value of the skills he has developed whilst portfolio working as a positive contribution to a very different role.

Derek (*Involuntary/Investor/Impassioned*) has worked in a variety of mainly health sector related roles and has also been a DJ, intermittently, since his time at university. He identifies the common thread between his present health sector project management and DJ roles as 'reputation' when he states that

> your reputation is key – it's really key you've only got your good name and it takes, you know, it can be trashed in one bad job quite easily – and that's the last thing I want – and, you know, again that network, that's why you need that network of people – I don't necessarily keep a network – just for work, you know, I just – I just know a lot of people – and I've become friends with people from lots of different situations – and, for this type of work, it serves me well and even with the DJing, you know, that goes on reputation as well... so again you get that feedback – about how you're performing and how you're doing.

Monty (*Impassioned*) works as a campus manager and a tour guide which are not obviously linked roles but he identifies the need for interpersonal skills in both.

> I think they complement each other – er in many, many ways – I well I think, I think there are many benefits to, that can be brought in from the tour guiding side, the practical knowledge – not just the history but primarily of working with tours and people for you never know what you're going to get – and guiding them and explaining things to them – um and then there's the training the ambassadorial side, diplomatic side.

My own career straddles both property and education but I had not thought about a link between the two until I had a conversation with the Chairman of an organisation where I had just been invited to join the board.

> The Chairman of [institution] phoned to tell me that I'd 'got the gig'. They were apparently all very impressed with what I said. On the phone he said that I would enjoy the job 'if I liked helping people' and I realised that every job I do involves helping people – whether they are students, tenants, family members, mentees, or colleagues – so I obviously do. Diary entry 7/10/16

It appears that even if there is no obvious link between the jobs, participants identify a common theme, or connection, creating a coherent narrative, to make sense of their atypical working arrangements whether for themselves, an external audience, or both. This cohesion, whether self-identified or identified by others, helps to provide a socially acceptable career narrative.

Having multiple jobs can also offer greater psychological security. In Patrick's words, 'if you consider security about having eggs in more than one basket' holding multiple jobs in which to carry out, sometimes replicated, activities can provide greater security - financially, psychologically and in terms of employability. A diary entry records this observation:

> Interesting that [name] had negative feedback on her PhD presentation and has had tears about it and is very upset. Is this another advantage of portfolio working, i.e. when one thing goes wrong others are going right so your whole identity and self-esteem is not all riding on just one thing? Diary Entry 25/5/16

Not being fully immersed in just one role gives a wider range of contexts which portfolio workers can draw upon to interpret meaning.

5.6.2 Coherence or Fragmentation?

One of the main challenges of multiple identities for portfolio workers appears to be achieving the coherent identity required by organisations, and society, whilst undertaking a fragmented and unpredictable working life (e.g. Mainiero & Gibson 2017) as 'specialization signals excellence' (Caza et al 2018). Participants unanimously created coherence in their narratives but this was achieved in different ways. The four types of coherence: temporal, causal, thematic and cultural (Habermas & Bluck 2000), adapted to careers, were all exhibited in the narratives told, either singly or in combination.

Tristan (*Insatiable/Impassioned)*, in addition to producing a diagram of his five current jobs, later in the interview took another piece of paper and provided a timeline from leaving school at 16 to today (*temporal coherence*). This highlighted the main events that had resulted in his current portfolio career, including divorce, higher education and re-marriage giving rise to a geographic move (*causal coherence*) that then required a job move. Desmond also demonstrated the need to achieve temporal coherence when he said, 'well I can give you a CV history if you want for, for the last ten years… cos that might help you with the context'. He also provided evidence of causal coherence, going back to his early childhood to justify his decisions, when he suggested a main benefit of portfolio work to him was having control saying:

> actually psychologically the control element is a, is a really important factor
> with someone that was – uprooted at the age of four-and-a-half – or four –
> to er, a, a new village, new home, new – new Dad – there is that element of

> needing control of my life – comes back to the property thing. Even though, you know, I rent my house from a bank um it's my house and I decide what colour it is, not the landlord, and it, and, and it's my fiefdom.

Amy, although not overtly recognising it as a causal factor, states that portfolio work suits her as she believes she has no belonging needs saying:

> that's probably part of my upbringing I suppose – er my father was in the services so we moved every two-and-a-half years – so – you know, I went to ten junior schools and – five senior schools, and you lose friends – every two and half years, so it didn't really matter – so I don't think I have those needs – really.

Many participants, predominantly, but not exclusively, female, also cited having a family as a causal factor that started them portfolio working.

Thematic coherence was exhibited by all participants demonstrating a clear need for a theme running through all jobs whether general or specific. Some of the more general themes were Juliet's 'working with children', Tristan's 'creative human', Justin's 'education' and my own 'helping people'. Some participants provided a more precisely defined theme. Amy, who has four different jobs within the property sector, rather than simply citing 'property' as her common theme, refined her diverse roles to the overarching theme of being 'connected with people's expectations of the way you should live in property'.

Finally, *cultural coherence*, interpreted as the normative cultural notion of what should be included in a *career*, is what can be lacking in portfolio work. Traditionally, careers have followed what Ibarra (2015 no p. no.) described as the 'learn, earn, return' pattern. For portfolio workers this pattern may be followed initially but then they may enter further cycles, being at different stages in the process in their different jobs. Alternatively, they may go through the pattern in a

different order, earning first and learning later. They might also be carrying out these stages simultaneously, and repeatedly, in different settings.

My interpretation of the empirical evidence is that the portfolio workers in this sample unanimously create coherence out of the fragmentation of their portfolios, or clustering (Ramarajan 2014), and believe it is important to do so. It also appears that *Insatiables* might perhaps have more of a challenge in creating a coherent identity due to constantly taking on new challenges that might not have an obvious fit with their existing work. However, they might also need to signal this incoherence to generate more work. There is a balance to be struck between achieving a culturally acceptable coherent identity and demonstrating the flexibility, adaptability – and availability (Reid 2015) – that needs to be signposted to continue to acquire work. This is where identity manipulation is used to create the desired identity for different audiences. The current rhetoric suggests that flexibility and adaptability is required of workers but the societal norm of progress through the traditional hierarchical career is still in place.

One of the main sources of work reported by portfolio workers was networking. Work either came through previous contacts, or through new contacts, where face-to-face interaction enabled them to build their social capital, find out what identity was required, and tailor theirs accordingly. The opportunity to craft a preferred identity for different purposes is something portfolio workers appear to be able to do relatively easily. For a full-time traditional employee it is likely to be far harder to hide their main occupational and organisational identity.

A common source of identity is job titles (Grant et al 2014) which all traditional full-time employees, and most portfolio workers, are likely to have as they enable

organisations to plan and organise human resources. Portfolio workers may have

multiple job titles which can be an area of conflict requiring further identity

manipulation. Portfolio workers might modify their job titles, to create coherence,

for their use outside the organisation, such as on social media, or hide those that

do not fit with the coherent identity they have created. For full-time traditional

employees it is more difficult to obliterate their organisational identity as they

have fewer, if any, alternative work identities to choose from. In addition to the

difficulties with achieving coherence with fragmented jobs and job titles, portfolio

workers identified two other areas where fragmentation resulted in duplication

and frustration not experienced by workers in full-time traditional employment.

Fragmentation and administration

Many of the participants discussed the time taken for additional administration

resulting from the fragmented nature of their careers. Amy, for example, says:

> I've got, I work off three different laptops – and one of my own... it is a
> nightmare – actually I tend to use only one – and transfer things backwards
> and forwards – um – but the courts are moving towards er people working
> remotely – and so they're quite keen on people having swanky new laptops.

Several participants also highlighted the issue of the complicated tax arrangements

that result from working on a variety of different contractual bases. Patrick

identified one of the main disadvantages of portfolio working as

> the tax, the first thing that came to my mind is the accounts um – making
> sure that – you know – the tax, the accounts, the tax system is so
> complicated that it's very difficult to do it without an accountant, and I you
> know I pay an accountant to do mine - um – so that's – you know, that's,
> that's a difficulty – um - - actually making sure that, that – where you're
> earning the most money or where you're paying basic rate of tax and then
> maybe the higher rate tax.

A diary entry also demonstrates how the tax system in the UK is not set up for

portfolio workers:

> I received my accounts from the accountant stating that I owe £4854 in
> Corporation Tax, a bit less than usual now that I'm earning more PAYE
> from [institution] and less invoiced work due to their change in strategy.
> Also as a result of this, I am due a tax refund of £2264.26. This just
> highlights how our tax system in the UK is really not structured for
> portfolio workers. I can just imagine the administrative cost of handling the
> payment and the refund rather than just having one account where one
> could be applied against the other. Still, at least I don't have to find so
> much money to pay it as usual. Diary Entry 27/10/16

Other functions, or transaction costs, mentioned, included updating websites,

juggling multiple email addresses, networking, managing several IT and HRM

systems, undergoing multiple sets of identical training in different settings, and

dealing with multiple pay and pension schemes. These are all tasks a portfolio

worker has to carry out to be successful but are not directly remunerated.

Although, in isolation, none of these appear to be major issues, they were cited by

portfolio workers as one of the main disadvantages of working in this way. The

more jobs and contractual bases the worker has, the more time they spend on

these administrative matters which do not directly generate any income. The

individualisation of labour means that these costs historically covered by

organisations are now borne by these workers (Fleming 2017).

Fragmentation, training and development

Another aspect resulting from the fragmented nature of portfolio work is the

management of training and development. Although some portfolio workers

obtained this through their various organisations, the onus is on them to organise

their own training and development. Some portfolio workers specifically take a job

to obtain the necessary training for other jobs in their portfolio. For example, Lara

(*Impassioned/Inundated*) says:

> One of the reasons I do the [organisation] job is because I then do all their mandatory training which I kind of need for some of my other jobs... there's always stuff available through [company] it's just fitting it in – it's just difficult cos with [company] I have to travel – [organisation] we do do in service training um but now I, I, I have to, I have to self-fund training more now than before... but erm you know I'm getting the mandatory training from the [organisation]. Sometimes I think it annoys them that I'm still on their bank staff and they have to pay me to do the mandatory training.

This demonstrates how Lara can use one position within her portfolio to provide

her with paid mandatory training that she can use for her other jobs; despite this

she has to self-fund more training than she did when employed. Lydia also used

one of her positions to 'upskill' in order to obtain further work saying:

> the [organisation] contract um was as a result of wanting to um upskill – my clinical um skills to make sure that I was up to date and keep my professional registration – um I approached a contact locally to ask if they had any um bank vacancy work – which they did um so I went there on the bank but very quickly they then – offered me – a contract.

This ability to obtain training from one job to use in another job is a definite

benefit but it can result in frustration due to duplication as the diary entry below

shows.

> So – today – another day, yet another HR system. This is now the fourth one I have for [organisation] alone – this one is to ensure I do the mandatory training – why can't they all be in one place?? Or even just two places. My first outstanding task is fire safety training which, when I work remotely, is probably less important, and I have already done the exact same fire safety training course at [institution], [another institution], etc., surely there should be some way of 'cross accreditation' rather than me wasting valuable marking and student time repeating previous training??... P.S. Another 100% in my fire safety assessment to go with my collection of other 100%s. Diary Entry 13/8/17

One of the difficulties of portfolio working appears to be that some organisations only look at the individual in terms of the job they are doing for them, i.e. that fragment of their identity that is displayed within their organisation, whereas portfolio workers have multiple organisational identities that could be exploited to the benefit of both parties. Although the portfolio worker can create coherence, the organisation is often unable, or unwilling, to recognise this coherence in its processes and procedures.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter addresses the research sub-question, 'Who are portfolio workers, what do they do, and why?' providing insights into the range of those undertaking portfolio work and their reasons for doing so.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that portfolio work is not restricted to a limited range of occupations (Clinton et al 2006; Wood & Michaelides 2016) but is now seen in a wide variety of settings, occupations, industries, life stages, ages, and educational levels (see Appendix IV). In addition to the work related to the core occupations or professions there is evidence of a considerable amount of essential administrative work that has to be undertaken, often on an unpaid basis.

There are a number of different reasons underpinning the move to portfolio work and these reasons change over time. The most common reasons for entering into, and remaining in, portfolio work have been identified resulting in an empirically-based typology of seven types of portfolio worker. It is important to differentiate between types of portfolio worker because the main motivators to work in this way are likely to impact on types of work undertaken, experiences and meanings of work, and also the importance, and extent, of the identity work required. It

appears that portfolio workers do not all, as Gold and Fraser (2002: 594) suggest, rely on 'an emphasis on professional or occupational identity' but also on, inter alia, networking, reputation, family commitments and lifestyle. Integral to what portfolio workers do is manipulating and framing their ambiguous identities to appeal to their respective audiences and justify their choice of working pattern in the context of the current labour market. This manipulation goes beyond Choudhry's (2010) concept of a chameleon identity, due to the ability to select what specific *combination* of identity elements to display in any particular situation, although the ability to manipulate in this way is likely to be impacted on by the extent of the structural advantages of this particular sample of portfolio workers.

This chapter has addressed the key interconnected aspects that impact on how portfolio working is experienced resulting in the development of an empirically-based typology and bringing a closer understanding of what it is like to be a portfolio worker. The next chapter explores what portfolio working means to those undertaking it.

I don't like work… but I like what is in work - the chance to find yourself. Your own reality – for yourself, not for others – which no other man can ever know.

Joseph Conrad (1902/1990: 25)

Chapter Six: What Does it Mean to Portfolio Work?

6.1 Overview

The previous chapter investigated who portfolio workers are, what they do, and why. This chapter focuses on 'the meaning individuals attach' (Duberley et al 2006: 282) to their portfolio careers and the 'identity implications' (Gill 2015). The concept of identity is used as a lens to unpack what this style of work means to individuals as meaning is contingent on identity (Alvesson & Willmott 2002). A wide range of experiences were reported, resulting in a variety of meanings, but there were clear themes that emerged.

The meanings, either directly reported by participants, or interpreted, are those experienced by individuals that are portfolio working. They will inevitably compare portfolio working to other working patterns they have experienced, or are aware of, therefore the meaning to them will differ depending on their history and motivations for portfolio working (see Typology, Appendix VI). This research considers meanings articulated explicitly in interviews, but they are only the words, or labels, for the meanings individuals choose to share. The words selected to describe meanings may be inaccurate or ambiguous and not reflect their collective normative meanings. They do, however, provide an indication of what

the individual *thinks it is important to say* about portfolio working thus providing a guide to their preferred espoused identities. The meanings cited may also be only one small part of the overall meanings being experienced, and might not always have been honestly expressed, so it is necessary to try to tease out unspoken meanings, searching for contradictions and ambiguities in the accounts provided.

Meanings, from a constructionist point of view, are created by individuals as they engage with, and interpret, the world they are experiencing (Crotty 1998). These meanings are likely to evolve over time through continuous interpretation and reinterpretation. The interviews were a 'narrative production site' (Czarniawska 2004: 50) and were often used as 'meaning-making' opportunities (Smith et al 2009: 18; Bosley et al 2009: 1498). It is possible that my position as an insider-outsider (Humphrey 2007) accentuated an interpretation of positive meanings about the phenomenon. To overcome this, the interviews specifically explored, and extracted, negative meanings of this style of work as well as positive ones.

6.2 Commonly Used Signifiers

The first cycle coding (see 4.8.3) highlighted 'time' as the most frequently occurring word, followed by 'people' (see Image 6.1). Although word frequency is a basic analytical device, and does not necessarily suggest significance (Saldaña 2013), time was also the first prevalent discourse identified in the literature review (see 2.5.1) and this is discussed in more detail in section 6.4.

Image 6.1: Word cloud depicting most frequently occurring words from In Vivo coding – exact words only

'People' emerging as the next most common word reflects the portfolio working concept being heavily reliant on social interaction. Many participants reported spending time consciously networking and building the social capital which appeared to form an essential aspect of creating their portfolios. Sebastian, when talking about his geographic move, said:

> I had to kind of start again so it was all back to – um – doing that thing that I think most portfolio workers have to do to which is network your, your backside off.

Here Sebastian is taking control of the situation by proactively looking for work but many other participants reported unsolicited work being offered to them by their network. Successful networking is also likely to have positive implications for

meanings of security and control. Alison summarises her own situation, which encapsulates that expressed by many other participants, saying that, over time:

> I think I've built up, the confidence that people will employ me.

Other participants highlighted the importance of interpersonal skills to enable them to 'fit in' quickly to organisations which is imperative due to the limited time, and possibly short-term nature, of their work there.

These initial signifiers provide a preliminary insight into what portfolio working might mean to participants. Further investigation into related words provides a greater understanding of their connotations.

In addition to highlighting the importance of 'time' and 'people', followed by the opinion that this working pattern is 'different' and 'interesting', it is noteworthy that 'paid' and 'money' were only just in the top 50 words suggesting that this is not a major consideration for portfolio workers when evaluating, or presenting, their experiences. This is not necessarily because pay and money are considered unimportant but perhaps because a secure income stream is less important to portfolio workers than other aspects.

These initial descriptive codes were then compared against my Lived Experience Diary and the results are shown in Table 6.1.

Word	Number of participants (total of 36)	Number of times mentioned	Focus Group	Times mentioned in Lived Experience Diary	Discussion see section number
Flexibility	36	110	Yes	15	6.4.2
Security	33	104	Yes	22	6.4.4
Control (and Power)	29 (35)	89	Yes	30 (39)	6.4.3
Balancing	28	75	Yes	24	6.4.1
Variety (and challenge)	28	69	Yes	25	6.4.5

Table 6.1: Most frequently occurring words and descriptors from manual structural coding

Again, this analysis focuses on signifiers, i.e. what has been explicitly stated by participants, rather than the meanings attributable to them. This analysis was used, initially, as an exploratory tool to sensitise myself to terms being used within the socially available discourse (Gill 2015; Watson 2008b). The frequency of occurrence provides an indication of the discursive space within which portfolio workers live and work and an insight as to what aspects are considered to be of importance to them. Most of these words also emerged from the literature review as prevalent discourses.

Frequency of occurrence is insufficient to tease out meanings as the words are likely to have a different meaning depending on each individual's previous experiences (see Appendix VI). Time, for example, could be in the context of not having enough, having more, flexibility, control over it, or a number of other interpretations. Different and interesting can also have alternative meanings. Different could mean, inter alia, conflict, change or unique value. Interesting could mean exciting and stimulating, or it could be used as a euphemism for difficult or

challenging. To explore what these words *mean* to individuals, a more detailed contextual analysis of responses was carried out.

6.3 Exploring Meanings

In addition to analysing what was *said* by participants, it was necessary to try to interpret what was *meant*. Meaning is highly subjective and constructed based on experience or actions (Alvesson et al 2017). Certain words, such as 'security' are ambiguous, having different meanings (see 2.5.5) due, predominantly, to diverse previous experiences. For example, to *Involuntaries* security might mean both job and income security (Muffels 2008); for *In-transitions* security might mean keeping an existing job whilst gradually building up other part-time work in a different area to create a new work-based identity (Standing 2011); and for *Investors* security might mean having the opportunity to obtain experience, or additional qualifications, in a job developing adaptable and transferable skills (Sehgal 2017) to increase their employability (Inkson et al 2015). There is also the issue that *'people don't always say what they mean, and people don't always mean what they say'* (Jones 2012: 3 italics in original) so alternative methods of exploring meanings were employed including sketches, metaphors and similes.

Sketches

The sketches, drawn at the start of interviews, produced original insights to the meaning of portfolio work, highlighting thoughts and meanings that had not previously been explicitly acknowledged. Anthony's drawing, for example (see Image 6.2), highlighted some points he was unaware of. A blank space had been left in a quarter of the page. In our discussion it emerged that he had hoped to retire to spend more time on his music but, due to his wife's unexpected early

retirement, he had returned to work. Although it felt somewhat audacious (particularly as Anthony is a psychotherapist by profession) I volunteered that this might represent his desire to leave space for his musical interests; a view he agreed with. Anthony subsequently identified as what he described as 'the portfolio option': *Impassioned, Involuntary* and *Insatiable*. The space on his sketch might therefore also suggest that he is leaving room for new opportunities that might arise.
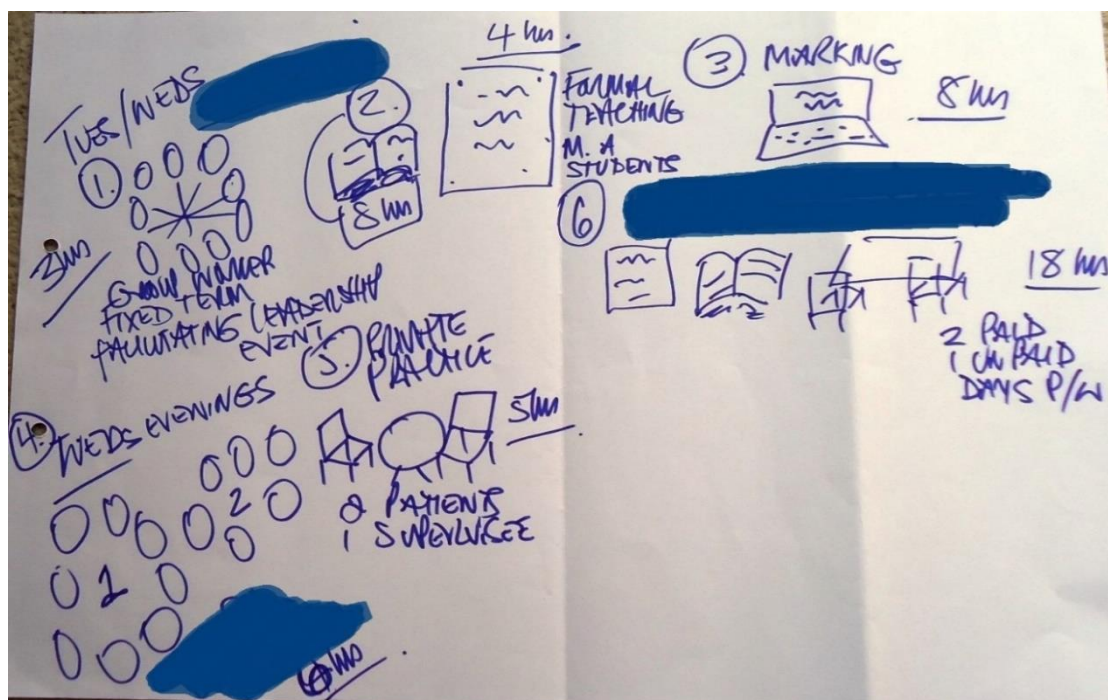
Image 6.2: Sketch produced at start of interview by Anthony (anonymised)

Julia provided a sketch of two of her remaining jobs (see Image 6.3) but completely omitted her part-time studies perhaps because she does not perceive them as 'work'. She has also left a considerable amount of space on the page which could be due to having only recently reduced her jobs from six to two. It could also suggest that she does not feel fulfilled by her existing portfolio so is leaving space for other opportunities. She has clearly separated the two remaining jobs, despite them having a common theme of hospitality, which suggests she perceives them

very differently. The colourful drawing, with more detailed figures, related to the positive meaning of working in hospitality and the colourless drawing, with simple figures, to her teaching job that she took primarily to provide some financial stability. She says:

> I couldn't er secure a rental property or a mortgage not having a contract er so for the first time, in my 30s, my Mum had to be guarantor on a property – having rented privately since I was 18, so I needed the contract for that stability, so once I got the contract as well I also managed to secure a mortgage.

Julia highlights here one of the key difficulties of portfolio working, i.e. that working on a precarious basis makes it very difficult to secure a mortgage (Watts 2000). Although she was able to adjust her portfolio to add a longer-term contract to it, she spoke negatively about this work. This indicates the ambivalence that some participants feel towards portfolio work, not necessarily as a whole, but to aspects of it. Julia self-identified as an *Involuntary* because she has been unable to pursue her passion of working full time in hospitality due to the precarious nature of the work. She has had to take on more secure employment to obtain a mortgage but is unwilling to give up what she describes as her 'passion' so has tried to create her portfolio to suit her life (Mainiero & Sullivan 2006).

Julia's depiction of her two existing jobs provided a useful catalyst to facilitate the emergence, and exploration, of the ambivalent meaning of portfolio work in the interview context. This balancing of different aspects of the portfolio, and the ambivalent meanings of it, seemed to be common amongst participants.
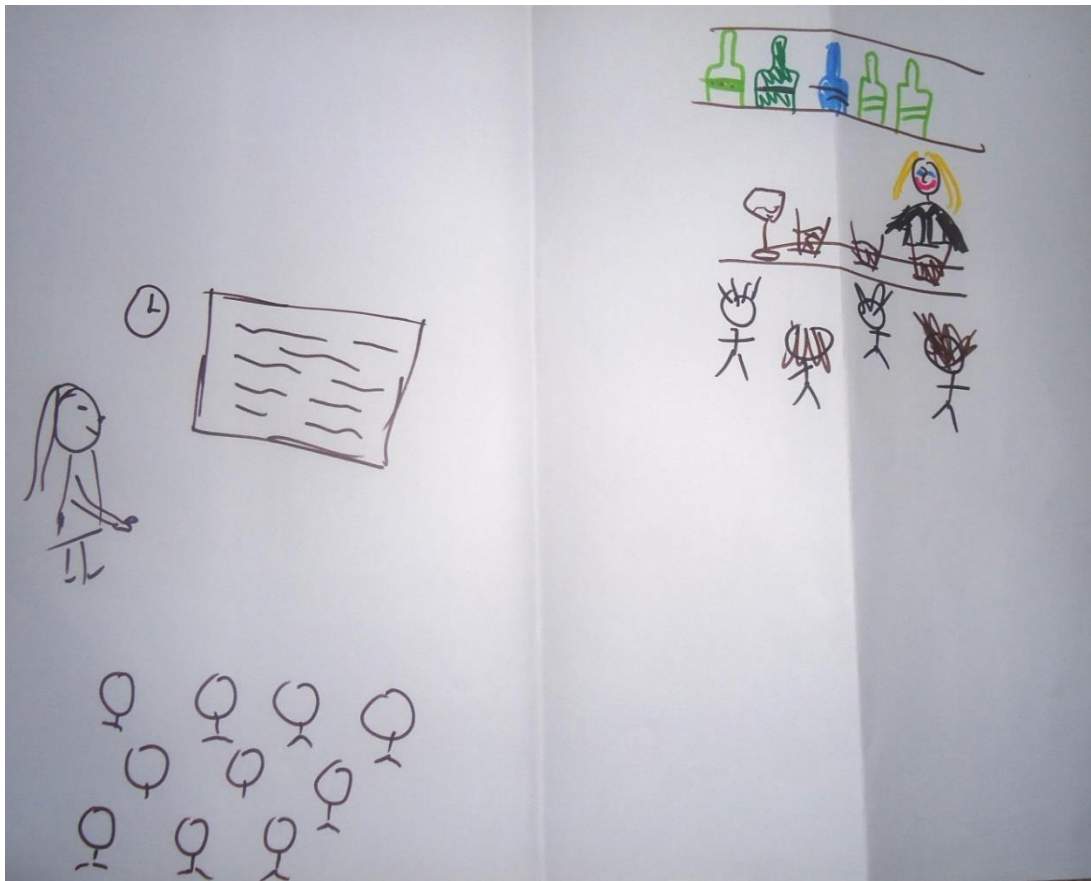
Image 6.3: Sketch produced by Julia at start of interview

Metaphors

The use of metaphors is a common way of 'making what is unfamiliar familiar'

(Dunn & Neumann 2016: 114) and building accessible narratives. Metaphors are a

method of perceiving and interpreting reality which helps to improve our

understanding (Cornelissen et al 2008; Handy 2015), and guides how we feel

(Hochschild 2001), by engaging with and organising the world we inhabit (Morgan

1993). Metaphors can be used to provoke strong emotion and feeling; to elicit

interest, excitement, shock or other feelings (Czarniawska 2001); to provide a

different angle for analysis of situations (Reissner et al 2011); and can be

'unexpectedly revealing' (Handy 2015: 21). Metaphors emerged naturally during the

interview, rather than being imposed or projected (Cornelissen et al 2008).

Metaphors are a word or phrase that has a literal meaning that is used to emphasise the similar qualities of another thing. They were used by participants as a way of explaining, making sense of their experiences and sharing their understanding of what portfolio work means to them. Metaphors allowed them to both get close to their experiences by highlighting similarities but also to distance themselves from them by noting dissimilarities (Oswick et al 2002).

Metaphors represent the phenomenon being studied, in this case portfolio working, in a particular way (Dunn & Neumann 2016) and could be considered to represent a socially available discourse (Watson 2008b: 128). This view is supported by the common recurrence of certain metaphors despite the wide range of participants (see Table 4.1 and Appendix IV). The most commonly recurring metaphors identified in the fourth cycle coding (see 4.8.3) supported some of the key themes identified in the earlier coding cycles with 'balance', albeit interpreted in different ways, appearing in multiple metaphors. The most commonly cited metaphors (see also metaphor data table Appendix IX), and a possible interpretation of their meaning are set out in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Metaphors and their possible meanings

Metaphor	Cited by	Interpretation
'juggling' also described as 'spinning plates' and 'a balancing act'	Caroline, Derek, Raymond, Patrick, Lydia, Anthony, Julia, diary entry	Tietze and Musson (2002: 326), in their research into temporal flexibility, suggest that the metaphor of juggling resonates 'with a precarious balancing of different demands and tasks, which is perpetually threatened by disorder and chaos', and this emerges, to quite an extent, from the data. The balancing of conflicting demands was a common theme across the majority of participants. How participants *felt* about this balance, however, varied. Caroline had become used to it. Derek and Raymond actively used 'juggling' to facilitate their personal objectives and felt supported by understanding employers. Patrick, however, felt his employer was unaware or uninterested in his other jobs. Lydia and Anthony both felt they had a little too much to juggle, and Julia felt that juggling could impact adversely on her performance. Some of the experiences reported were, however, inconsistent. Anthony, for example, despite feeling he had a little too much work, also felt it was 'sort of exciting' to be in this situation.
'swings and roundabouts'	Julia, Joan, Stanley, diary entry	This metaphor refers to a situation where the negative aspects of a situation are balanced by the positives so again refers to the balance symbolised by the juggling metaphor. Julia felt that the potential negative impact of juggling was balanced by the motivation from the variety offered by multiple jobs. Joan used the metaphor to express her contentment with the flexibility of her role, although it emerged during the interview that her flexibility was limited as attendance at conferences and board meetings was totally inflexible. Stanley also expressed contentment with the balance as did two of my lived experience diary entries. Both the 'juggling' and 'swings and roundabouts' metaphors refer to the issue of balancing conflicting demands, which is unsurprising due to the nature of the work. Balancing was also the fourth most commonly occurring word (see table 6.1).

Metaphor	Cited by	Interpretation
'safe pair of hands'	Gavin, Sandy	This metaphor suggests that the individual is reliable and does not make mistakes. Part of this reliability is likely to come from always accepting work that is offered, but this can result in an imbalance or 'too much' work. Refusing work that is offered could, in Gavin's words, 'snowball into a whole load of no' as refusal of work may be perceived by the employing organisation as being unreliable. Maintaining a reputation of reliability and accuracy requires identity work but it also has to look easy.
'a duck'	Lara	Lara uses the evocative metaphor of a duck paddling to try to stay afloat to make the point that she feels she has to present the image, or identity, of being calm and in control despite how difficult she may be finding the juggling. It is interesting that she chose a duck rather than the, more usual, swan as she felt that she was not as graceful as a swan. Her sketch (see Image 5.2) also shows her stick figure with very messy hair; she described herself as the 'frazzled person in the middle'.
'invisible'	Lauren, diary entries, Caroline, Henry	This metaphor depicts the perceived unimportance and lack of status. Although this metaphor was only mentioned specifically by Lauren, it also came up in my lived experience diary on a few occasions, and a number of participants mentioned the feeling of unimportance albeit using different words. Caroline, for example, implied invisibility when describing herself as 'a nobody' as did Henry describing himself as a 'little minion'. Invisibility could be in relation to the worker only presenting a fraction of their identity or to the marginalisation of the worker by the organisation. This feeling of invisibility in specific roles seemed however to be balanced by greater recognition in other roles within the portfolio.

Metaphor	Cited by	Interpretation
'doors' including 'a foot in the door'; 'one door closes, another one opens'; 'knocking at the door' and 'out the door'	Nate, Raymond, Monty, diary entries, Ronan, Joan, Lauren, Charles	This range of metaphors, concerning doors each represent different experiences of portfolio working. 'A foot in the door' was a popular metaphor that can be interpreted as the portfolio worker using this style of work to develop their career in a new organisation or occupation as both *Investors* and *Insatiables* do. 'One door closes, another one opens' highlights the pragmatism and resilience developed by portfolio workers over time to maintain the positive meaning of this working pattern. 'Knocking at the door' refers to being asked to carry out work, which has not specifically been sought out, although it could also refer to proactively seeking more work. The final metaphor of being 'out the door' relates to the ability, and feeling of power, to leave a position that has become untenable for whatever reason.

The metaphors outlined above demonstrate how participants are using metaphors, to build narratives of their lives and to help to create their social, and self, identities. Common identities that emerged, in the context of the interviews, were of individuals that can, or at least try to, balance multiple demands, being reliable, flexible, adaptable, and sought after. Some participants, however, appear to find it challenging to achieve, or even identify, their optimal balance. The issue of trying to establish themselves in organisations with a valid social identity also emerges from the choice of metaphors. Although less commonly used, some participants employed similes as an expressive way of describing and explaining what portfolio work means to them.

Similes

Rather than providing potentially enlightening insights, as metaphors do, similes highlight 'shared properties' between two situations (Veal & Hao 2007) to help to explain meanings. Ronan uses a simile when talking about the growth of his portfolio saying:

> I see it a bit like a plant growing really you, you don't plant B but maybe these sort of branches can come off and, you know, the, you know, it can, it can for me it's the only way to survive. I think I would have gone under years ago if I was just a guitar repairer, or just a journalist or just this or just that

> *Why?*

> Well basically, basically cos there'd never be enough work for me to be – acquisitive in terms of people skills – I'd have become very bored.

Survival relates to the ability to continue to live or exist so 'gone under' would usually be interpreted as failing to survive, i.e. having insufficient money. Ronan, however, appeared to be more concerned about the lack of variety (see 6.4.5). His

use of the plant simile explains the way that branches have been added over time, which seems to happen with a number of portfolio workers, whether proactively seeking new 'branches' or opportunities presenting themselves. Some workers seem to find that this organic growth leads to a shift in focus over time requiring further identity work. Ronan's sketch (Image 5.3) shows how he carried out identity work during the interview by retrospectively applying a coherent structure to his portfolio of work.

An entry from my lived experience diary also uses a simile:

> I feel a bit like a piece of seaweed being washed by the waves, first in one direction, then the other; first towards property, then towards general management, then back to property again. Diary entry 14/12/16

This simile gives the impression that I am responding to forces beyond my control, moving from profession to profession at the whim of organisations. This appears to contradict the results in Table 6.1 showing that the most frequently mentioned words in my lived experience diary were control and power. It appears that I, and many of the participants, *feel* we are in control because we make the final choice of what work to take, and not take, but ultimately it is the organisations that have the work available and can choose whether to offer it, or take it away. When I visualised the seaweed simile, I was imagining seaweed tethered to a rock being washed from one side to another; the rock perhaps representing my more fixed self-identity and the waves washing me from one occupation, and concomitant social identity, to another. It is a fundamental characteristic of seaweed that it responds to the power of the waves; it is perhaps an equally fundamental characteristic of portfolio workers that they are capable of responding to external forces by exhibiting the adaptability and flexibility that organisations require

(Bernhardt & Krause 2014). This diary entry also highlights how I have begun to think about how the portfolio fits together, rather than just taking whatever jobs are offered, exercising agency to achieve a better balance. This also enables me to take a variety of 'discursive spins' (Alvesson 2008: 14), allowing me to rationalise a more coherent social identity (Hall 2002).

The use of metaphors and similes, to create images and convey meanings, supports the assertion of storytelling being an accepted way of creating identity (see 3.3.5). The similarity of the metaphors used by participants suggests some commonality of experience and interpretation despite the wide range of participants. A number of key themes emerged from the various approaches to coding (see 4.8.3) and these are explored below.

6.4 Key Themes - Identifying Tensions and Interpreting Meanings

The most popular theme that emerged from the initial coding was 'time', and this was supported by the literature review. The irrefutable fact about time is that each individual has a limited amount of time available, limited, ultimately, by their lifespan although the extent of this is usually unknown. This has manifested itself in the work-life balance discourse which implies that less work means more time for life (see 2.5.6). The meaning of work-life balance will however vary depending on the individual, and the context, as balance is an ambiguous word.

6.4.1 Balance

Many metaphors cited (see 6.3) highlight participants balancing conflicting demands, which is unsurprising when working in multiple roles. Balance was also

the fourth most frequently occurring word in the second cycle coding. The prevalent discourse of work-life balance (see 2.5.6) clearly emerges as important to all participants; however, most participants report that they believe that they have 'too much work'. This seems to contradict their advocacy of the importance of, and ability to achieve, work-life balance. The perception of too much work seems to result, mainly, from the impression that organisations will stop offering them work if they turn work down so that there might not be enough work in the future. It also appears that the meaning of balance is interpreted more widely than just in terms of work-life balance.

Portfolio workers appear to manipulate their social identities to fit what they perceive employing organisations require, for example, demonstrating availability, reliability and adaptability as evidenced by the recurrent metaphor of a safe pair of hands (see 6.3). This availability, however, needs to be balanced with the need to preserve time for both work and life. Some participants stated they felt that they had too much work. Anthony, for example, was surprised when he calculated how far in excess of his contracted hours he was working. This could suggest that he has simply been too busy to work it out, but it is more likely that he is enjoying his work as he is not counting, or resenting, the hours he spends at work; or that he no longer strictly demarcates life and work. Ron, who was working in one full-time contract, two part-time roles and four voluntary roles also did not calculate the hours he spent working saying:

> I haven't looked, I've never worked it out; I never wanted to work it out.

This appeared to be because much of his time was spent on his voluntary work, or gift work (Handy 1995b), which was his passion, so he did not perceive this as

'work' thus blending work and life (Hopson & Ledger 2009). Sebastian supported

this view of the hours of work being unimportant when he said:

> it doesn't feel like it's overwork cos I really enjoy it – um – but it's yeah it
> can be, it can be tricky that's kind of the weekends and evenings...I love
> that side of it and... notionally, I'm, I'm getting paid for two days a week for
> [organisation] – but I put in – every hour I need to – outside of my other
> bits of – work.

Sebastian highlights here that despite the widely espoused work-life balance and

flexibility portfolio workers benefit from (e.g. Clinton et al 2006) he ends up

working weekends and evenings describing this as 'tricky' presumably because he

is trying to balance the needs of his family and the needs of the organisations he

works for. He also suggests that he is working more hours than he is paid for,

which is not uncommon for part-time workers (Conway & Sturges 2014). However

he states that it does not *feel* like 'overwork', which implies that if work is

enjoyable enough then it becomes so integrated (Lewis & Cooper 2005) with life

that it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two. These participants all self-

identified as *Insatiables,* with Ron and Anthony also self-identifying as

Impassioned, which might indicate that they are more concerned about quality of

work than hours.

The difficulty of achieving an acceptable work-life balance, seems to be due to

managing demands of multiple employing organisations to, what Amy describes as

'everybody's satisfaction'. When a good balance is achieved workers can find

themselves carrying out work that is of benefit to more than one employing

organisation achieving a synergy that can mean they are effectively being paid

more than once for a piece of work. This can be balanced against any free work

(Handy 1995b) that is not being paid but is offering some other benefit, either now

or at some future date. It can be difficult to measure the balance between the two aspects as a portfolio worker has to carry out unpaid work such as promotion and networking in order to obtain further work. It is also possible to combine paid work and free work in such a way that productive capacity is maximised, but it is difficult to allocate the amount of time spent on each. For example, when inspecting a property close to the coast, then having a walk on the beach whilst mentally planning a presentation, it is difficult to allocate the amounts of time related to paid work, free work, and leisure. This difficulty of categorising and allocating work time can lead to a tendency amongst participants to push the balance too far towards work at the expense of life. Anthony describes his experience:

> I have been better in the past at saying no, but I do tend to get into this sort of pattern, which is to take on too much, and then gradually have to, I think there's a sort of, a sort of, um - - - it's sort of exciting in a way, I'm sort of testing myself; right we'll see how much I can take on and how, how near I can get to actually pushing myself over the edge and then see if you can extricate yourself from it without suffering any bad consequences which is really silly.

This does seem to be a common approach towards trying to achieve the optimal balance; perhaps because it provides the challenge (see 6.4.5) that the majority of participants cited as an important part of their decision to portfolio work. My lived experience diary records one of the occasions when my own portfolio became unbalanced.

> Thinking about one of my participants who says they take on more and more work until something happens, I guess I reached that point yesterday. I rushed off and went to the cashpoint whilst thinking about where to go next. I forgot to pick up my cash and only realised when driving home. Stopped off again at the cash point where my cash slip for £100 was blowing forlornly in the breeze with no cash… So – perhaps that is my trigger to tell me that I have so much work I'm now losing money as a result. What am I going to do about it? I don't know, I'm too busy to work out how to

extricate myself! And again, later today, I spent all day working on the [professional organisation] exam. As I don't have the base day-to-day knowledge it takes me a lot of time. I was really getting on well with it. I was on the last question when I realised I had enough in that particular section so I saved the paper as October deleting all the April stuff. Then when I went back to April I realised that I had forgotten to save it so I had just lost a day's work. I cried. I then got on with redoing it and hope that I have done it in a more succinct way. This is the sort of error I NEVER make so I really need to be careful as this is three mistakes in a week. I somehow need to take back control before worse mistakes happen but work is flooding in from [organisation] – a whole new batch of dissertations that I wasn't expecting – and I'm already negotiating with the children how much work I can do in the Easter holidays. Where did it all go wrong? Diary entry 29/2/16

This extract highlights the tension between the desire for flexibility, variety, challenge and control, and the need to achieve a balance that enables preservation of a social identity that will ensure continuity of work but that does not result in adverse outcomes impacting negatively on self-identity. Although a large number of participants reported being in control as one of the main advantages of portfolio work, in this extract it is clear that I feel I have let things get out of control and am struggling to balance all demands resulting in a negative impact on both productivity and my own self-identity. During the period of this diary entry I however had to maintain the adaptable, flexible, reliable social identity to ensure that work continued to be offered. With portfolio work, the individual control, and nature of the contracts, means that there is the risk of work overload. Organisational control relates only to the relevant fractional contract, and there is no legal limitation, or responsibility, in respect of hours worked; it is entirely within the control of the individual which can result in burnout (Fleming 2017). In Elena's case, doing too much gave rise to a dangerous imbalance, resulting in mental illness. She says:

> that's the perhaps negative thing about me that I can't realise what my limits are because I think I, I pushed my limits and I that – so in towards the end of the PGCE – um at Easter – um because I think I was getting unwell then – now looking back I think I was I started to lose it, losing it there (laughs)… – I think I pushed myself too far there – and I didn't realise it er and I didn't realise it up until er, er I came back, came back here actually after the Summer (laughs) and had a breakdown so um – I think that's, I think that's a negative – for sure.

Here Elena highlights what can happen when the balance, in this case between different work commitments, is lost. It is left up to the portfolio worker to decide when the right balance is reached, and Elena feels the inability to know her limits is a negative trait. This pushing of limits by participants seemed to be due largely to the inability to say 'no' mentioned by many of them. As Gavin says:

> one of my weaknesses is I'm gonna have to start saying no to a few more people at the [organisation] because otherwise – I just feel that I'm being exploited and I don't want to, I don't want, I don't want to feel that way and if you can just go in, do one or two - modules that you like – that's the ideal um the problem is at, at places like this like this, once you start say, well if you do start saying no it kind of – it's, it can snowball into a whole load of no and I, you know, I, it's very difficult to manage that.

Gavin is concerned with promoting a positive social identity as an adaptable, flexible and reliable worker. There is, however, a tension between the need to do this to obtain work and it resulting in too much work leaving him feeling exploited. He appears to have a clear idea about the amount of work he would like, to achieve his optimal balance, but feels concerned that if he turns work down he will not get enough work. The anxiety of not having enough work is commonly cited by participants. For example, Anthony says:

> the anxiety which I hear a lot from, not just people in my profession but plumbers and electricians, butchers, say yes to everything because you don't know where the next famine is coming along and you know, people might not give you any more work or – which is not rational.

Anthony is talking here about individuals that are self-employed rather than portfolio workers, but this continuing concern about where future work will come from is a phenomenon that is common to both types of worker. This can lead to over extending themselves by taking on too much work. Anthony went on to explain that, after leaving his full-time permanent position, he took five months off to tour America with his wife and on his return he said:

> I started to get a bit, a bit anxious, and thinking there's all this space and I'm not doing anything, and I don't belong to anything and you know, you'd go to conferences and people would say where do you work and you'd be stumped for an answer, you'd be thinking well not only don't I know where I work but I don't know who I am – you know, because I was, sort of felt defined by working in the [public sector organisation] so – er I think that probably had something to do with a period of madness really, just taking, applying for lots of things, not expecting to get them all and then when they all came up – um, saying yes to them.

Although Anthony said that he took on work for mainly financial reasons, from this extract it emerges that a significant part of his anxiety was due to a loss of identity. Without an organisation to belong to, his identity was at risk. His quest for somewhere to belong, to provide a basis for his work identity, resulted in him taking on many different roles. His opinion, expressed in the first extract, that it was 'not rational' to take everything he was offered, is based on his experience of ending up having more work than he needs. The *Involuntaries,* who have experienced not having enough work, are more likely to be able to justify the needing to take whatever work is available.

Lydia also fails to say no to options, but for a different reason. She says:

> I think it's um, probably in some ways, maybe a little bit not very good at saying no to um – to options because I can see the potential in them and that can be, you know, social as well as professional and working um – offers.

Here she is talking about options beyond purely work-orientated ones suggesting that she is also carrying out identity play (Ibarra & Petriglieri 2010) but, in this case, with a view to achieving a balance between her social, professional and working identities by exploring wider possibilities within each of them.

Despite being aware of the potentially negative effects of having too much work, many participants seemed to be unwilling, or unable, to reduce their workload, highlighting another tension, or difficult balance, this time between control and lack of control. This appeared to be mainly due to either wanting to try out new opportunities (*Insatiables/ Investors)* or fears of not having enough work (commonly *Involuntaries*). There is also a challenge (see 6.4.5) that results from taking on too much work but still managing to do it. Despite many participants reporting that they had too much work, the majority of them did feel they had the final choice on how much work to take on and, ultimately, the ability to turn it down giving them a sense of agency.

Another reason for taking on more work seemed to be the validation, or positive self-identity, that it provided. Ronan, for example, said:

> I realised from an early day, early days of being a student I never, ever thought that I was good at anything – I think you'll find that's a common theme as well with people that do what I do – um so therefore – you, you, you don't have the pressure of having to succeed – I've never done a job interview – I've never been interviewed for a band – people have always knocked on my door so far.

Ronan, inter alia, plays for world famous bands, runs his own business, has a PhD, is a technical author and teaches at one of the top universities in the world, yet says he thought he was not good at anything. He was quite right in his assumption

that other portfolio workers shared this view of not being good enough. Patrick

stated:

> even though I teach – um I still keep pinching myself and thinking
> someone's going to walk in the classroom and say you really shouldn't be
> doing that (laughs),

and my lived experience diary describes myself as feeling 'a bit of a fraud' (see p.

161). Many participants were working in positions that were new to them, or

beyond their direct experience, and suffering from 'imposter syndrome' (Caza et al

2018; Clance & Imes 1978). This discomfort, however, seemed to dissipate with

experience because each time something new is successfully completed,

confidence grows that future new challenges will be too. As Rick says:

> I mean some of these jobs I'm doing, you know, are, are very challenging –
> but – you know, I, I enjoy that because I know that, and I also have the
> confidence now to know that I can – I can meet those challenges.

These extracts suggest that taking on new work can help to provide a positive self-

identity. It may be that portfolio work provides the opportunity to challenge

oneself in a number of different roles to achieve self-development (Petriglieri et al

2019), and the considerable efforts made to overcome imposter syndrome can lead

'to more success' (Jarrett 2010). It is also likely that a stronger self-identity, that is

likely to be very firmly tied to work, will develop due to the time spent thinking

about future engagements, networking and ensuring the appearance of constant

availability to organisations (Reid 2015).

The meaning of balance to portfolio workers seems to encompass not only the

amount of work, but also the *potential* to achieve an optimal balance by making

changes. It is, however, not easy to achieve this balance as there are other factors

involved in the balance, and the factors will vary depending on what the individual

is seeking from work. When the balance is right it leads to very positive meanings

as the diary entry below shows:

> Fabulous portfolio day today. I've stopped teaching now so suddenly have four days to plan and organise whatever I want to do so decided to start the day with a swim. Whilst swimming (in a nice fairly empty pool) I planned my day and week. Started on one [institution] course when I got back, then did some PhD transcription, now for some finances then start on my [another institution] marking. A good combination of different jobs and some exercise. So why is it such a good day? Just having the time to think and plan rather than firefighting I think. How can I achieve this balance always? By taking less? Trouble is, [institution] is very poorly paid for what I do but it gives me the social interaction I lack in other roles. Not sure whether there is a solution. Maybe some permanency in one role to allow me to reduce the time in others? Diary Entry 21/3/16

The difficulty of achieving the right balance is highlighted but also the enjoyment

when it does work. The entry suggests that this 'fabulous' day is not a common

occurrence; that there is often too much to do, and that it requires reacting to

work (firefighting) that is outside my direct control. Looking at what made it such

a good day, I have suggested that it is having the time to think and plan, but it is

clear that it is still a day filled with activity. I have stated that what made it a

particularly good day was the ability to pursue different activities: exercise, work

for one institution, study, personal administration and work for another

institution, i.e. a good balance of paid and free work (Handy 1995b). This entry

also draws attention to the balance in relation to what I believe is being obtained

from different jobs; one institution is paying badly but it provides the social

interaction that is lacking in an online teaching role. Balance therefore does not

only mean in relation to different types of work (Handy 1995b) but also balance of

the attributes of, or meanings of, the various types of work. The extract suggests I

perceive that I have more control, or sense of agency (Petriglieri et al 2018),

working in this way than in a more standard traditional form of employment, yet I am still striving for control, seeking an optimal balance which seems to be achieved only rarely. The contrast with the extract above and that dated 29/2/16 (see p. 218) is dramatic, highlighting the polarity of emotions (Petriglieri et al 2019) experienced in this type of work. The desire to balance conflicting demands seems to lead to tension, for example, between anxiety about security and the wish to work flexibly.

6.4.2 Flexibility

Flexibility, which is related to the overarching issue of use of time, was mentioned by all participants, most of them more than once, being commonly cited as one of the main advantages of the portfolio working pattern. Again however, there is a wider discourse around the meaning of the term flexibility (see 2.5.6). Flexibility has been somewhat idealised (e.g. Taylor 2017; Savickas 2000) as being valuable and socially desirable, which shapes people's identification with it. Individuals are likely to interpret flexibility positively as a way of coping with the uncertainty in their working lives, but, in some cases, it was not a wholly positive aspect. It appeared to depend on who was expected to display the flexibility – the individual or the organisation – and how balanced between the parties the requirements for flexibility were. Where flexibility was specifically discussed and agreed, under the psychological contract, it was perceived more positively than when it was enforced as enshrined in the written contract. Some participants understood flexibility in terms of their own flexibility to respond to needs. Amy, for example, says:

> I think you have to be very flexible – um - - you have to be able to yeah it's that flexibility of understanding – that one person's needs might be greater one week than somebody else's – and being able to address that – and deal

> with it – to everybody's satisfaction without – dropping – the other things you're doing.

Although Amy is talking about her own flexibility here, she has also highlighted the importance of balance, in this case achieving a balance between demands from multiple organisations. This requires the ability to prioritise based on need but, at the same time, maintain a high quality of service to all employing organisations. Gavin also talks about the need to be flexible, but, in his case, in the context of adaptability, saying:

> I can probably fit into different environments, I'm flexible enough to fit into different environments – and 90% of the time, get on with the people that I'm working with, adapt what I, adaptability that's what, flexibility, adaptability I would say.

Gavin and Amy are both talking about flexibility as meaning something that they can choose to exercise rather than something that the organisation may, or may not, offer them. It is almost taken for granted that flexibility forms an integral part of the portfolio working concept, and they both appear to be making their flexibility part of their espoused social identity to promote themselves to employing organisations. They also seem to have adopted it as an integral part of their own self-identities perhaps due to its positive connotations. This can, however, result in self-exploitation (Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011; Murgia et al 2017) where they are so keen to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability that they push themselves too far and resent the lack of reciprocity.

Lydia talked about flexibility in terms of the organisation offering it, and the need for it to be reciprocal, as part of the psychological contract. She says:

> I think probably that, the fact that it is um – so flexible to be allow you to balance and it, it works both ways I mean both, I think both organisations

> benefit from my ability to be able to maybe um move working days to suit the need for whatever might be happening within their organisation on a particular day and to be able to attend to that um I, I'm flexible and that allows them to be flexible with me as well - um – and that's very positive.

Although Lydia's written contracts specify certain days and times, she has developed a mutually beneficial psychological contract whereby both parties move days and times to suit circumstances. This allows her to maintain her voluntary positions and her domestic responsibilities. In this case, the meaning of flexibility to Lydia is 'very positive.' Some participants however find that flexibility means something different to organisations, or clients, than it does to them. Esme (*In-transition/Inundated*), for example, states:

> I'm really struggling with 9 to 5.
>
> *In what way?*
>
> Um cos I have to sit at my desk or be here physically from 9 to 5. I've all my, my career... when I arrived and when I went was entirely down to me and my discretion providing I got my job done... some days I think this would be so better if I could spread this out on the kitchen table at home and then, you know, take the dog for a walk and um clarify my thoughts and then come back and I'd do it better... I suppose the only downside for me is this 9 to 5... I think I'd do a better job – if I just sat at the kitchen table, I'd still be on my emails – what is it about me physically sitting in this room that is so important?

Esme was working three days a week in her main job and her experience illustrates how the rhetoric of flexibility can clash with the reality (Bratton 2015), resulting in frustration. Flexibility is being increasingly offered by organisations as a response to societal demands for work-life balance. It is widely promoted as a positive, beneficial aspect of 'new' careers therefore an attractive element to incorporate into an identity narrative. Esme's understanding of work has been reframed and reshaped through a rhetoric of flexibility which changes her expectations of, and

the way she experiences, her work. The difficulty appears to be that, to the employing organisation, the meaning of flexibility is offering part-time work on days of her choice. To Esme, however, based on her experience in her previous full-time permanent role, this role does not fit her interpretation of flexibility. Requiring her to 'sit at her desk' all day, she believes, results in reduced productivity.

Justin was similarly struggling with a recent change to a job that was less flexible than he had been used to. He says:

> one of the, the things that stands out most about doing this type of work –
> is that even though you're probably doing a full-time job when you add all
> the bits together – it kind of doesn't feel like that – there's a variety about it
> – and there's um - - there's almost an absence of shackles – so not being –
> tied to – you know a particular institution and the culture that they, they
> espouse – um – here's getting pretty close to being a nuisance.

The 'nuisance' he referred to was the desire of one of the organisations that he worked for to have him in the office three days a week. Prior to this he had worked for three different organisations, based from home, just attending meetings and events as required. Justin suggests that the variety means that it does not feel like a full-time job, but his use of the phrase an 'absence of shackles' suggests that he rejects the organisational requirement to fully embrace their culture and structure. He appears to want to distance himself from the organisation, affiliating with it only to the extent he perceives is necessary, but not wanting to belong to or be owned by it.

Like Esme, Justin felt the requirement to attend the office was constraining mainly due to having a very long commute that he felt was unproductive. Justin became so frustrated with this lack of flexibility that, a couple of months after our

interview, he left this organisation and added a new job, offering the flexibility he required, to his portfolio. Being 'tied' or 'shackled' to an organisation did not fit with Justin's interpretation of the meaning of flexibility and contravened his self-identity as a portfolio worker with a choice of where and when to work.

What appears to be so attractive about portfolio work is that participants perceive that they are free of organisational control. They seem to be rejecting previous discourses of the organisation man (Whyte 1956) and ideal worker (Lewis & Cooper 2005; Werth & Brownlow 2018) who obtain meaning and a sense of belonging from organisations, preferring to affiliate themselves only to the extent that is necessary. This rejection of organisations suggests that portfolio workers no longer view them as positive, benevolent places which they want to be part of but something they want to distance themselves from. This is likely to reflect the changes in the world of work whereby personal experiences, particularly for *Involuntaries* who have been rejected by organisations when experiencing redundancy, mean that organisations are no longer perceived as a positive place to be.

To Ronan, flexibility is so important that he refuses to work with clients that will not offer it. He says:

> my customers have to, have to be flexible um – and as I say you know, when they come to me for lessons or whatever – but it's great for them because then it means that they can do the same with me – so quite often, you know, if they need to change a lesson I'll, I'll be able to find a gap so if you look at my diary – there's gaps – it's like with sort of fitting you in today I could plan a gap for you but I may have had to phone you and say I'm sorry I can't do that now that's frustrating isn't it – to, you know, to the, to make it work so yeah fluid dynamics would be jokingly the my, my, my approach – not quite technically correct – it's essential I can't, can't function with anybody that can't.

I saw his 'fluid dynamics' in action when our first interview was postponed and, when I arrived for the rescheduled one, his earlier appointments had overrun, so I joined him walking his dogs to maximise our interview time. The meaning of flexibility to Ronan is clearly very different to the meaning attributed to it by Esme's employer. Ronan states that he demands total flexibility to manage his own time, but, when looking at his diary with him, it was clear that there were certain immovable commitments such as teaching at a university, touring with a band and charity fund raising musical events. His reference to 'fluid dynamics' relates to the interactions of two parties reacting to each other's demands. He appears to display different levels of flexibility, depending on the perceived importance of the interaction, but is of the opinion that he can achieve the flexibility he needs to balance his multiple jobs.

What emerges from all participants is that flexibility is a crucial element of portfolio working and that the meaning of flexibility is context dependent. There is the potential for a mismatch between organisational definitions of flexibility and those of portfolio workers (see 2.5.6). Esme's and Justin's organisations, for example, thought they were being very flexible by allowing them to choose which three days a week they worked but having to choose three days, and stick with them, and being unable to work from home, felt very inflexible to them causing frustration. Lydia and Ronan, however, had both been able to negotiate a level of mutually acceptable flexibility leading to a positive outcome.

In addition to the different interpretations of flexibility between workers and organisations, there also appeared to be a conflict between flexibility and the

responsibility portfolio workers feel towards their clients, students or customers.

This tension is highlighted by Lara, who says:

> I've clients who I see at home texting me wanting to be seen and then you know the only times they can come are this, that and the other and so it's just trying to accommodate them and not kind of, I suppose I do feel responsible for, for them to a certain extent so I think it's, I think that could be quite stressful – if you weren't really kind of a bit resilient and also just the, if I know that [company] is a bit fed up with me having changed a clinic not letting that kind of weigh me down erm and like today I missed Harvest Festival 'cos of Pilates and usually, I mean they're really good and quite often I you know I have changed classes in the past but because I cancelled one two weeks ago to do the adoption workshops I didn't feel I could cancel the class and they couldn't, and two people couldn't come later so, so I missed it so I think it's just the resilience just comes from, it's a bit of everything really it's... there is a definite conflict of interests.

Lara's portfolio (see Image 5.2) requires complicated high-level scheduling skills as she has nine different jobs. In this style of work, it is inevitable that there will be cancellations, changes and rescheduling, and there is a need for workers to become used to this, developing the resilience Lara refers to, to continue to view flexibility positively. She provides an example of where her flexible working pattern resulted in her missing her younger daughter's performance. The Pilates session she refers to is one that forms part of her own business; therefore she has no organisational responsibilities; her responsibilities are solely to her clients. This sense of self-responsibility seems to be a common prerequisite of portfolio work, a trait that is chosen, but also required, by clients, customers and employers. Lara was clearly concerned about missing her daughter's performance but felt that her obligations to her clients outweighed this concern. She might also have been anxious about the impact on future work if she came to be perceived as unreliable by her clients undermining her carefully crafted social identity. It is also notable that of all her roles, it is her family that is given the lowest priority in this conflict.

This was reported quite often by participants due to the need to preserve the social identity of being reliable, available and flexible. Although Lara felt conflicted by her responsibility for her clients, and guilt about missing her daughter's performance, she had the power to make the decision to fulfil her obligations to her clients; it was her choice and not imposed upon her by an employer. Despite the flexibility in her various roles not offering her the ability to satisfy all needs, having the power to make the ultimate choice herself resulted in an overall positive perception of flexibility.

6.4.3 Power and control

The above findings concerning flexibility support Valcour et al's (2007) contention that having *control* over time spent working is of greater importance to portfolio workers than the number of hours they are working. For the purposes of analysis, control and power have been grouped together due to their similarities despite having slightly different meanings (see 2.5.3). The literature review (e.g. Collin & Young 2000; Ehrenreich 2006) highlighted a general perception that the employer has the greater power in the employment relationship emanating from the employees' insecurity (Maranda & Comeau 2000), but the relationship is more nebulous (Butler 2014) than this. It will differ depending on the individual circumstances and motivations of each party (see Typology, Appendix VI).

The perception of flexibility seemed to depend mainly on the extent to which they felt in control of how, when, and where they carried out their work and to what extent they felt the organisation was in control. Having control of what they did at work made them more likely to obtain intrinsic rewards from it (Kalleberg 2016:113). Charles (*Involuntary*), for example, says:

> the fact I've got control over when, and or to a large extent, when and how I do the job. For example stuff I do for the [organisation] scheme um you know… if it's a nice sunny afternoon on a Sunday I'll go out and do it because you're not reliant on making arrangements with other people, but certainly this work for [institution] and some of the other things I do I, I can choose when I do it and its er and how I do it.

For Charles control is likely to be important having been made redundant after a long career in the public sector. He likes the opportunity to work how he wants to, and when, and later states that for him portfolio working is 'graduating into a permanent shift' because he enjoys having control of his time. Working on a Sunday might be construed as a constraint by some individuals as it is traditionally a day of rest spent on leisure, religious observance, or with family, but it is Charles' *choice* to work on a Sunday – rather than a requirement – and something he would have been unable to do in his previous full-time job. He can combine work with a walk in the sunshine, demonstrating his ability to blend work and life, achieving a positive perception of flexibility.

Even where control was not *exercised* by participants, the impression that they had control made them feel powerful, and this is difficult to achieve when working for one organisation full-time.

Nate (*In-transition/Insatiable*), for example, felt in control of his career having used his network to move away from his original career, where he had become bored, to experiment with a new possible self (Gratton & Scott 2016) then creating a new career path to develop it (*In-transition)*. His sketch (see Image 6.4) shows how he has identified a coherent theme to his portfolio, in this case quality. The arrows on his sketch depict his intention to reduce his lecturing role and increase his quality assessment role in the future by carrying out additional training and working for more organisations. He describes his 'foot in the door' as the start of a

clearly articulated career plan with the intention of remaining in portfolio work to retain the flexibility to spend time with his young family before 'reining back, scaling back' and 'having more me time' as he gets older.
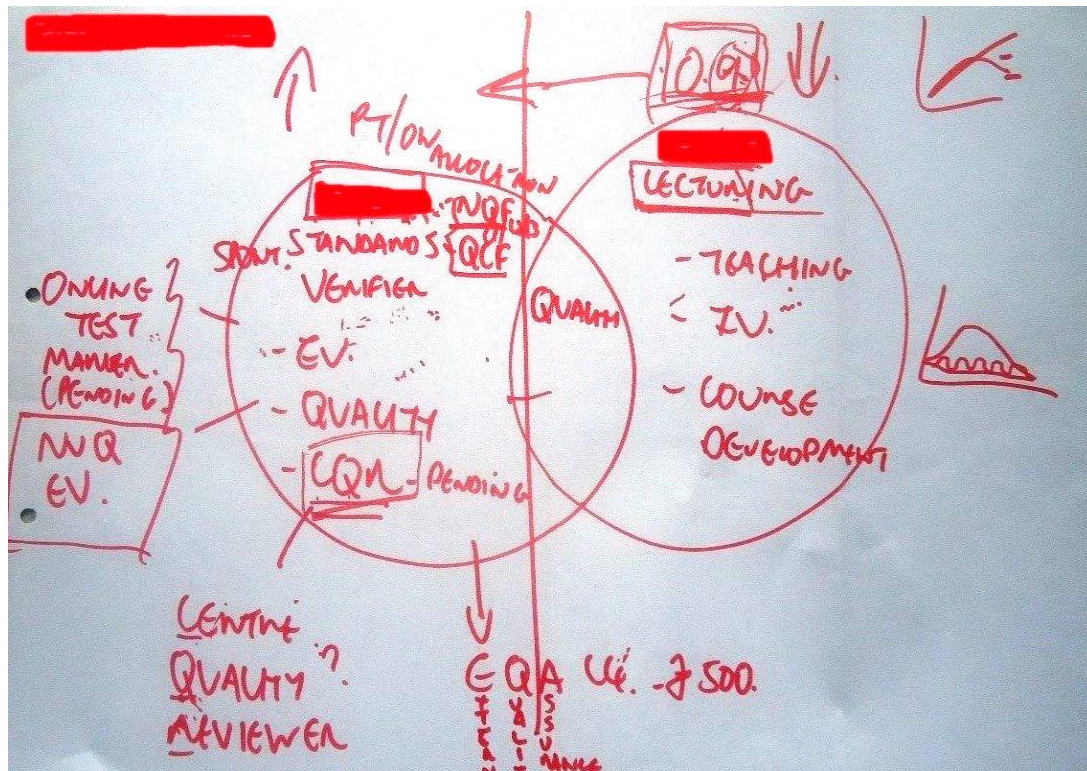
Image 6.4: Sketch produced by Nate during interview

Gavin also, despite working on two fairly precarious contractual bases, depicted his career plan in a similar way to Nate showing his existing and his aspirational career. Gavin's sketch (see Image 6.5) also shows how he sees a theme emerging – commercial training – that can link his two existing streams of work providing coherence. In both cases the participants feel that they have the power to shape their portfolios to achieve desired goals.
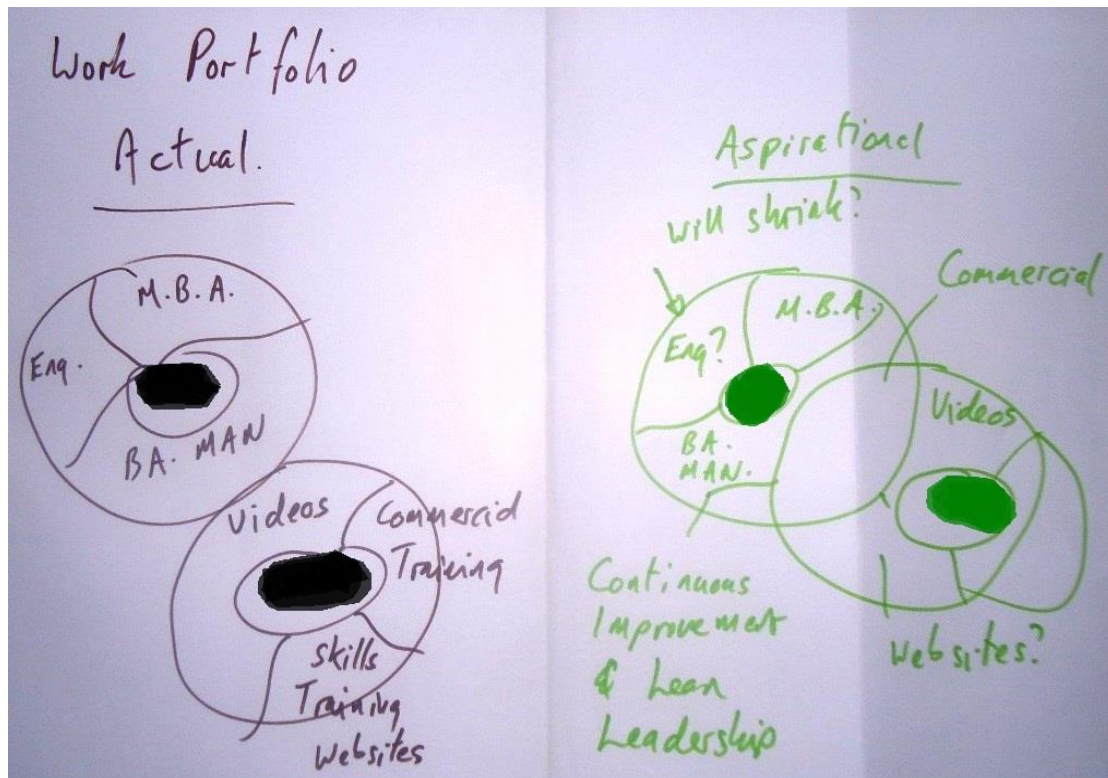
Image 6.5: Sketch produced by Gavin during interview

Even when it appears that the organisation has the balance of power, perhaps due to providing the main source of employment, portfolio workers, who are accustomed to taking responsibility for themselves, seem to be able to take control. The diary entry below shows how I was able to respond to an event that was outside my control, taking back control by developing my own solution to the reduction in work and then reframing this as a positive aspect of portfolio work to reinforce my positive self-identity.

> Just before I went away, [individual] emailed saying she understood I was withdrawing from my contract for the [subject] module, I went straight back saying that this was not what I had understood from [line manager], and he confirmed this. She then wrote to say she had commissioned someone else as had thought I wasn't doing it. This was really annoying as I had wasted time preparing two presentations. However, this spurred me on to email [individual] in response to one of his on [company], offering to take a longer contract to give me some security and to reduce my tendency to take on too much work in case some of it suddenly comes to an end. This is a really positive aspect of portfolio working; when one door closes, you can simply open another one. Diary entry 7/1/16

This entry supports Charles' and Nate's views of the control element of portfolio working. It is clear from this diary entry that I felt confident in my ability to proactively negotiate terms with another employing organisation to 'fill the gap' left by cancellation of a contract for one module. Other participants took a more reactive approach to obtaining work, just agreeing to take work when people came 'knocking at the door' but this also gave a sense of agency as it was within their power to either accept it or turn it down.

Control was exhibited either by leaving the problematic job and finding another one, as Justin did, by renegotiating existing roles as I did, or simply by the belief that they had the power to exercise control if they wanted to, which appeared to come largely from not being fully invested in just one organisation and having various options to choose between. This sense of power resulted in commonly reported perception of liberation, or freedom. Derek specifically mentions the shift in balance of power between him and the organisation and how liberating this feels when he states:

> it feels a bit more like I've got a bit more control rather than the organisation just having all the control, me having none and being completely at their, you know, beck and call... this way I feel that I have a bit more control which means I'm able – to steady things a bit more, Jan, and although it's hard to get the balance right it does mean if I did need to go and get more work or whatever – you know, I'm in a position where I can do that and it's, it's quite nice, it's quite liberating, in some respects, to think well actually if I don't want to do this anymore – you know, whatever I mean I'm – I was kind of thinking as well when I, my brother lives in New Zealand there, now – he works at university – and um I thought well, you know, if there's a time when I haven't got, well what will I do if I haven't got any work and I thought well actually if I haven't got any work for a month or so I could go and see my brother in New Zealand and that'd be great but I haven't, that opportunity hasn't arisen but – probably increasingly, if I keep being successful, I'll have to make sure I engineer those pockets of time to say – act.

This sense of agency could partly be due to Derek's initial identification as an *Involuntary,* a position which, when he was made redundant, felt very out of control. He presents going to see his brother in New Zealand as an opportunity he could take if he has no work. This could be him reframing the potentially negative event of being out of work into a positive situation. He then goes on to suggest that, if successful, he will make time to do this. Either way, he has not yet taken this time off demonstrating a tension between what he *feels* he can do and what he *actually* does. Derek seems to be comparing his portfolio working situation with his previous standard employment whereby he would only have been able to take two weeks annual leave which he considered insufficient to go to New Zealand. He feels that he is able to have more control over taking time off even though he has not yet exercised it. When questioned, it turned out that it was more the impression that he could take time off if he wanted to, although in reality, he did not do so due to perceived pressure of work.

Taking time off is particularly problematic for portfolio workers as, in this style of working, the tradition of holiday being an entitlement or reward for full-time work is not applicable. Many portfolio workers are not paid for holiday, and this can impact on their social identity. If they do take time off, this could impact positively, suggesting that they are successful enough to take extended time off, or it could impact negatively due to the stigma attached to not working; it depends on how it is framed and the cultural norms which they have internalised. Taking time off can also undermine the carefully curated social identity of being flexible, adaptable and available. Derek's impression of being able to take time off therefore appears to be a 'subjective sense of freedom' (Barley & Kunda 2004: 242) but it seems to be this perception of freedom that is important to workers.

How participants judge what portfolio work means to them is relative to both comparison with their view of other people's work and with their own previous experiences. Many participants reported the freedom of portfolio work which implies that traditional full-time employment with one organisation is constricting and constraining. For those portfolio workers that have previously had long careers in the public sector, working within its relatively restrictive policies and procedures, being able to work when and where you want to provides a sense of freedom. For portfolio workers that have worked their way through a traditional hierarchical occupational career, being able to include work that interests them, rather than a job that supports their occupational progression, provides a sense of freedom. For portfolio workers that are new to the world of work, the sense of freedom seems to come from choosing what elements of work to include within their portfolio, although this is tempered by the need to earn an income as in Ron's case (see 6.4.4). Derek mentions the freedom to take time off but, in reality, many portfolio workers do not seem to take much time off. This may be due to the work-life blend they have achieved enabling them to fit in other commitments. It could also be that if they enjoy most of the work they are doing, and have control of what work is done, when, where and how it is done, then the intrinsic rewards (Kalleberg 2016) outweigh taking much time off. As Sebastian says (see 6.4.1) when talking about working evenings and weekends, 'it doesn't feel like it's overwork cos I really enjoy it'. It may, however, be that individuals are too afraid to take time off due to the anxiety about future work mentioned by Anthony (see 6.4.1).

Control, like balance and flexibility, is also related to the overarching theme of time. Rick says:

> One of the advantages is that you don't have a boss. I mean, at [institution] I know I haven't got a boss because no one will ever – um tell me what I, what I can't do, they're encouraging me to do what I want basically – so none of these I've got a boss and that's, that's the key – so I am – I'm very much in charge of my time – which I think is a gift and I think what makes most people unhappy – when they're not in charge of their own time.

Rick is suggesting that having control of his time results in happiness. He also highlights not having a boss as an advantage of portfolio work which is another example of the rejection of the traditional hierarchical organisational career. A diary entry of my own supports Rick's contention that having control of your own time is important:

> Was reading an article in the Telegraph magazine (7/10/17) this morning with a profile of Carine Roitfeld, former editor of Vogue Paris, now Global Fashion Editor of Harper's Bazaar and CR Fashion Book. The section of the article that really spoke to me was:
>
> *"If the bosses of publishing houses Hearst or Conde Nast called her tomorrow to offer her a top job, would she take it? 'No,' she says, flatly. Why? 'Freedom. There are so many new opportunities when you are free. I want to always do something new and fresh and exciting.'... 'I try to push new doors because I don't want to be bored or tired.'"*
>
> This is exactly how I feel. I want to retain the relative freedom of being able to go for a run, or a swim, when I want to; have a bath in the middle of the day when I'm cold; take most of a day off tomorrow to spend with my younger daughter on a non-pupil day; and take my Mum to a hospital appointment. If I worked full time in a traditional role I would feel that the organisation 'owned me' and I would have to ask for permission, or tell someone, or take a day off for tomorrow, whereas it is all within my control, and I will catch up by working early in the morning and late at night. The perception of freedom far outweighs the downsides of limited pension provision, sick pay, etc., etc. in my view. Diary entry 11/10/17

Here I have focused on the freedom element of Roitfeld's quotation and provided examples of this highlighting my sense of agency based on the ability to choose what I do with my time without having to obtain permission from anyone else, although I have certain duties and activities that have to be completed at some

point. My own situation is somewhat different to that of a world-renowned fashion expert, who is unlikely to have concerns about her earning potential, giving her free choice. The sense of freedom expressed is for more prosaic reasons and, although I am not free from concerns about earning potential, I have been successfully portfolio working for 20 years, providing a sense of security. Part of this sense of freedom relates to not having to ask permission to carry out caring responsibilities which, in my experience of full-time work, has always had negative connotations being perceived as a lack of commitment and a reminder of a life outside the organisation when many organisations appear to prefer to employ organisation men (Whyte 1956) and ideal workers (Lewis & Cooper 2005). It is interesting that I have not commented on Roitfeld's reference to the new opportunities and not being bored which perhaps reflects these aspects as being of secondary importance to the sense of freedom. Reference to the lack of benefits being outweighed by freedom again highlights the recurring theme of balance (see 6.4.1).

The empirical evidence intimates that portfolio workers perceive that they have a more equal balance of power and that failure of organisations to accept this power-sharing (Huq 2010) can bring the employment relationship to an end. A number of participants provided examples of where they had the balance of power by simply leaving roles that did not suit their requirements. This balance of power was directly related to how secure they felt in their portfolio of jobs. Even where some organisations no longer chose to employ them, they felt secure in their ability to either retain, or expand, their other existing jobs, acquire more work through networking or secure new jobs.

6.4.4 Precarity and security

Most participants' portfolios contained work on a fixed term, zero hours, freelance, 'gig economy' (McKinsey 2016), 'platform economy' (De Groen et al 2017), 'peer, networked, on-demand, collaborative economy' (Fleming 2017) or informal basis, and much of the literature suggests that this type of work is insecure and precarious (e.g. Sennett 1998; Smith 2016; Standing 2011). The definition of security is subjective (see 2.5.5) and likely to have been formed based on personal experience. Those portfolio workers that identified as *Involuntaries,* following redundancy, are likely to perceive the traditional permanent employment contract as less secure than those that had not had this experience. For portfolio workers, it appeared that although one role might become redundant or come to an end, it is highly unlikely that they would all do so at the same time giving a sense of psychological security that contradicts the prevalent discourses (see 2.5.5). Younger participants were more concerned about the security issue and felt that if their commitments changed, for example, if they wanted to purchase a property or have children, then they may need to reconsider portfolio working and swap to a 'more secure' traditional way of working. Two participants had, however, been able to add traditional full-time jobs in the short term, reducing the other parts of their portfolio, just to obtain a mortgage. Ron, for example, took a job he did not particularly want saying:

> it was more of an opportunity – to – have a sta, stable income for me to be an opportunity to have a mortgage now, those sort of things um – looking back, looking back - - three years, probably three years ago - - er – and I don't like, I don't like regretting what I've done but I probably wouldn't have taken it.

There was a clear tension here between his freedom to do the work he wanted to and the restriction of the need for a stable income to secure a mortgage. Ron was unhappy in the job that produced a stable income and unsuccessfully tried to reduce it to a part-time role. After less than two years in that job, having secured his mortgage, he left and rearranged his portfolio to spend more time on the jobs he enjoyed. Desmond also struggled with his mortgage following a relationship breakdown when he was portfolio working. He said:

> there was no way I could secure a mortgage on my own, on my house – and give her the money, the equity that she was owed – bloody nightmare so I um – I was, I, I, I kind of – pulled in favours and I borrowed um from my family member the money to, to pay her off the equity so that she would agree to sign um the house over to me – my next hurdle was I needed a mortgage – so – the company that I'd worked for as a, as a video producer/director in London for three years – um – I phoned them up and said, and said can I come in for a conversation, I, I think there's a, an opportunity to be had for us – er and I, and I phoned up the owner of the company, who I got on with,… um and I just said look I've got to sort my life out – I'm going to lose my hou, my home, my life, everything – if I don't get a mortgage on my own, and I don't know how to do it – and he said OK cool, what are you suggesting? And I said – can you employ me for three months? And he said OK – it's not that much Desmond – and I said OK well, you know, let's, let's I'm flexible – but I just need the three months' worth of payslips – and I need a salary and it's got to begin with a 4 and he said oh right – OK – how about you give me six months – how about you, you do this job for me – and, and even though I wanted to do, I wanted to be a video producer again, he said no I want you to be a video producer and a networker. I want you to get out there, I want, I want to own you and I just thought, do you know what, this is an opportunity, I'm going to take it – it's going to get me that house secure – to enable my life to continue as the way I wanted it – um and he gave me, he gave me the salary and then after, after four or five months – again I, I, there were elements about what I was doing that I was thinking naah – naah didn't really sign up to this, I only really wanted my mortgage and I was prepared to work, very hard for them and do that um so we had, we, we just – we came to an arrangement and I said guys this has been great, thank you so much you – you have saved my, my home, my fiefdom, - um – I'm gonna – gonna, gonna go back out there again – er – cos the mortgage had gone through and it was mine and my ex had gone.

Desmond was plainly driven back to more traditional employment by his need to secure his property. This was particularly important to him due to having been uprooted at the age of four-and-half (see 5.9). The language he uses, and the rapid pace, and repetition of his speech, demonstrate how distressed he was about the situation he found himself in. Despite the efforts he had put in to promote a reliable and responsive social identity to employing organisations, resulting in profitable self-employment, this was meaningless to lenders. He did not fit the required social identity of a potential borrower as the lender was only concerned about a standard employment contract as proof of a regular income. This lack of recognition of his social identity, combined with the loss of self-identity as a result of his relationship breakdown, meant he felt he was losing everything. Despite his desperation, he had to present a positive social identity to his previous employers representing his situation to them as 'an opportunity'. Resorting to a return to his previous secure social identity was perhaps not only to achieve the mortgage he required but also to give him the stability and security he needed to anchor his identity whilst working out how to rebuild it. As part of the negotiation with his former employer he recollected his employer saying 'I want to own you' making it clear that he felt he had to give up his freedom to secure his mortgage. Once he had done this he quickly moved back to portfolio work. In his case, the need for security and stability, once he had secured his mortgage, was then outweighed by the desire to return to the flexibility, control and power, and positive self-identity he had experienced when portfolio working.

Both Ron and Desmond highlight the lack of recognition that portfolio working has in society whereby, despite the income levels that can be achieved, there is still usually a default requirement to prove regular employment income from a

permanent contract. This is notwithstanding the experience of a permanent contract being frequently felt, and proven, to be comparatively less secure. Both individuals also express dislike of, or discomfort with, the traditional employment pattern, and associated social identities, they had taken to secure their mortgages, returning to the relative freedom of portfolio work, and concomitant self-identities, as soon as they were able.

Both of these men are portfolio working to carry out work they enjoy. Many female participants, however, seem to portfolio work predominantly because it fits better with their caring responsibilities than traditional employment, although Keith and Ronan also mentioned this as a factor. This gendered aspect would merit further investigation but is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Most participants expressed the view that they were more secure portfolio working than in a traditional working pattern, despite the tenuous nature of their contracts. This contradicts much of the literature concerning the precarity of the short-term, part-time and informal contracts most portfolio workers have (e.g. Kofman 2016; McDonald et al 2008; Ross 2009). Although some of the participants mentioning security were the more established portfolio workers, who were unconcerned as they already had a solid financial and career base, two at the beginning of their careers considered themselves relatively secure (see Table 6.3).

Participant	Self-identified as	Extract
Sam	Involuntary and Investor	I mean I feel like for one thing it's, it's sort of um a little more stable having a foot in er in more than one institution um rather than yeah being completely invested in one or the other.
Patrick	Insatiable	I could have quite easily expanded any area of that portfolio, had one gone dry.
Ron	Insatiable and Impassioned	I know that I've still got income sources from other areas.
Duncan	Impassioned*	I regard it as more secure than what I had before... I've got sort of three irons in the fire as opposed to one.
Lauren	Investor and Insatiable	I think umm I'm much less worried nowadays about how I'm going to pay the bills cos I always think that there's money coming in from somewhere.
Sebastian	Insatiable	(*when asked what he would do if one job comes to an end*) 'I just get out on my bike – or, or do one of the other jobs harder... and more of it.

* Duncan was the only participant where my own identification was different. I had identified him as In-transition (see 5.5)

Table 6.3 Extracts concerning perceptions of security

These extracts all relate to the more traditional interpretation of security, i.e. income and employment security rather than job or combination security (Muffels 2008). Most participants used one of the jobs in their portfolio to provide their base income, or 'safety net' (Gold & Fraser 2002: 579), facilitating full flexisecurity (Wilthagen & Tros 2004). Justin, for example, said:

> so when I actually decided to go down this multiple – (laughs) two faced, three faced route – it was always with the, the proviso that I'd got one substantive, part-time post.

Lara also highlighted the security offered by one of her paid jobs:

> it's a permanent part-time contract position, so I do that to give me a bit of security really – and also some of the benefits that come with it as well you know with it I get private health insurance and you know a pension which I never really paid into before.

Sebastian also felt it was 'fantastic' being offered a job three days a week that covered, what he described as, his 'base income' giving him two days a week to do consultancy work for other companies. All of these participants felt that the traditional security offered in their base income roles left them free to carry out identity play (Ibarra & Petriglieri 2010) mitigating the risk of exploring other opportunities.

For other participants, their perception of security was generated by the length of time they had been doing a particular precarious contract. Keith had been working on a series of short-term contracts for one employer for over 20 years, as have I. Felicity had worked on a zero hours' contract gradually increasing her hours for one employer over a period of seven years. A further impression of security came from the confidence generated by obtaining further work, over time, when needed, or 'employability' (Baruch 2004; Inkson et al 2015). This change in emphasis 'away from employment towards employability' (Storey 2000: 32) means that rather than leaving the responsibility for employment with the organisation, it now lies with the individual who needs to undertake sufficient personal development to maintain employability. This self-development can be easier to achieve when portfolio working because workers can do what they perceive is good for themselves rather than what is good for the organisation. Three participants specifically mentioned the ability to use portfolio working to improve their career progression, although this goes against the prevalent discourse of portfolio work

impeding the progressive potential of careers (e.g. Fenwick 2006). Derek, for

example, gave up a secure full-time permanent position to take a six-month fixed

term contract saying:

> I thought, even if it was only for six months, it would get me six months experience as a team manager which would then put me in a stronger position to get another team manager job.

Lydia too has found that portfolio working has helped her to move to a higher-

level role. She says:

> I think um I've seen different – elements of working within the public sector and now outside of the public sector that I hadn't experienced before, and that's been very useful – very interesting – um - - and being able to um – develop a different er skill set and that I'm, I'm doing one of the roles something that I had no experience of previously at all – um, and that has been good to do so I, you know, definitely gained I think from the experience there and, and also received some training in that area so that's been beneficial – and it wouldn't have happened in my previous roles and I wouldn't – I don't think I would have been – um eligible to apply to a role that the level I'm currently in, to do that work, I would have had to have taken a um a lesser grade role to be able to experience that.

In both cases, it is not only the experience gained but also the opportunity to

undertake further training which enhance employability and extend their social

identities. Lydia has also found it 'very interesting', which is likely to add to her

positive self-identity. A number of other participants were also pursuing further

study on a part-time basis which not only contributes to employability (Inkson et

al 2015) and transferability of skills (Patton 2000), thus adding to perceptions of

security, but also adds variety and challenge to their portfolio.

6.4.5 Variety and challenge

Although the data exposed 'variety' as the fifth most commonly mentioned word,

fourth cycle coding highlighted that it was frequently mentioned with 'challenge'

as the two appear to be closely interrelated (See Appendix X). Variety refers to the

diversity and difference of the work and challenge to the testing of ability which

often requires mastering of new or different capabilities. Derek stated:

> I feel I've got a bit more control as I mentioned earlier, and it's just a better
> – situation for me to be in whereby I can um, you know, I can actually um –
> you know, have a selection of jobs and, and do a variety of things, that's
> much more – challenging and entertaining – than just working in one job,
> in one role, for the rest of my – employment.

This has to be considered in the context of Derek's experience of redundancy. He

self-identified initially as an *Involuntary* who had moved to being an *Impassioned*

and *Investor.* He is comparing his current roles with working for the public sector

for many years before being made redundant. Prior to his redundancy, although he

might not have found the work very 'challenging and entertaining', he probably

balanced this against the traditional security offered by his employment. Although

with his precarious portfolio work he has lost that security, this is outweighed, in

his view, by the variety it offers. Variety, however, simply means doing different

things, not that all the elements are challenging and entertaining. Most

participants had certain aspects of their portfolio that were not diverse or

challenging but rather mundane. A diary entry (see Appendix X Flexibility/Variety,

dated 29/4/16) highlights the boredom resulting from having three different sets of

marking to do for different organisations. This is, however, rationalised by the

advantages of the flexibility of choice of which boring job to do, and when, and

being able to break up the boring jobs with other jobs making them seem more

exciting in comparison. Also, although there are times when work is boring, it is

usually short-lived and interspersed with more challenging and exciting work. In

many portfolios it appears to be the 'boring' work that provides the base income

allowing the portfolio worker to diversify into other more interesting work.

Lydia also highlights both variety and challenge, but, in addition, she corroborates

another trend that emerges clearly from a number of participants. Much of the

variety mentioned comes from the interaction with 'people', as highlighted in the

first cycle In Vivo coding (see 4.8.3). She says:

> I think the variety, the challenge – um the variety of people that I've met – um associated with various roles because obviously – generally um – you have a, a smaller group of, of individuals that, when you're working in one – formal organisation in one place potentially you may come into contact with people but your core group will be a smaller group and I think I would um I very much enjoyed meeting a variety of different people in these other roles

Here Lydia expresses the importance of social interaction, which was mentioned

earlier as one of the elements that needed to be balanced in the portfolio (see

6.4.1). Lydia's enjoyment of meeting a variety of different people is also likely to

contribute towards her adaptability and flexibility when having to 'fit in' to diverse

organisations. The desire for variety and challenge, and the enjoyment this

provides, however has to be balanced with the need for security. Sebastian

highlights the tension between the two, using another metaphor for balance, when

he says

> I suppose it's mixed, it's a double-edged sword isn't it? cos I like the, I like the challenge of doing something new and learning about something new which I think is actually the thing that drives me – I like learning stuff and – um – but there's always that kind of financial security element – to it – which does overshadow stuff, I think.

This tension between the desire for variety, challenge and learning something new,

and the underlying need for security, was mentioned by a number of participants.

In Sebastian's case his main concern appeared to be financial security, but the majority of participants were more concerned about combination security (Muffels 2008), i.e. having the power and control to achieve the flexibility needed to achieve the preferred work-life balance, and their identities were created, and maintained, in the interviews accordingly.

6.5 Implications for Identity

The key themes outlined above are those most frequently mentioned by participants, and the next question is how these themes relate to the identities of portfolio workers. Taking Ramarajan's (2014: 594) interpretation of identity as 'how we see ourselves' these key narrative themes provide a sense of how participants are able, in the absence of one organisational identity, or work place (Tyler 2011), to anchor their identities within certain other rationalisations. They also highlight how portfolio workers carry out identity work due to, inter alia, not feeling 'good enough'. This could be due either to taking on roles that were beyond their direct experience or simply not quite fitting what they perceive as organisational expectations.

The majority of participants, with only two exceptions, reported that they would never return to a full-time traditional job unless it was something exceptional. Amy said:

> it would have to be something earning a million pounds a year or something, working for Richard Branson or something.

This implies that portfolio work is providing participants with something that, in their perception, traditional jobs within organisations did not, or would not. Most participants reported being happier portfolio working than in their previous

traditional jobs. Nearly half of participants described themselves as 'lucky' or 'fortunate' to work in this way, which is a defining feature of 'imposter syndrome' (Jarrett 2010; Caza et al 2018), although the reasons given for this varied. Reasons included having control to name times, hours and places of work; doing work that they really enjoy; or being approached with offers of work. Although these aspects are not unique to portfolio work, it is often easier to achieve them due to the more balanced negotiating strength of both parties. The combination of different work and challenges also seems to build up confidence in portfolio workers that can then be carried through into taking on more new challenges and maintaining employability (Inkson et al 2015; Storey 2000). Contrast this situation with Tristan talking about one of his colleagues who is unhappy in her work. He said:

> and I said to her – she's 54 I think she said – and I said there's always jobs coming up for fashion and textile course leaders, would you consider moving on? and she said 'I really haven't got the confidence now', she's been there so long – 'I haven't got the confidence to apply for another job'.

This suggests that if you are in just one job that is not going well it is much more difficult to maintain confidence in your abilities, and a resultant positive self-identity. For a portfolio worker, if one job in the portfolio is not going too well, it is highly unlikely that they all will be going badly. It is also possible to terminate the job that is not going well, lessen its impact by reducing the hours or workload or use it to highlight the benefits of other jobs within the portfolio and hence maintain a positive self-identity. The ability to create the desired portfolio by reducing the workload, but not necessarily completely severing the relationship, reflects the ability to achieve a 'balanced contract', but this does not reflect only how well employees are able to meet the employer's requirements (Bernhardt &

Krause 2014) but also how well the organisation is able to meet the portfolio worker's requirements.

Analysis of the data to extract the key themes suggests that narratives are continually being used to construct and negotiate the identities of portfolio workers. Narratives enable participants to re-story their experiences to arrive at plausible accounts (Ybema et al 2009) that make sense of their situation. Participants appear to carry out identity work to perceive - and present - challenges and difficulties as opportunities, facilitating successful navigation of the continuously changing world of work (Meijers & Lengelle 2012). When describing the meanings attributable to portfolio work, nearly all participants drew on their previous experiences to differentiate their current ones (Storey et al 2005), and some participants compared themselves to other people (Ybema et al 2016) or their work colleagues, carrying out 'anti-identity work' (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003).

Amy, for example, stated:

> I'm an animal that doesn't like to be tied down to rigid rules

> *Which sounds like a bit of an odd thing to say when you're working in a kind of government institution doesn't it?*

> I know (laughs), yes I'm not the normal for here I'm afraid

This comment was, however, said in a way that implied that she was very pleased, to be different to her colleagues in traditional full-time jobs. This anti-identity work (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003) suggests that Amy is rejecting the work identity of this particular organisation by accentuating the fact that she is different to the other employees, which appears to be an integral part of her self-identity.

She also needs to promote a separate social identity as part of maintaining her employability in her other jobs.

In all cases, the comparison seemed to construe participants' previous existences, or those of others, as relatively unattractive depicting, for example, full-time employing organisations as alienating and controlling (Petriglieri et al 2019). It became clear that much of the identity work carried out involved turning negative aspects mentioned into positive ones whereby precarity became freedom; challenges and emotional tensions became self-development opportunities; fragmented work became variety and challenge; all these re-framings being used to build up positive self-identities.

6.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter addresses the research sub-question, 'What does it mean to portfolio work?' The key themes that emerged from discussions provide an indication of 'the meaning individuals attach to the unfolding events of their careers' (Duberley et al 2006: 282). These key themes are only the most frequently mentioned by participants; there are also others relating to, inter alia, training and development, commitment, loyalty, giving something back, career progression, convenience and synergy that there was insufficient space to explore.

When extracting meaning, participants appear to be able to create their own, predominantly positive, versions of their social world (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003) and to create, manipulate (Giddens 1991) and maintain, socially acceptable identities. The significant findings are that the key themes – balance, flexibility, power/control, security, and variety and challenge – are all related directly, or indirectly, to the use of time and all are interrelated and interdependent.

The main challenge appears to be achieving an optimal balance between exploitation and self-actualisation; between adaptability, flexibility and having too much work; between control and lack of control; and between positive and negative emotions. There is also evidence of complicated high-level scheduling skills facilitating flexibility but an inability, or unwillingness, to take time off. There also seems to be a lack of recognition of portfolio workers by society which has practical, adverse consequences on them in terms of the ability to obtain mortgages, loans and rental accommodation. Portfolio workers seem to have to continuously evaluate and manipulate their portfolios to achieve an acceptable self-identity. A considerable amount of identity work is carried out to present a resilient and self-reliant approach to events by, for example, reframing a job loss as an opportunity, to enable maintenance and promotion of a positive self and social identity. Participants also managed to collate a combination of roles which, however diverse, could be narrated into complementarity to achieve an acceptable social identity. Where a perceived optimal balance was achieved, it resulted in such a close integration between work and life that hours spent working were no longer measured, as the boundary between work and life became almost indistinguishable.

Participants were virtually unanimous in stating that they would not return to a traditional pattern of work which appeared to be mainly due to perceived organisational constraints preventing balance and control in their lives. This balance goes beyond the prevalent social discourse of work-life balance to encompass a wide variety of aspects of participants' lives. All participants appeared to be able to successfully construct, by way of narrative, an evolving identity based on their experiences, which demonstrated their ability to justify, and promote,

their choice to work in this way. They were able to reframe the potentially

exploitative nature of their short-term precarious employment status as liberating

– rather than a constant source of concern – building socially acceptable, often

self-actualised, identities enabling them to successfully manoeuvre the changing

world of work.

I have always advised that portfolio players rather than being "jack of all trades and master of none" should look to be "jack of many trades and master of some".

Bruce Lynn, Microsoft

(cited in Hopson & Ledger 2009: 4)

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Overview

This final chapter reviews the research question and sub-questions to discuss and evaluate the interpretations, understandings and conclusions derived from the empirical data drawing on a range of careers and identity literature. The key conceptual, empirical and methodological contributions are then outlined.

7.2 Discussion

The overarching aim of this research was to provide insights into experiences of portfolio work in the UK, seeking to understand what portfolio work is like for those undertaking it, and how portfolio workers make sense of this work arrangement. The research question was:

> *What is it like to be a portfolio worker, based on individuals' accounts of their experiences?*

This research question was developed into four sub-questions that evolved during the research process. They became:

1. What is portfolio work?

2. How do experiences of portfolio workers impact on identity?

3. Who are portfolio workers, what do they do, and why?

4. What does it mean to portfolio work?

The first sub-question is addressed in Chapter Two, which locates portfolio work within the literature on contemporary forms of work, and reviews the evolving definitions of portfolio work. The second sub-question is explored in Chapter Three to provide a context for understanding the experiences of portfolio work. Key findings drawn from a focus group, 36 semi-structured interviews and a lived experience diary (see Chapter Four) are presented in the next two chapters.

Chapter Five addresses who portfolio workers are, what they do, and why, capturing a variety of changing reasons for entering, and remaining in, portfolio work in an empirically based typology. There are a wide variety of settings, career and life stages, income brackets, occupations, ages and combinations of portfolio represented. Across all portfolios, it is evident that there is a considerable amount of time spent on both administrative work and support activities, as well as extensive identity work.

Chapter Six considers meanings of portfolio work highlighting that, despite the wide range of individuals undertaking portfolio work, certain key similarities of experience and interpretation emerge mainly concerning the challenge, and tension, of balancing both personal and organisational demands.

The fundamental importance of identity work to navigate and articulate portfolio workers' understanding of their portfolio working arrangement emerged during the fieldwork. Accordingly, this final chapter uses a combination of identity and careers literature to examine how portfolio work is interpreted, presented and sustained by those undertaking it and the chapter outlines a number of conceptual, empirical, and methodological contributions.

Portfolio work is becoming more prevalent in today's society (e.g. Caza et al 2018; Ibarra 2015) 'whether by choice or by accident' (Schein 2017: xxi) yet our investigation and understanding of the concept is limited. This may be because it is considered unimportant when the majority of the UK working population (Labour Force Survey 2018), still work under traditional full-time permanent employment contracts. It may also be because it is hard to find portfolio workers due to the invisibility and inaccessibility of this type of worker (Smith 2016). Existing investigations into portfolio work are based on inconsistent definitions of it (see 7.2.1) and mainly concentrate on participants within similar industries, overlooking those with multiple professions (Clinton et al 2006).

The literature reviewed presents polarised views about portfolio working. A fairly clear distinction is drawn between the traditional structured full-time organisational career (e.g. Inkson et al 2015; Valcour & Ladge 2008) and the more flexible, adaptable, versatile, dynamic, individualistic new career (e.g. Arthur et al 1999; Inkson et al 2012; Petriglieri et al 2019). Society's conceptualisation of work has shifted over the years, towards the 'new career' concept of which portfolio work reportedly forms part (e.g. Cohen 2016; Mandl & Biletta 2018).

Much of the literature founded in psychology presents new careers, such as portfolio work, as providing flexibility, freedom, empowerment and fulfilment for the individual, (e.g. Coplin 2013; Kelliher & Anderson 2008) although others suggest that this might be an idealised view (Smith 2016; Vallas & Cummins 2015). Those scholars that have discussed careers from an organisational viewpoint, founded in economics and strategic HRM, present it as offering flexibility and competitive advantage to the organisation (e.g. Symes 2014). Organisation studies,

founded in sociology, take a more critical approach framing portfolio work as precarious, insecure and exploitative (e.g. Sennett 1998; Standing 2011; Tweedie 2013).

More recent literature developed within career studies (e.g. Inkson & King 2011; Petriglieri et al 2019; Ramarajan 2014) takes a multi-disciplinary, integrated approach assessing the meaning for both the organisation and the individual to provide a more balanced view.

This research identified the different *meanings* attributed to some of these key descriptors contributing to the bodies of work concerning both 'new' careers and identity. It uses concepts and theories from both disciplines facilitating cross fertilisation (Alvesson et al 2017) and providing timely empirical insights into what portfolio work can look like in practice, based on the reporting, and interpretation, of individual experiences.

7.2.1 Portfolio work

The literature considers that portfolio working forms part of the new career concept (e.g. Gold & Fraser 2002; Hopson & Ledger 2009; Ibarra 2015). However, recent research into modern working practices (Taylor 2017) does not explicitly mention portfolio workers despite them forming a growing part of the workforce (Caza et al 2017). The literature demonstrates that definitions of the portfolio career have evolved over time (see Appendix XI) and this work contributes to the literature by providing a new definition of the term based on a review of relevant literature and empirical evidence.

Contested definition of portfolio work

Handy (1995b: 175) was the first to conceptualise portfolio work as 'a collection of different bits and pieces of work for different clients', the use of the word 'clients' suggesting that individuals are self-employed. Hopson (2009: 5) however suggests that portfolio workers are employed, describing them as having 'two or more jobs with different employers' and Lipińska-Grobelny (2014) also refers to portfolio workers as employees. Gold and Fraser (2002) consider portfolio working and self-employment to be interchangeable and Platman (2004) fails to differentiate between portfolio workers and freelancers. Wood & Michaelides (2016: 113) conflate the terms portfolio worker, contractor and freelancer and state that portfolio workers are usually employed on a 'commercial rather than employment contract basis'. This conflation of these terms is challenged. Both the literature, and the empirical evidence, suggest that portfolio workers, contractors and freelancers have different characteristics and identities. Although some participants included freelance and contracting within their portfolios none of them were *solely* freelancers or *solely* contractors. Many portfolio workers also included, within their portfolio, jobs on a traditional permanent contractual basis, albeit it usually part-time, providing them with the stability and security to later add self-employment to their portfolios.

Handy (1995b) did not explicitly mention payment in his definition of portfolio workers, as he included free work (see table 2.1) as part of a balanced portfolio. Later definitions however focus on paid work only (e.g. Cohen et al 2004; Duberley et al 2006; Grigg 1997) but many participants supported Handy's (1995a) inclusion of free work undertaking voluntary work or study as part of their portfolios.

The concept of 'balance' is introduced by Handy (1995a) and supported by Inkson (2007: 9) who suggests that an individual 'balances a portfolio of different and changing opportunities'. This is corroborated by empirical data with balance being one of the most frequently occurring words used by participants (see 6.4.1) and 'juggling' the most commonly used metaphor (see Table 6.2 and Appendix IX).

Ibarra's (2015) definition emphasises the self-directed nature of the work, whether paid or free, and the way it can utilise existing competencies and facilitate the learning of new ones. The learning of new competencies is captured by the *Investors* category in the typology of portfolio work (see Appendix VI).

The most recent published definition of portfolio work, which is used for the development of social policy in Europe, is provided by Mandl and Biletta (2018: 14) who define portfolio work as 'small-scale contracting by freelancers, self-employed or micro enterprises, conducting work for a large number of clients'. This definition therefore excludes those that are employed on a part-time basis and those that have employees, both of which were present in this sample. Their report then goes on to suggest that portfolio work is dominated 'by male, middle-to-older aged workers' thus excluding the large number of female portfolio workers that have built portfolios around their caring responsibilities. They also suggest that 'phases of very high work intensity might follow phases of no work at all'. There were no examples, apart from the *Involuntaries* in the short term, of no work at all amongst participants, due to their ability to maintain at least one stream of work at all times.

The inconsistencies and contradictions between different definitions, and the reported experiences of portfolio work, led to the development of a new definition.

A new definition of portfolio work

Based on a combination of the analysis of existing literature and empirical

evidence, a proposed new definition of portfolio work, that is intended to

encompass all aspects of the portfolio working phenomenon, is provided:

> *A collection of different pieces of work, both paid and unpaid, that can change quickly in response to different challenges and opportunities in an attempt to achieve an acceptable balance. The work may be for an employer, a client or a combination of these. Contractual arrangements can include a blend of any type including, inter alia, full or part-time employment, freelance, independent contracting, zero hours, job share, self-employed, informal and voluntary work. All jobs are likely to have, but do not have to have, some common theme running among them.*

This can be summarised into a shorter definition of portfolio work as:

> *Undertaking multiple jobs, in a variety of organisational settings, on a range of contractual terms, with a view to achieving an acceptable balance.*

Both definitions include the possibility of being employed on a traditional basis as

a portfolio worker, albeit part-time, which the most recent definitions in the

literature (see Appendix XI) do not recognise.

Another aspect highlighted by the literature review was whether portfolio working

is limited to 'the highly educated and privileged few' (Clinton et al 2006: 197) or

'high fliers' (Storey 2000:34) only; whether it is 'for the old, when one has given up

on striving and is preparing to hand over the reins to a younger generation' (Ibarra

2015 no p. no.); or whether it is 'dominated by male, middle-to-older-aged workers

driven by the desire for independence and self-fulfilment' (Mandl & Biletta 2018).

The empirical evidence suggests that it is not solely the preserve of any of these

groups as a wide variety of education levels, occupations, positions, income, ages

and genders were represented in the sample. However, due to the snowball

sampling technique minority groups such as the physically disabled were not included so it is not known whether the inclusion of minority groups would have supported or contradicted previous findings. Participants demonstrated different reasons for entering into, and remaining in, portfolio work although a number of common themes emerged (see 6.4).

Typology

On the basis that interpretations and identities of individuals tend to be founded on comparison with previous experiences (Alvesson et al 2008) and institutional interactions (Vallas & Christin 2018), the reasons for starting, and continuing, to portfolio work were explored. This led to the development of a typology of portfolio workers (Appendix VI), demonstrating that a range of types exist within the generic term 'portfolio worker' rather than being a specific group (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Ibarra 2015; Mandl & Biletta 2018; Storey 2000). The typology is based on each portfolio worker's own interpretation of their situation, combined with analysis of their responses, construed and articulated by me, then confirmed by them. Participants' perceptions of portfolio work have to be contextualised in the light of where they originally were on the typology and where they believe they are now. For example, the *Involuntaries,* who had been made redundant or were unable to find full-time employment, were much more likely to feel self-actualised, and positive, about portfolio work because they perceived they had taken back control after being unable to keep, or find, the full-time traditional positions they sought.

This typology contributes towards existing literature by helping to contextualise the meanings of portfolio work, for this specific sample of portfolio workers, and to pinpoint some surprising aspects.

A considerable number of older, close to or post-retirement age, workers do not perceive their identity as *in-transition* to retirement (Ibarra 2015), even if beyond official retirement age (see Appendix IV). Therefore, rather than classifying their career as a 'bridge career' it is more of an 'encore' career (Simpson et al 2012: 431, 430). They appear, however, to be less concerned about reconnecting with their communities and contributing in socially worthwhile ways (Simpson et al 2012) and more interested in doing personally meaningful work. Although a minority identified themselves as *In-transitions,* the majority self-identified as *Insatiable*, which has implications for the type of work older workers are interested in, and willing to carry out. It appeared to be important to be perceived as doing work offering variety and challenge rather than simply working for additional income after retirement (e.g. Mandl & Biletta 2018).

The literature review also identified a question over whether portfolio work impacted positively or negatively on the progressive potential of careers (Fenwick 2006), and again, this depended on the type of worker. For example, *Involuntaries,* particularly those that had been made redundant and were at a late career stage (Mainiero & Gibson 2017), were less concerned about career progression than, for example, *Investors.* In some cases, portfolio work enabled a move to a new career, or a more senior position than might have been possible if working in a full-time traditional role. Portfolio work therefore does not appear to necessarily inhibit career progression, although the progression may not be linear.

Using the typology as a reference point also highlighted the way portfolio workers tend to move from category to category over time, whether proactively or reactively (see Figures 5.1 and 7.1).
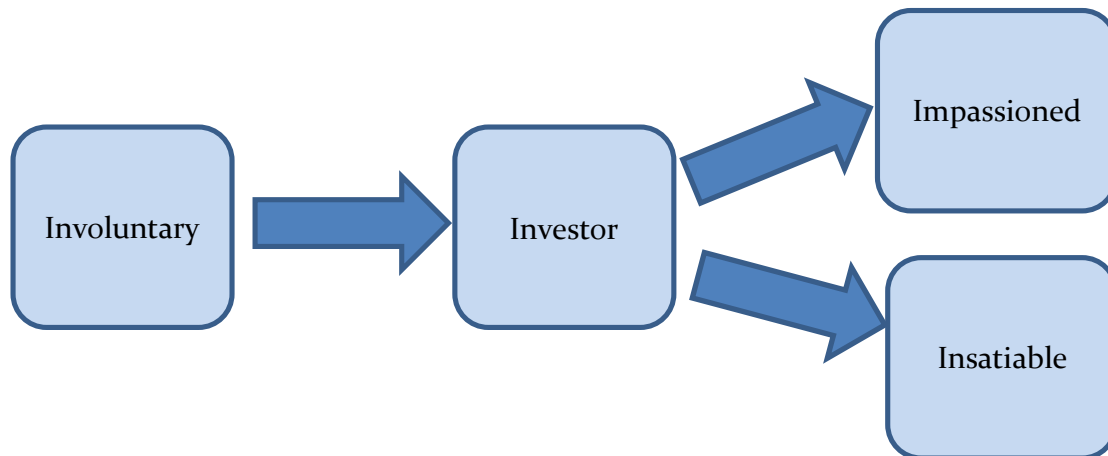
Figure 7.1 Temporal nature of typologies of portfolio workers

In addition to the dynamic nature of the typology there was also evidence of multiple contemporaneous categories as shown in the example in Figure 7.1. The fluidity of movement between categories, and between jobs, can prevent the construction of a coherent professional socially acceptable identity (Gherardi & Murgia 2013) thus provoking intensive identity work.

7.2.2 Identity implications

Identity has typically been researched within an organisational context (Petriglieri et al 2019) because strong identification with organisations can provide a sense of stability (Savickas 2000), security, belonging (Duberley et al 2006) and a socially legitimate identity (Cohen 2014). In the absence of one strong organisational culture or place of work (Tyler 2011), portfolio workers must construct an identity that is both socially and personally acceptable. Although research into multiple

work identities is increasing, as yet, it does not specifically cover portfolio workers. Caza et al's (2018) research into plural careerists concerns those 'voluntarily holding multiple jobs based on personal interest' which would exclude all but the *Impassioned* and *Insatiables*. Similarly, Petriglieri et al's (2018) research into 'portable selves' was carried out in the context of only one setting which was an educational institution.

Identity work

Work is considered to be a defining feature of our identity (Bratton 2015; Brown & Coupland 2015; Petriglieri et al 2018) and is used as a way of establishing oneself in the social structure. For portfolio workers, with multiple jobs, there appear to be multiple places to position themselves in the social structure with multiple bases for identity construction, i.e. 'portfolio staff with portfolio identities' (Barnett & Di Napoli 2008: 203). Although not an initial focus of the research, it soon became apparent that identity work is of fundamental importance to those that portfolio work as the disparate collection, or 'laundry list' (Ibarra 2015), of jobs needs to be moulded into a coherent social identity (Gherardi & Murgia 2013). Identity work forms a vital part of the labour of a portfolio worker to respond to the changing contexts, pressures and environments that they are exposed to. Although this identity work is not *directly* rewarded or productive, it forms an essential element of their labour power and is at the heart of being a competent portfolio worker.

Despite the constant pressure on portfolio workers to be adaptable, flexible and responsive, which erode social preconditions for building identity (Alvesson 2010), rather than experiencing difficulties finding meaning and direction in life portfolio workers seemed to be able to draw on a wide variety of sources, carrying out

extensive identity work, to establish a coherent identity. A commonly used method of dealing with the uncertainty of working in this way was by reflexive storytelling (Inkson 2015; Maclean et al 2011; Weick 1995) as evidenced by the wide use of metaphors and similes (see 6.3). This, however, went beyond constructing a socially legitimate, coherent identity to crafting an identity that was then strategically mobilised to accomplish personal objectives (Alvesson 2010).

History and past experiences (Choudhry 2010) provided the basis for workers' sense of identity. The typology developed (see Appendix VI) assists with classifying and recognising different kinds of portfolio worker, although these categories are fluid, and tempered by present experiences. There was evidence of significant and sustained identity work amongst participants who, as a result of rejecting traditional organisational employment, narrate cohesion from the fragmented natures of their portfolios. It was also apparent that interpretations of multiple job situations as a problem, as many *Involuntaries* perceived them initially, became, over time, a central and positive element (Caza et al 2018) of their identities, provided an acceptable balance could be achieved. Identity work is used to arrive at a balance whereby experiences of exploitation are counteracted by experiences of self-actualisation.

Gill's (2015) depiction (see Figure 3.5) considers identity implications an outcome – in his research, status anxiety – which then feeds back into further identity work. The portfolio worker has the potential to have multiple implications from multiple jobs resulting in a continuous process of identity work, and play, to try to achieve a balance between positive and negative aspects of work. Portfolio workers also have a multiplicity of social identities including not only the notion of a 'portfolio

worker' but also their occupations, organisations, networks or other 'personal holding environments' (Petriglieri et al 2019). This gives them far greater scope for identity work due to the greater number of 'various milieux in which they live their lives' (Watson 2008b: 129).

This multiplicity of social identities is impacting on evolving socially available discourses surrounding the changing world of work where new descriptors such as the gig economy (McKinsey 2016), the platform economy (De Groen et al 2017), peer, networked, on-demand, collaborative economy (Fleming 2017), independent workers (Petriglieri et al 2019) and plural careerists (Caza et al 2018) are becoming familiar terminology.

This research, however, highlights that widely used terms such as 'flexibility' have a variety of interpretations depending on previous experiences and institutional interactions (Vallas & Christin 2018), and these different interpretations impact on the meanings of portfolio work.

Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) model (see Figure 3.6) suggests that identity regulation, identity work and self-identity are of equal importance, but portfolio workers appear to be resisting organisational attempts to regulate their identity. They are focusing their efforts on identity work, making this of greater importance than the model shows, developing their self-identities fairly independently of organisations. They appear to be able to choose to what extent they want to comply with organisational identity regulation, accepting it if it fits with the rest of their portfolio, but resisting it if it does not.

Watson (2008b) and Gill's (2015) model (see Figure 3.5) appears to suggest that individuals will carry out identity work to ensure that their self-identity fits with

the required social identity. Portfolio workers, however, when feeling confident and in control, seem to be able to impose their self-identities on their social identities. Some participants were able to negotiate their social identities to fit their preferred self-identities by practising role behaviours that were consistent with their self-identities (Inkson et al 2015), changing job titles (Grant et al 2014) and employment bases, and creating job experiences that fitted with their lives (Mainiero & Sullivan 2006). It appears that, rather than portfolio careers relying on an emphasis on professional or occupational identities (Gold & Fraser 2002), portfolio workers are instead developing stronger self-identities and carrying out extensive identity work to reduce conflict and ensure a good fit between self and social identities.

This then raises the question of how perceptions of self-actualisation and exploitation arise. These were identified as coming from assessments about key aspects of work such as power, control, security, flexibility, balance, variety and challenge. There were other issues, such as, inter alia, status, pay, convenience and opportunities for career progression mentioned, but the seven identified were the most frequently cited aspects by participants and were also prevalent themes in the literature (see 2.5).

If participants perceived that they had the power in the relationship with their employing organisations, were able to control their work, had the flexibility they required, had sufficient variety and challenge, and felt secure, then this led to overall positive outcomes putting them at the self-actualised end of the spectrum. If, however, they felt powerless, insecure, lacking challenge and variety, that their work was out of control and that they had insufficient flexibility this led to

perceptions of exploitation. Overall, most participants seemed to be able to manage the balance towards an overall self-actualised view of portfolio work, even if, in contractual terms, in some jobs they considered themselves to be exploited. If there was a perceived imbalance in their identity implications, they appeared to be able to carry out identity work to turn a perception of exploitation into a perception of exercising choice and being in control. Any negative identity implications, such as the stress of having too much work, were re-framed as rising to a challenge, and a source of learning and growth (Petriglieri et al 2019). This, in turn, led to increased confidence which then helped to build up a more positive social and self-identity in a virtuous circle.

A balance was achieved when overall positive aspects of the work portfolio outweighed negative ones. These will vary depending on the type of portfolio worker and what aspects are important to them because 'people are in their jobs for different reasons' (Schein 2017: 46). For example, *Involuntaries* are likely to have a greater desire for security in terms of regular income. *Insatiables*, however, are less likely to be concerned about security and more interested in opportunities for experimentation and growth.

Although many portfolios contained some work that was perceived as exploitative, participants were able to justify this by balancing it out with other, more self-actualised, elements of their portfolios. Figure 7.2 provides an example of how one *Impassioned/Investor*'s perception of three different jobs could be mapped. These categories will be interpreted differently by participants depending on their prior experiences. For example, former public sector employees often cited being

powerful and in control but this has to be considered in the context of their previous work in a traditional hierarchical structure.

Many participants had a 'safety net' job (Gold & Fraser 2002: 579) giving them the perceived security to explore other options. This security was often at the expense of other aspects of their work so these elements were sought from other jobs added to the portfolio to achieve an overall optimal balance. Those participants that felt overly exploited were able to take action to try to restore the balance by, inter alia, changing jobs, representing their social identities differently (Kreiner et al 2006), or reducing the time spent on, or impact of, that job.
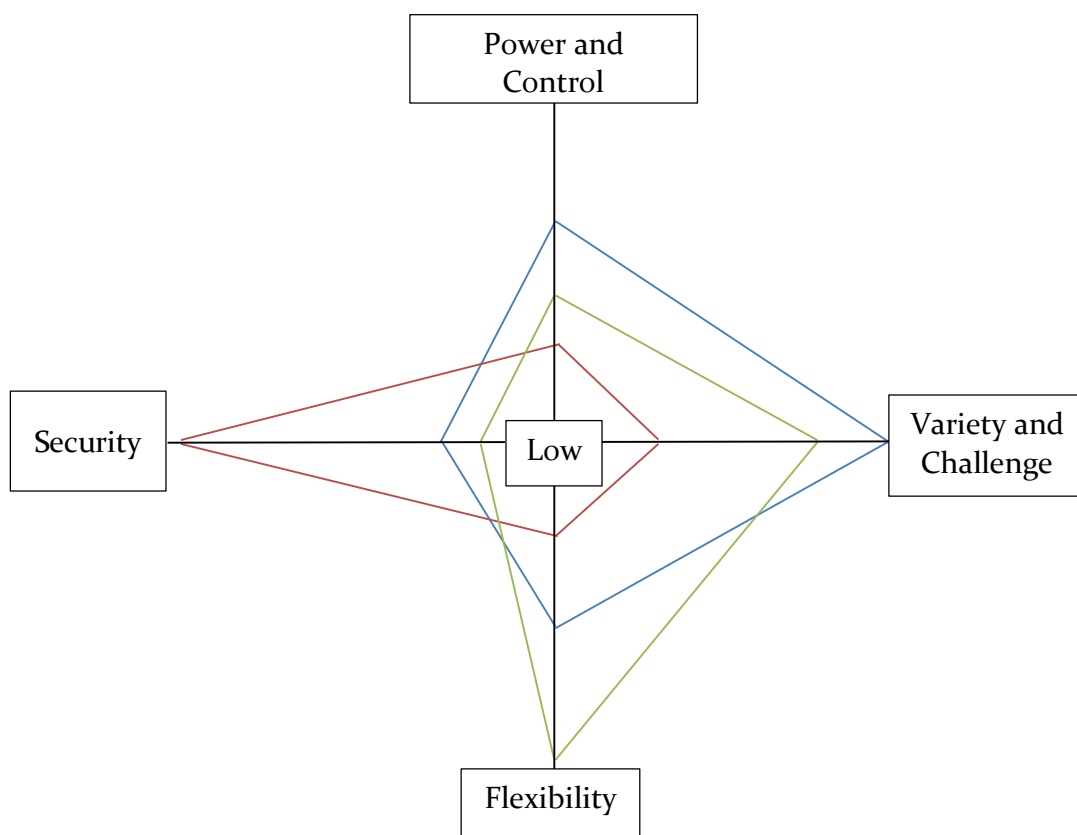
Figure 7.2: An example of the overall balance that can be achieved with three contemporaneous jobs

This representation is, however, personal to the individual and not usually shared with employing organisations as, for example, stating that a job was being taken

purely for security might not be attractive to employers. Empirical evidence suggests that the social identity signalled to organisations may be very different to the core self-identity as this style of working allows workers to present a face suitable to the specific purpose.

One of the main reasons for carrying out this research was to give portfolio workers a voice so that they no longer feel 'invisible' or a marginalised sector of the labour force. This invisibility can be due to them only presenting a relevant part of their identity, or from being marginalised as a result of merely being in a fractional post.

Analysis of the data led me to draw parallels between portfolio workers and 'The Incredibles'. This fictitious family hide their individual talents of strength, elasticity, invisibility, speed, and 'undiscovered potential' in an attempt to fit into normal life (Pixar no date). It seems that many portfolio workers hide some of their identities from organisations that are only interested in small parts of them. The superhuman qualities of 'The Incredibles' also reflect qualities exhibited by portfolio workers, for example, the elasticity to juggle different demands and the speed to do so quickly. The undiscovered potential of the baby aligns with the *Insatiable* category of the typology developed, exploring new opportunities and experimenting with provisional (Cohen 2014), possible (Gratton & Scott 2016; Markus & Nurius 1986), and potential selves (Trondman et al 2014; Wapnick 2015), or what Handy (2015: 163) describes as the 'golden seed' of possibility that exists within each of us and might, if we identify what it is and nurture it, lead to personal fulfilment.

Identity manipulation

This hiding of talents and experimenting with provisional selves (Cohen 2014) is closely allied to the chameleon identity theorised by Choudhry (2010), whereby individuals choose which of their two ethnic identities to accentuate in a particular situation. Like chameleons they will either choose an identity to blend in to their environment or as a form of social signalling. However, the chameleon concept does not reflect the far greater capacity for choice of identities that portfolio workers have. They can choose from a wide variety of occupations, organisations, networks or other 'personal holding environments' (Petriglieri et al 2019) in addition to age, gender, ethnicity or other social groups.

I therefore conceptualise portfolio workers' identities as a Rubik's cube[6] identity. The cube represents the ability of portfolio workers to manipulate their identities in a number of different dimensions, to display different colours and combinations of faces, representing different social identities. Portfolio workers have the ability to carry out identity work to display a different face (Goffman 1967/2005: 5) in each organisational setting, selecting only the specific elements of their identity that are salient to a particular context (Caza et al 2018) to create the desired impression (Bolino et al 2016; Goffman 1959/1990). They can also conceal a face, in respect of a specific role; present a role in a different way, carrying out anti-identity work (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003); or make a couple of twists to slightly alter the face to tweak the identity presented; or, for example, carrying out further training or

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[6] The Rubik's cube is a cube-shaped, colour matching, puzzle popular in the 1980s. It has six different coloured faces compiled of 27 mini cubes. There are 43 quintillion possible moves to arrive at the solution of each face being all one colour (Rubiks 2018).

development, as *Investors* do, to extend the potential face that can be presented. Rather than trying to achieve the puzzle's solution of all faces being one colour, which perhaps an employee in one traditional career might be required to have by their organisation, the portfolio worker can create numerous different multi-coloured faces to appeal to different employers simultaneously.

Each individual mini cube can be manipulated in all directions, to suit employer or client requirements, or external environmental changes, then the required face can be presented. The cube itself, however it is manipulated, is still constructed of 27 mini cubes and six faces which perhaps represents the more stable self-identity. There can be conflict between these multiple identities, and this is dealt with by the manipulation of the cube which can be either adaptive or exploratory (Petriglieri et al 2018) which align to the *In-transitions* and *Insatiables* classifications. The typology of portfolio workers goes some way towards explaining the different conditions that are required to facilitate this swivelling of identities. For example, those that are *Insatiables* are likely to have a wide variety of identities to draw on, whereas *Involuntaries* may take longer to develop both the range of alternative identities and the ability, and confidence, to manipulate the cube. Although the sample did not specifically consider minority groups, it seems likely that certain groups, such as the physically disabled, might have a reduced identity capacity due to the constraints within which they have to work.

The ability to carry out continuous identity work – or build identity capacity – is a process that can create value as depicted in Figure 7.3. This process includes learning not only to carry out effective self-promotion but also having the flexibility and adaptability to successfully manipulate, mould, and switch identities

to suit audiences. This fluidity of identity requires continuous learning, an essential skill in a continuously changing environment (Johnson 2018). The process of maintaining these different identities may also add value by both producing and signalling (Caza et al 2018) specific desirable qualities such as confidence, adaptability, agility and other transferable skills (Deloitte 2018). The process can also be used to overcome imposterism which can then lead to greater success (Jarrett 2010) and can become a fundamental and positive part (Caza et al 2017) of their self-identities.

IDENTITY WORK

Towards achievement of perception of optimal balance between desired social and self-identities

Employer or client requirements

Internal and external environmental changes

INCREASED IDENTITY CAPACITY

Process of identity work, responding to experiences, creates value by developing social and cultural capital together with required attributes such as flexibility, adaptability, responsiveness, resilience, learning agility and other transferable skills. The more frequently the worker is exposed to different jobs and roles, the more they increase their identity capacity

Figure 7.3: The Rubik's cube identity work model

This manipulation may, however, result in unintended consequences, as it is impossible to predict all outcomes resulting from the manipulation until it has occurred. The portfolio worker can respond immediately to any unintentional outcomes with further identity work. The Rubik's cube identity can also be analysed both as an external social identity and an internal self-identity whereby the colours presented on the external face may be perceived differently, by each party, depending on previous experiences, as the data has demonstrated.

Portfolio workers can also offer organisations skills and experience that a traditional full-time employee might not have. For example, part-time teachers are able to bring their industry experience to their teaching, and their teaching knowledge and skills back to industry, and this can be demonstrated in their presentation of their Rubik's cube identity.

This identity work is carried out against a background of discourses of work-life balance, security, flexibility and control which manifests itself as a struggle around the identity of a portfolio worker. The literature (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Mandl & Biletta 2018; Wood & Michaelides 2016) tends to frame the identity of the portfolio worker against the alternative of traditional full-time employment with the benefits that this offers. This research, however, suggests that the world of work has now been dismantled to such an extent (Tweedie 2013) that portfolio workers now frame these discourses against their own previous experiences (see Appendix VI), rather than the alternative of full-time traditional employment. The meaning of portfolio work is therefore *relative* to their past employment, organisational structures, cultures and other experiences. Their views are contextualised by comparison with their own experiences and what they perceive other people are

undergoing. For example, freedom is felt by those portfolio workers that had previously worked within the relatively restrictive policies and procedures of the public sector.

Portfolio workers are seeking a balance between what each of the jobs in their portfolio means to them (see Figure 7.2). Their identity has been presented, or interpreted, as self-actualised – choosing when, where and how to work; or exploited – being told where, when and how to work on several short-term, insecure, poorly remunerated contracts. Portfolio workers may even present self-actualisation and exploitation, or any points on the continuum between the two, at the same time. This will depend on the context of each job and portfolio workers appear to accept an element of exploitation, particularly in their 'safety net' (Gold & Fraser 2002) job, provided this is balanced by a perception of self-actualisation in other roles.

Portfolio work provides the opportunity to challenge oneself in several different roles to achieve self-development (Petriglieri et al 2019) and a stronger self-identity, albeit perhaps a self-identity that is very intensely tied to work. The expectation of constant availability from employers and clients (Reid 2015), and the need to be continually scanning the environment for future engagements, means that work forms a very large part of their self-identities.

It is also possible that the stronger self-identity that results from a reduced attachment to an organisation, occupation or other identity anchor will, in turn, impact on employer and client requirements whereby portfolio workers are able to negotiate their preferred terms, in either written or, more commonly, psychological contracts, as depicted in Figure 7.3.

Identity anchors

The literature indicates that some of the main anchors of identity construction are:
the organisation (Kreiner & Ashforth 2004); the occupation (Ashforth et al 2013);
the occupation and profession (Gold & Fraser 2002); organisational culture or
place of work (Tyler 2011); the network (Murgia et al 2017); lifestyle, challenge,
dedication to a cause (Schein 1996); or, more recently, a 'personal holding
environment' composed of routines, people, places and purpose (Petriglieri et al
2019). Portfolio workers can select from any of these anchors, either individually or
in combination. The portfolio workers in this study felt able to change their
identity anchors, depending on the context, tending to underpin their fluid,
dynamic identities with a combination of networking, challenge, reputation, the
family and lifestyle, using a different combination for each situation.

There was also evidence of portfolio workers being able to negotiate a preferred
identity in collaboration with employing organisations. This flexibility on the part
of organisations seems to lead to a longer-term relational contract, albeit,
nominally, still on a short-term, fixed, transactional basis. There is clear evidence
from participants that they are imposing their self-identities on social identities,
changing the accepted notion of the portfolio worker, and/or the occupational,
organisational or other social identity. Portfolio workers can manipulate and frame
their deliberately ambiguous identities to appeal to what they believe their various
audiences are seeking and to justify their choice of working pattern, in the context
of the current labour market, as conceptualised by the Rubik's cube identity (see
Figure 7.3).

Managing multiple identities

The portfolio workers in this study tended to either compartmentalise their different jobs and identities, or have a dominant identity underpinned by any of the identity anchors outlined above. This supports Ramarajan's (2014) independent and clustered divisions and Hennekam's (2015) separation or synergy. Even if presenting compartmentalised (Roccas & Brewer 2002), independent (Ramarajan 2014) or separate (Hennekam 2015) identities, when describing their portfolio careers, workers were able to provide a narrative highlighting synergy between some very diverse jobs demonstrating at least one type of coherence, most commonly thematic (Habermas & Bluck 2000). Narrative is both an existing identity making resource and a potential identity provider whereby narrative is an outcome of various identity choices. This feeds back into their social identities, but empirical material shows that portfolio workers are not constrained by existing discourses (see Figure 7.3) but can use the conflict, or overlap, between potential identities to craft one that is unique to them, supporting and sharing a coherent identity by careful use of narrative (Meijers & Lengelle 2012).

Identity coherence

Coherence emerged clearly from the literature as an objective of identity work (e.g. Alvesson et al 2008; Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003; Watson 2008b) although this has been disputed more recently by scholars (e.g. Beech et al 2016; Daskalaki 2012) who suggested that incoherence forms part of identity work. There is certainly evidence that portfolio workers are prepared to explore new opportunities that fall outside their existing identities, but they then appear to narrate these into coherence with the rest of their portfolio often using the balance between different

elements (see Figure 7.2) to justify their inclusion. They are also able to explore

new identities without having to relinquish their existing ones by utilising their

Rubik's cube identity (see Figure 7.3) avoiding the more dramatic and disruptive

process of identity transformation (Lawler 2014). There are several examples where

participants were able to reframe seemingly negative events into positive ones by

carrying out identity work to continue a coherent narrative. For example, job

losses were reframed as opportunities to acquire new jobs and insecurity reframed

as flexibility.

Identity and balance

Optimal balance was considered by Kreiner et al (2006) in the context of the

balance between personal and social identities, but, in common with most identity

research, this concerned one type of occupation, or vocation, only. In the case of

portfolio workers, with multiple occupations and jobs, a closely allied issue of

balance arose, not only that between social and personal identities but also the

contexts within which they operate, i.e. work and life. Atzeni (2012) suggests that

the majority of people have a negative attitude towards work although it can be

creative and fulfilling and form part of a social life. Recent work-life balance

literature suggests that boundaries between work and life are increasingly blurred

(e.g. Gratton 2011; Gratton & Scott 2016), and that work and life should be

combined into an integrated, synergistic whole (Sirgy & Lee 2018), but there

appears to be a mismatch between the rhetoric and the reality (Bratton 2015). Most

research to date concerns the impact of work-life balance policies offered by

organisations (e.g. Perrigino et al 2018; Talukder et al 2018) on different types of

worker (e.g. Pandu & Sankar 2018; Wilkinson et al 2018).

The issue of balance in this study relates to the fundamental importance, to individuals, of time. Although there is an increasingly wide range of flexible working policies and practices available to those in full-time traditional careers, these policies, implemented within organisations, can have negative outcomes (e.g. Perrigino et al 2018). The portfolio workers in this study were unanimous in wanting control of the times, places and ways of work being done. Fleming (2017: 169) believes that balance is a fable that 'reinforces the fantasy of individual choice and freedom' but there was strong evidence of a perception of choice and freedom amongst portfolio workers despite an apparent mismatch between different interpretations and understandings of the meaning of flexibility (see 2.5.6).

The work-life balance framing puts the two at opposing ends of the spectrum assuming they are mutually exclusive rather than mutually reinforcing (Lewis & Cooper 2006). Rather than the balance being between work and life, as the literature suggests (e.g. Sirgy & Lee 2018; Wilkinson et al 2018), for portfolio workers the notion of balance is interpreted differently. Work and life are neither homogeneous nor static, and portfolio workers are can manipulate their work, life and concomitant identities enabling them to achieve an optimal balance. Whether this is conceptualised as *life* balance, or *work*/*work*/*work* balance, the important distinction is that each job satisfies different needs leading to an overall perception of optimal balance (see Figure 7.2). There is also evidence of a synergy between different jobs. Work has therefore become a productive capacity, which can be shaped by the individual in different ways to achieve both self-actualisation and acceptable public and private identities. The infrastructure for all these balances is the identity work that has to be carried out to maintain it and this identity work can benefit both the individual and the organisation.

7.3 Conceptual Contributions

This study makes specific conceptual contributions to the literature on portfolio work and identity, which are discussed below.

7.3.1 Portfolio work

There are two key conceptual contributions to the limited literature on portfolio work. The first relates to a new definition of portfolio work (see 7.2.1) which should provide a basis for further research into this growing NSWA. The second concerns the different backgrounds and types of portfolio worker, within the generic definition, which have been conceptualised as a typology (see Appendix VI). This typology can be used as a framework to distinguish between categories of worker in terms of motivation and past, present and future selves to aid understanding and demonstrate how 'the preferences for and experiences of nonstandard work change over an individual's career' (George & Chattopadhyay 2015: 16). The typology also addresses Ashford et al's (2018) call for future research to 'further differentiate samples of workers in the gig economy' considering the role of both choice and future aspirations.

This research contributes towards a greater understanding of portfolio work by confirming that it is not the preserve of specific groups only (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Ibarra 2015; Mandl & Biletta 2018; Storey 2000) but covers a range from junior to senior management and young to old. It also highlights how a combination of early and late career roles, and low- and high-status roles, can be brought together and that age does not necessarily indicate career stage.

This study interrogates balance in the context of the working lives of portfolio workers, many of whom are working very long hours, often longer than they would have been in a traditional job. Most of them, however, seem to perceive, at least some of, their work as more attractive than other parts. This is likely to be particularly prevalent with those who are *Impassioned, Insatiable or Investors* because their reasons for working, and their experiences of this aspect of their work, make it seem more like life, or even play, than work. The experience of portfolio work is therefore not, as the literature suggests, about work-life balance, work-life blend (Hopson & Ledger 2009), work-life integration (Burke 2006), or work-life harmonisation (Lewis & Cooper 2005). It perhaps needs to be reconceptualised as either work/work/work balance or even just – life – with work being an inevitable, vital (Werth & Brownlow 2018) and increasingly integral, part of life rather than a separate entity. Negative aspects of portfolio work, such as the time spent on the, usually unpaid, administrative and support activities connected with having multiple jobs, appear to be counteracted by the experimentation and unconventionality in work facilitated (Gratton & Scott 2016) and the opportunity for workers to develop themselves (Harding 2013), experience growth (Ashford et al 2018), and shape their identities.

7.3.3 Identity

There is a consensus that work is vitally important in relation to identity (e.g. Bratton 2015; Brown and Coupland 2015) but identity has mainly been examined in the context of traditional careers (Petriglieri et al 2018). This study contributes to the identity literature by highlighting how portfolio workers, in the absence of a core organisational identity, select from various alternative discourses to promote their preferred identities (Petriglieri et al 2019) and create a 'coherent whole of a

career' (Mainiero & Gibson 2017: 2). Proactive high-level, intense, and elaborate identity work is carried out, to craft a coherent socially and personally acceptable identity. The identity work forms a continuous, intensive and vital part of the portfolio worker's capacity as identities are continually reclaimed and revised as they move between organisations and roles (Ashford et al 2018). This ability to successfully carry out identity work is developed over time adding to the skills and abilities a portfolio worker can offer.

This is conceptualised as a Rubik's cube identity (see Figure 7.3) whereby the ability to manipulate the cube gives portfolio workers greater capacity to capture who they believe themselves to be (Caza et al 2018), promoting a greater understanding of themselves (Petriglieri et al 2018) and their work (Ashford et al 2018). It also enables them to respond to perceived changes in the external environment, or organisational needs, creating social and cultural capital and additional value by identifying and developing attributes that are prized by organisations such as flexibility, adaptability, responsiveness, resilience, learning agility, and other 'portable' skills such as marketing ability, communication and digital capabilities (Ashford et al 2018). This Rubik's cube identity is both outward facing, building social identity, and inward facing, building self-identity by providing the portfolio worker with the capacity to reframe negative aspects of their working lives. Losing a contract, for example, can be reframed and presented as an opportunity to explore new challenges reinforcing the worker's self-identity as an *Insatiable.* This capacity for identity work can be built up over time, and through experiences, in a similar way to Ibarra and Obodaru's (2016: 60) 'liminality muscle', i.e. the more they are exposed to environmental and organisational

changes the more adept they become at manipulating their Rubik's cube identity creating additional value.

Finally, the Rubik's cube conceptualisation captures the way that portfolio workers' multiple identities are not wholly *either* independent *or* clustered (Ramarajan 2014), or separated *or* synergistic (Hennekam 2015), but may exhibit both aspects to different audiences at the same time depending on the extent to which multiple identities are accepted in specific domains. As the portfolio worker becomes more confident of their ability to generate an acceptable social identity over time, they seem to evolve from independent/separated to clustered/synergistic approaches to their multiple identities forming strong, complex and layered (Ashford et al 2018) self-identities of their own. They are then able to use these strong identities to exert some power and control over the organisations they work for, and environments they work within.

The ability to carry out identity work is developed to respond to environmental pressures, initially as a coping mechanism, but over time it is honed into a specific skill that is used to improve employability. The identity work provides not only a versatile repertoire of identities but also encompasses an intensified ability to learn, perform, and easily move between, new identities. As flexible working becomes more widespread employers may become increasingly interested in identity capacity as it provides a way of ensuring workers have the capability to adapt and fit into organisational structures easily, can make a positive contribution towards the espoused organisational identity, and can add to the organisations' intellectual capital. The value of this identity capacity might, however, either not be fully recognised by organisations, or may even be exploited by making use of it

but not acknowledging it and remunerating it. Changes in organisational and social contexts have brought the study of multiple identities to the fore making it 'one of the most relevant research and intervention foci' (Alcover 2018) and the Rubik's cube identity work model extends this body of identity work.

7.4 Empirical Contributions

This study focuses on an under-researched (Gold & Fraser 2002) segment of the working population that is hidden perhaps due to the contested definition of portfolio work and the inability to distinguish it from other NSWAs. Previous investigations into portfolio work have mainly addressed just one type of occupational group, gender, or hierarchical level (e.g. Cohen et al 2004; Fenwick 2006), or a limited range, (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Wood & Michaelides 2016). This research addresses a wide range of occupational groups, genders and hierarchical levels (see Table 4.1). This variety overcame the lack of variability in respect of reasons for entering portfolio work as not all participants had employment alternatives (Clinton et al 2006), or a choice (Fenwick 2006), to work in this way. The development of the empirically-based typology to reflect both reasons for entering, and for remaining, in portfolio work captures both choice (*Insatiables)* and necessity (*Involuntaries)*. It also highlights the evolution of necessity into choice in most cases.

Fenwick (2006) called for further research into the development of portfolio workers' identities and identity construction. Identity manipulation emerged as a key feature of portfolio workers' lives due to their lack of one organisation around which to build their identity. Rather than relying on an emphasis on professional or occupational identity (Gold & Fraser 2002), a wider range of connections are

used (Petriglieri et al 2019). This study has deepened our understanding of the interactions between multiple identities (Miscenko & Day 2016) and addresses how portfolio workers manage their competing identities against the constraints of hegemonic career discourses (La-Pointe 2010: xxx) to carve out socially acceptable identities.

A further contribution of this study is that it has been carried out by a portfolio worker, as an insider researcher (Saunders et al 2009; Humphrey 2007), who has been immersed in a similar situation throughout the research process. The lived experience diary adds depth and richness and provides additional support to the analysis although this did require a high level of reflexivity to be able to put forward an interpretation of how portfolio workers make sense of their working lives and how they fit into the world of work.

The accounts of the experiences of portfolio workers demonstrate that they are not all 'pining for core jobs' (Handy 1995a: 79) or 'wanting the relative stability offered by a permanent position' (Simpson 2016 no page no.). Rather than presenting portfolio work in contrast with the traditional career, empirically, it is discussed in relation to individuals' previous experiences and the institutional conditions they have been exposed to (Vallas & Christin 2018). If they have experienced negative aspects of organisations, such as being made redundant as many *Involuntaries* were, this makes portfolio work appear more attractive. Despite the precarity of many of the individual roles within the portfolio, there were widely reported perceptions of greater psychological security due to the improbability of losing every job in the portfolio at the same time.

It is hoped that these findings will contribute towards the ongoing debate over the changing nature of work and employment (Ashford et al 2018; Barley & Kunda 2004; Bratton & Gold 2017; Gratton & Scott 2016; Hewison 2016; Murgia et al 2017) by enhancing the understanding of this under-researched, yet growing, segment of the workforce. More specifically, an appreciation of the heterogeneous nature of portfolio workers, that often extends far beyond their organisational job descriptions and roles, could have positive implications for both workers and organisations.

7.5 Reflections on Organisational Implications

Organisations appear to be losing relevance (Loacker & Śliwa 2016) for portfolio workers as they can choose to what extent they want to affiliate themselves with them, using them as tools (Inkson et al 2015) to provide resources for their individualistic careers. They can build their identity outside organisations finding satisfaction, belonging and recognition from customers and clients rather than the organisation. Organisational structures, systems and processes need to continue to evolve, beyond the 'old norms and assumptions' (Duberley et al 2006: 290), to adapt to individual requirements to attract talent. This is particularly important in the UK where the highest level of employment in over 40 years (Labour Force Survey 2018; ONS 2018a) is being experienced making competition for good workers more intense.

7.5.1 Social expectations and the psychological contract

To understand what portfolio workers and organisations require from each other, it is necessary to look beyond purely contractual terms, which are often short term and may be considered exploitative. To achieve a mutually acceptable working

arrangement, workers and organisations need to demonstrate negotiation and reciprocity to arrive at an agreed psychological contract. This psychological contract is, however, concerned only with the relationship between the organisation and the individual, and the context for the portfolio worker goes beyond this to encompass the market, the professional field, social interaction, routines and sense of purpose (Petriglieri et al 2019). It is perhaps therefore not just the psychological contract, but also the social expectations of each party, in terms of behaviours, that need exploring.

The multiple work roles carried out by portfolio workers result in several contemporaneous psychological contracts which are multidimensional constructs (Gerber et al 2012). The psychological contract becomes increasingly significant because portfolio workers are searching for different features from different jobs. Although the literature suggests that career progression is less likely to be a concern, or a realistic aspiration, for portfolio workers (e.g. Fenwick 2006; Conway & Sturges 2014), empirical evidence suggests that some portfolio workers, particularly *Investors,* are likely to use portfolio work to acquire skills and experience that can enhance employability and, potentially, career progression.

A particular issue for portfolio workers, highlighted in this research, is that organisations tend to make assumptions about them based on the job, or category, they are working in within a particular organisation, or the face they are displaying. As many of the jobs are short term, temporary, part-time, precarious (Standing 2011) and sometimes 'early career' (Mainiero & Gibson 2017), the social expectations of power and status from the organisation can clash with those of the individual leading to frustration. Each employer has, to an extent, become

expendable due to the other options open to the portfolio worker, and a failure to appreciate this shift in the balance of power can ultimately result in the end of the relationship.

The psychological contract can also be of greater importance to portfolio workers than traditional workers as, in some cases, there is no explicit written contract making the job wholly dependent on the psychological contract. The suggested shift away from a relational psychological contract to a transactional contract (Baruch 2004; Inkson et al 2015; Watson 2008a) is not supported by the data, which demonstrates the importance of a relational psychological contract even when underpinned by only a short-term transactional contract. Again, the issue of balance arises, this time between the needs of each party. It does not appear to be the case that the employer holds the balance of power (Bernhardt & Krause 2014) because the portfolio worker has alternative options if the psychological contract does not meet their expectations. They will simply move on to another position, adversely impacting on the work outcomes for the organisation (Gerber et al 2012). The challenge for the organisation is keeping track of the changing priorities and expectations of the worker (Cogin 2012) over age, career stage and role combinations. These may be difficult to identify as they are fluid and dynamic with some workers exhibiting both early and late career positions (Mainiero & Gibson 2017) within their portfolio and presenting different aspects of their Rubik's cube identity.

The other key element of the psychological contract requiring balance is that between precarity and security. The literature suggests that short- or fixed-term contracts lead to precarity (e.g. Murgia et al 2017; Sotelo Valencia 2016; Standing

2014), when compared with the traditional permanent employment contract. The majority of portfolio workers do not appear to feel that 'flexibility mostly means precarity' (Gherardi & Murgia 2013: 98) as they seem able to manage the precarious nature of their multiple contracts to provide a level of security – financial, psychological and in terms of employability. This finding contributes towards filling the gap in studies of 'workers' perceptions of precarity and vulnerability' highlighted by Hewison (2016: 439). The level of psychological security seems to come from a combination of having alternative options; having a very long-term employment relationship, albeit on the basis of a series of short-term contracts; or perceptions of employability based on experience (De Cuyper et al 2018). As both traditional working patterns and NSWAs are now considered to be insecure (Kalleberg 2016) it might be more important for both workers and organisations to concentrate on discussing and clarifying individual psychological contracts, or social expectations, rather than solely focusing on enforcing formal contractual terms.

'More collaborative and explicit dialogue' (Fenwick 2006: 77) should help to ensure a convergence of the social expectations of each party. Those organisations that are prepared to adjust their HRM processes and procedures to accommodate the individual demands of workers are likely to be able to achieve optimal performance. Organisations that can offer contracts that can be adapted to suit workers' requirements are also likely to be able to compete more successfully when attracting talent to the organisation. There appears to be a need to stop the focus on *time* spent working – as most flexible working policies do – and instead focus on the *quality* of the work.

7.5.2 Flexible working

A flexible working policy within an organisation appears to no longer be enough for portfolio workers. The meaning of flexibility seems to be interpreted quite differently, by workers and organisations, so it is vital to discuss and agree these interpretations as part of the psychological contract to avoid the negative perceptions that can otherwise result. The different interpretations of flexibility amongst participants in this study seemed to be predominantly based on their previous experiences (see Appendix VI).

The main driver for flexibility for individuals is to balance work and other commitments (Savickas et al 2009) by having more control over their time (Barley & Kunda 2004). For organisations, however, flexibility is driven by the need to be agile, adaptable and able to respond to changing market conditions facilitating speedy numerical, functional, temporal and geographical changes in staffing levels (e.g. Lewis & Cooper 2005). Organisations seem to mainly offer flexible working policies that focus on numerical flexibility, i.e. time spent working, which can have negative implications (Perrigino et al 2018) and is based on the flawed assumption that the hours contracted are the hours worked (Conway & Sturges 2014). The view that working long hours for an organisation is a sign of productivity and commitment also needs to be challenged (Chung 2019). Portfolio workers interpret flexibility much more widely including when, where and how they work. Despite many reporting having more work than they would like, they are still able to frame this as flexibility as they perceive it as their choice, to have compiled this portfolio, even if this choice reflects their concerns about lack of future work.

There are signs that portfolio workers are beginning to exert some control over working patterns by leaving a job that does not offer sufficient flexibility, refusing to do more days when asked to do so, negotiating part-time hours for a full-time post, or crafting unique personalised contracts to suit their needs (Caza et al 2018). This research adds to the evidence base for developing more creative and individualistic policies and procedures, and being prepared to adjust them and tailor them to individuals, to attract and retain talent. The *perception* of flexibility seemed to be of more importance than actual flexibility. A sense that workers were able to take time off if they wanted to, even if they did not, provided perceptions of flexibility.

7.5.3 Recognition of the individual

This research demonstrates that participants felt some frustration at the conflict between the rhetoric of changes in work arrangements (Bratton 2015) and their own experiences whereby 'old norms and assumptions' (Duberley et al 2006: 290) still seem to apply. It is hoped that this work will contribute towards challenging these norms and assumptions to encourage thinking more widely, beyond pure contractual measures concerning hours of work and places of work, and encourage collaboration with workers, to achieve a mutually acceptable level of control and flexibility, enabling workers to create the optimal work-life integration and career identity they desire. This should then lead to improved motivation and productivity. When the optimal balance is achieved, and portfolio working is successful, workers no longer appear to worry so much about how much time they spend working.

Demands, from both organisations and individuals, for flexibility are likely to lead to increasing numbers portfolio working so it is necessary to improve the understanding of this growing segment of the workforce. This should encourage wider society, for example, mortgage lenders, and those recruiting and creating employment contracts, to take a more open-minded approach to portfolio workers. The overwhelming message from participants was of a need for balance, and it appeared that they were prepared to accept deficiencies in aspects of one job if they were able to compensate for it by finding them in another job. It also seemed that the strict division between work and life became difficult to identify when an optimal portfolio was achieved. The very different interpretations of flexibility suggest that increasing legislative control to afford protection to precarious workers (Taylor 2017) is not the only solution (Reissner & Izak 2018). There is a need for organisations to change the way they think about employment to reflect changes in the worlds of home and work (Hochschild 2001) and have a less judgemental response to career paths that differ from traditional ones (Gratton & Scott 2016).

Because most organisations recruit to fill a specific position the employment process focuses on whether the employee has the requisite skills and experience. In most cases portfolio workers are employed part-time in each of their roles. It usually seems to be the case that there is no recognition of cross-role benefits and the synergy that can be achieved between multiple roles. An effort to encourage these cross-role reflections by organisations, perhaps as part of the formal recruitment or performance review processes, might release additional benefits for both parties. Alternatively, portfolio workers may prefer to compartmentalise (Ramarajan 2014; Hennekam 2015) their various jobs with no cross-role reflection,

depending on how each job is perceived, and it needs to be made clear by both parties, as part of the psychological contract, which approach is to be followed.

7.5.4 Rejection of the organisation

Organisations are simply ways of connecting groups of people, and, now that there are so many ways to connect (Handy 2015), portfolio workers no longer seem to perceive organisations as benevolent places where they want to belong. There are clear signs in the data that individuals are actively rejecting, what they perceive as, inflexible organisations, agreeing merely to affiliate themselves for specific jobs but refusing to be 'owned' by them.

Again, this is likely to depend on previous experiences (see Appendix VI), whereby belonging might have negative connotations, particularly for *Involuntaries* many of whom were, at one stage, rejected by their organisations. Empirical evidence suggests that the 'comfort and allure' of full-time employment is no longer compelling (Hindle 2008: 150). Portfolio workers seem to be able to obtain sufficient comfort from their unique combination of jobs. What they lack in terms of perceived financial security, certainty, benefits and administrative support (Hindle 2008) appears to be outweighed by the control they perceive they have over where, when and how they work and their ability to manipulate their Rubik's cube identity in multiple ways. The control seems to come from having proved to themselves it is possible to successfully engage in multiple jobs (Caza et al 2018), and from having various options to pursue rather than being fully invested in just one organisation, resulting in a shift in the balance of power (e.g. Bratton & Gold 2017; Ramarajan 2014) from organisation to worker and psychological security. Portfolio workers also seem to no longer require, or expect, the praise and

recognition that historically came from organisations as this reportedly now comes direct from clients, patients, students, co-workers or others.

The literature (e.g. Hindle 2008; Standing 2014; Valcour et al 2007) suggests that precarious workers have to spend time carrying out tasks, such as administration, marketing, accounting and IT, that would previously have been carried out by organisations and that this is a negative aspect. However, the self-responsibility built up when developing these competencies seems to be an underlying condition of portfolio work and is considered to be characteristic of the emerging individualistic society (Handy 2015). These competencies, and resulting attributes, can add value to them as individuals and lead to further psychological independence. A number of portfolio workers in this study also reported not being good enough, or imposter syndrome (Jarrett 2010; Caza et al 2018), because they were working in positions that were a new challenge, but overcoming these challenges then led to increased psychological independence.

This lack of dependency on the organisation and belonging needs mean that portfolio workers have moved away from the concept of organisation man (Whyte 1956) and the ideal worker (Lewis & Cooper 2005). This could result in organisations discriminating against portfolio workers in a similar way to the historic exclusion of women from board positions (Hampton 2017). To recognise this possibility may require changes in organisational designs and structures to allow for simultaneous late and early career (Mainiero & Gibson 2017) positions. Organisations may also need to consider, rather than insisting on an early career junior title, granting workers sufficient narrative autonomy to use a title that suits their required identity. Rather than trying to regulate employees' identities (Gill

2015) organisations should allow portfolio workers some scope to develop identities (Grant et al 2014) that fit with the others in their portfolio. The identity of a portfolio worker emerged in a number of accounts to be based on *not* belonging to organisations. This has implications for both organisational policies and practices, particularly in relation to identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott 2002), and also structures and systems of society that assume most individuals work within organisations (Handy 2015). Many portfolio workers seem to be concentrating on building intangible assets, such as balance, control and autonomy, rather than tangible assets such as pay, pension and other monetary assets (Gratton & Scott 2016). HRM policies and practices are therefore in need of reform to facilitate individual requirements and negotiations rather than enforcing an organisational standardised approach. This could benefit portfolio workers, by enabling the development of more satisfying working lives, and organisations, by making more effective use of portfolio workers.

7.6 Methodological Contributions

To investigate the experiences of individuals required a broadly ethnographic approach to arrive at a construction of the phenomenon investigated (Denscombe 2007). As I continued to work on a constantly changing portfolio throughout the research period, I kept a lived experience diary to try to reflect on my personal experiences and provide further data to analyse for similarities and differences between my own experiences and those of my participants. This facilitated the provision of a more complex narrative (Humphrey 2007) than would have been possible for a complete outsider to this style of working. The constantly changing work portfolio also provided access to a wider variety of occupational groups and

hierarchical levels than most previous portfolio work studies. The lived experience diary provided support to underpin issues highlighted by the interviews and also recorded changes in my own practice to reflect what I had learnt during them.

This research took an IPA (Smith et al 2009) informed approach to explore, in detail, how portfolio workers experience their work and make sense of this non-standard working pattern. IPA, unlike social constructionism, assumes that what is said in interviews reflects the experiences of individuals (King & Horrocks 2010); however, the use of sketches produced at the start, and added to during interviews, provided additional insights and essential meanings (van Manen 1990) highlighting thoughts and meanings that had not been stated in interviews. The sketches acted as an aide-memoire and also allowed ambivalence to surface that could then be discussed in the interview context to enable the co-construction of knowledge.

Technology also assisted with the co-construction of knowledge in two main ways. It was easy to keep in touch with my participants as all of them had provided email addresses. This meant that once I had developed the typology I was able to seek confirmation from the majority of them that it reflected their own views and was of use. The second use of technology was, initially, to check LinkedIn profiles for recruitment of participants, but this also highlighted incidences of concealing organisational identities which inspired the development of the Rubik's cube identity model.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed the meaning of portfolio work to individuals working in this way, arriving at a new definition of portfolio work and a typology of portfolio

workers. The discussion highlights the extensive identity work carried out by portfolio workers, whereby aspects of identity are concealed, or revealed, depending on the circumstances, in a way that evokes associations with 'The Incredibles'. This creation, maintenance and manipulation of identities, tangentially to organisations, is theorised as a Rubik's cube identity whereby value is produced in the process of creating a socially legitimate identity. The chapter outlines contributions, specifically to the limited body of portfolio work and to identity literature, providing insights into the challenges and benefits, and the extent of identity work required, to successfully work in this way.

My portfolio, and my life, are balanced when there is enough money coming in, and when what I enjoy doing is proportionately a much bigger part of the portfolio than the chores and duties.

Handy (1990: 213)

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Overview

The previous chapter provided a discussion and highlighted contributions made by this study. This chapter summarises the key contributions, outlines the limitations of the research, provides suggestions for future research, and includes final reflections.

8.2 Key Contributions of the Thesis

This study makes three significant contributions to the careers and identity literature relating to portfolio work.

The first contribution draws together previously scattered, and sometimes conflicting, definitions of portfolio work. These have been analysed, together with the empirical evidence, to arrive at a new, empirically-based, definition of portfolio work (see 7.2.1). This definition addresses limitations in some existing definitions (e.g. Mandl & Biletta 2018; Platman 2004; Wood & Michaelides 2016) and encompasses all elements of this working pattern. This should provide a sound basis for further research into this phenomenon.

The second contribution is the development of a typology of portfolio workers (see Appendix VI). This contributes towards existing literature by helping to contextualise the meanings of portfolio work answering calls for the examination

of work and broader life contexts that make multiple identities important (Ramarajan 2014), where multiple loyalties exist (Clarke 2013) and the classification of different categories of workers within the gig economy (Ashford et al 2018).

The typology also addresses suggestions to demonstrate how experiences of portfolio work change over time (George & Chattopadhyay 2015).The typology also assists with explaining and understanding the polarised views of portfolio work as either a new and exciting style of working that enables individuals to achieve self-actualisation (e.g. Coplin 2013; Kelliher & Anderson 2008) or a precarious style of working that exploits individuals (e.g. Ehrenreich 2001; Standing 2014).

The third contribution is the conceptualisation of the Rubik's cube identity work model (see Figure 7.3). This contributes to the identity literature by addressing the need to understand the interaction between various work-related identities for those that do not have just one core organisational identity (e.g. Caza et al 2018; La-Pointe 2010; Miscenko & Day 2016). The majority of research into identity examines it in the context of traditional careers (Petriglieri et al 2018) whereas this study, as Petriglieri et al (2019) suggest, looks at drawing on alternative discourses to promote and maintain identities. The model also demonstrates how career transitions can be presented coherently (Mainiero & Gibson 2017).

Finally, the model illustrates the way identities can be created and changed depending on the audience they are generated for meaning that, not only do portfolio workers need to try to work out what the appropriate identity for that audience is, but they also need to manipulate, and manage, multiple simultaneous identities in different settings. This process of manipulation then becomes a

fundamental, and valued, part of their self-identity, and potentially social identity, and builds up their capacity to successfully present alternative identities.

Although this research is based on a more heterogeneous sample than previous research (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Wood & Michaelides 2016), it did not include representatives of all minority groups. It is hoped however that this work will contribute towards the debate on the future of work (e.g. Gratton & Scott 2016) and the identity implications (e.g. Brown 2015) of having multiple potential organisational identities (Caza et al 2018). It aims to offer insights to organisations offering, or developing, flexible working patterns and to provide a basis for future theory development in this area.

8.3 Limitations

The outcome of this research is the provision of one possible interpretation of the experiences of portfolio workers based on a focus group and thirty-six semi-structured interviews with a variety of individuals (see Chapter Four). The findings of this research cannot therefore be generalised to a wider population but provide a contribution to the body of work that is committed to understanding and explaining alternative working patterns, specifically portfolio work.

As I have continued to work throughout the research period in a changing portfolio of jobs it is possible that my view of portfolio working is overly positive and that this might have impacted on my understandings of my participants' stories. To overcome this, I actively probed for negative aspects and stories, but these were nearly always re-presented, or balanced, to provide overall positive meanings affording evidence of the tendency to manipulate the presentation of a positive identity.

The Rubik's cube identity concept serves only to identify the malleability and elasticity of the identities of the portfolio workers evidenced in this research, and the value that appears to be created by developing this capacity to carry out identity work. To what extent this is recognised by organisations is less clear. Also, as with any metaphor, there are limits to its usefulness for capturing all the nuances and complexities of portfolio work.

The value created in the identity work capacity that portfolio workers have to cultivate leads to the development of beneficial personal attributes such as resilience, adaptability, and interpersonal skills. Although the personal qualities required of portfolio workers were touched on during interviews this did not form a key aspect of the research. It would be of interest to try to identify whether the added value of these qualities, suggested by the Rubik's cube identity model, is fully recognised by portfolio workers and their employing organisations, and, if so, whether organisations acknowledge and reward them, or exploit them.

The wide range of participants was selected to overcome the limitations of the distinct groups investigated in previous studies (e.g. Clinton et al 2006; Wood & Michaelides 2016), however, this makes it difficult to identify specific aspects relating to particular groups. For example, the impact of gender, race, sexuality, or class on the experience of portfolio work has not been considered.

Although the literature is unanimous in suggesting that there has been a growth in the numbers of portfolio workers statistics are difficult to access as they are hidden within other groups. It is hoped that defining portfolio work might provide an initial step towards formal recognition of it in future statistics.

8.4 Future Research

The conclusions outlined in the previous chapter and the limitations outlined above led to some specific areas for future research.

8.4.1 Level of analysis

This research focuses entirely on the experiences of portfolio workers. The organisational perspective on portfolio work should also be explored. This might include aspects such as the level of awareness of the concept or how closely the worker's opinion of their identity fits with the organisational view of their identity. It might also consider the interpretations of key terms such as flexibility, security and career to clarify specific discrepancies between the organisational and the workers' interpretations with a view to assisting with the development of appropriate psychological contracts. Future research could also explore how other types of worker, outside the portfolio working context, perceive their organisations, i.e. whether they still perceive organisations as positive, benevolent places to belong to or whether they also want to distance themselves from organisations.

8.4.2 Identity aspects and significance

Although participants in this study covered a range of genders, occupations, education and ages, no significant investigation of differences between these aspects was carried out. Most of the women talked about being drawn to portfolio work as it fitted with their caring responsibilities. Most men appeared to pursue it in response to redundancy or to achieve self-actualisation. There were, however, exceptions to this generalisation and future research could investigate whether portfolio work is affected by gender, ethnicity, disability or other social groups and

whether there are certain groups that are more suited to portfolio work, or for whom portfolio work is easier to pursue. These groups need to be addressed in more specific, differentiated terms than the 'highly educated and privileged few' (Clinton et al (2006: 197), 'high fliers' (Storey 2000: 34), 'the old' (Ibarra 2015) or 'male, middle-to-older-aged workers' (Mandl & Biletta 2018).

8.4.3 Statistics

Further research is needed that focuses on the proportion of the market that is occupied by portfolio workers. It is difficult to assess the importance, and wider application, of this research without access to robust statistics to identify the numbers that are working in this way and what the rate of increase is. At present, numbers are hidden within statistics on self-employment (Ibarra 2015), workers with two jobs, and part-time and zero hours' workers. A good starting point might be for the ONS Labour Force Survey to clarify exactly what is meant by a 'main job', i.e. whether it is defined by longevity, permanence, hours worked, income, or some other measure (see 1.3.1) This would facilitate a sound statistical basis from which to plan further research.

8.4.4 Beyond personal qualities

If the predicted shift towards portfolio working suggested by a number of sources (e.g. Handy 1995a; Arthur et al 1999; Handy 2015; Caza et al 2017) is to continue, I support Ibarra's (2015: no p. no.) suggestion that there is a 'need to study what it takes to thrive in a portfolio career'. Although I asked participants to give their opinions of the personal qualities a portfolio worker requires to make a success of this style of work, and was able to gather some information relating to this question, the core focus of this research emerged as identity management.

Personal qualities cited included, inter alia, resilience, the ability to manage polarities of emotion and conflicting demands, self-confidence, strong interpersonal skills and complicated high-level scheduling abilities. Many of these qualities appear to be developed during the manipulation of the Rubik's cube identity. Further research on both portfolio workers' and organisations' views of what it takes to 'thrive' in a portfolio career would be worthwhile. Personal qualities could be researched in tandem with structural factors such as those related to gender (see 8.4.2).

8.5 Final Reflections

From a personal point of view, this research, although very challenging to fit around my portfolio of jobs, has provided me with the opportunity to share my participants' experiences. The personal benefits of this have been threefold. First, I have been able to integrate some of my participants' observations and approaches into my own practice helping me to manage more successfully, and even actively exploit, the fluid identity of a portfolio worker. Second, I extended my network resulting in new jobs for four of my participants and three for myself. Third, I have been able to use the research process as a reflexive space, reflecting on my experiences in comparison to those of my participants. Having discovered the literature concerning identity during my research, I have now post-hoc rationalised that what I perceived as a failure to 'have it all' – working as a fund manager in the City and having a new baby – was simply my inability to perform the two very different, and conflicting, identities simultaneously to the standard I had set myself. I am now clear that, despite some reservations, on balance, I do prefer this style of working as I can manipulate my Rubik's cube identity, making

small incremental changes continuously to achieve an optimal balance. I intend to continue portfolio working for the rest of my working life. I will persist with my aspiration to be an *Insatiable,* actively seeking new opportunities, experiences and challenges to add to my portfolio, to optimise my time and achieve a balance that ensures that I spend more time feeling self-actualised and less time feeling exploited.

I intend to continue to 'spread the word' about the portfolio working concept to contribute towards a change in attitudes and a paradigm shift whereby portfolio work is more widely embraced and supported in the hopes that more people may appreciate, as Sehgal (2017: no p. no.) does, that

> By doing more than one job, you may end up doing all of them better.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Conceptual Framework

Identity Work: Identity and coherence (Brown 2015; Watson 2008; Beech et al 2016), identity formation (Watson 2008; Gill 2015; Ybema et al 2009), identity conflict (Alvesson et al 2008; Ashforth et al 2008; Ramarajan 2014), identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott 2002)

The world of work - contextual factors impacting on growth of portfolio work: political, legal, economic, sociological, demographic & technological

'New' careers: e.g. Boundaryless careers (Arthur and Rousseau 1996); Protean careers (Hall 1976); Kaleidoscope career model (Mainiero & Sullivan 2006); Intelligent career (Arthur et al 1995) etc.

Emergent interpretative approach (Denscombe 2007)

IPA informed (Smith et al 2009) hermeneutic phenomenology (Husserl 1931; Gadamer 1989)

Semi-structured interviews, (making use of visual elicitation and text analysis), lived experience diary

Investigating the lived experience of portfolio workers

Evolution of definition of portfolio work in literature (Handy 1995a; Ibarra 2015; Clinton et al 2006; Michaelides 2016; Grigg 1997; Cohen & Mallon 1999; etc.)

What does portfolio work **mean**?

Who are portfolio workers and what do they do? Type of work, way of working

What is portfolio work?

Appendix II: Information Sheet and Consent Form

Participant Information sheet

<u>Investigating the lived experience of portfolio workers</u>

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

There is a wealth of literature that highlights a polarity of views on the portfolio working pattern (e.g. Kelliher and Anderson 2008; Fenwick 2005: Gratton 2014). As a portfolio worker myself, in a variety of educational and property roles, I have my own experience to draw upon but would also like to collate views from a number of participants in order to obtain data from others that have personal day-to-day experience of working in this way.

My PhD research aims to investigate the lived experience of portfolio workers in order to provide a detailed analysis of some of the key aspects relating to working in this way. It is an important area of study as a number of environmental factors are leading to increased numbers of people now working in multiple job roles therefore both organisations and individuals need to gain a greater understanding of the implications of it.

In order to participate in this study I would need approximately one hour of your time for an interview which could be held at a location of your choice. I would like to record the interview using a digital MP3 recording device. Transcripts of the interview data will be prepared and, if you would like to see them, forwarded to you for approval. The original recordings and transcripts will be stored on my

home PC only and will have no names or details that could identify you. All recordings and transcripts will be deleted on completion of the study in 2020.

After the interview I would like to be able to contact you in order to check any areas requiring further clarification and to share any initial findings with you. If you are selected as a key informant I would also like to be able to discuss the possibility of your keeping a very brief diary of notable events over a short period of time.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time before, during, or after the interview. No names or other information that might identify you will be used in any publication or documentation arising from the research.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please could you complete the attached consent form.

If you have any questions about my research please feel free to contact either myself, or my supervisors.

Researcher: Jan Wilcox   ✉ jwilcoa@essex.ac.uk   ☎ xxxxxxxxxx

Supervisor: Martyna Śliwa   ✉ masliwa@essex.ac.uk   ☎ xxxxxxxxxx

Supervisor: Casper Hoedemaekers ✉ choedem@essex.ac.uk   ☎ xxxxxxxxxx

Consent to Participate in Academic Research

Participant Name:

....

(This information is only needed to obtain to consent to the research and will not be used in any discussions arising from the research)

I have read and understood the attached participant information document and agree to participate in the research project entitled:

Investigating the lived experience of portfolio workers

I understand that this research is being undertaken by Jan Wilcox.

By signing below I agree with the following statements:

- I agree to participate in this research, voluntarily and without coercion.
- I have been given full information about the study in the form of a participant information sheet and contact details of the researcher.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving reasons and without penalty.
- Details relating to anonymity and confidentiality of the information has been provided and I understand these.
- I have had the opportunity to ask any questions.

Signed..

Dated..

Contact details for any further information:

Researcher: Jan Wilcox   ✉ jwilcoa@essex.ac.uk   ☎ xxxxxxxxx

Supervisor: Martyna Śliwa   ✉ masliwa@essex.ac.uk   ☎ xxxxxxxxx

Supervisor: Casper Hoedemaekers ✉ choedem@essex.ac.uk   ☎ xxxxxxxxx

Appendix III: Initial Interview Proforma

Introduction:

- self, permission to record and photograph, purpose of study
- Date/time
- Setting, why did you choose this venue for our interview?
- Respondent
- Observations

Job Design

- Can you sketch a diagram of your current work portfolio?
- Work schedule (hours, days, evening, travel)
- Which do you consider is your 'main' job and why? Hours/financial, etc
- How do you acquire work?
- How do you organise your work?
- How do you manage the workload? Do you normally have too much or too little? What do you do if you have too much or too little?
- How do you prioritise?

Organisations

- What do your various organisations do/not do that impact negatively on your experience of portfolio working?
- What do your various organisations do/not do that impact positively on your experience of portfolio working?
- Is there anything organisations could do to make your experience more positive?

Success

- How successful is it as a way of working, and why?
- How satisfied are you and why?

Positives and negatives

- What are the main advantages of this style of working? And if you had to name just one, which is the most important?
- What are the main disadvantages? And if you had to name just one, which is the most important?

Personal qualities

- What are the key qualities needed for successful portfolio working?

Identity creation and maintenance

- What do you consider to be your primary identity? Why?
- How do you maintain this identity?
- Do you change your identity between roles?

Tools of the job

- What are the key tools you need to do your jobs?

Traditional v portfolio

- What are the things you miss most from a 'traditional' full time job?
- What are the things you would miss most about no longer working portfolio?

Past and future

- How long have you been working in this way?
- What made you start? Choice?
- What has made you continue?
- Do you intend to return to/would you rather be working in a 'traditional' style of working? (what do you understand by the term traditional?) Why?
- Is there anything that would encourage you to stay working portfolio?
- Factors that make portfolio working more easy?
- Factors that make portfolio working more difficult?

Respondent information

- DOB
- Gender
- Marital status/family
- Educational and professional qualifications
- Homeowner?
- Approx gross family income from all sources last year
- Email address and phone no.
- Other participants?

Exploratory questions: Why? How? Can you tell me more about that? Tell me what you were thinking? How did you feel?

Appendix IV: Characteristics of Participants

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M/F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Lauren (pilot)	PR and Marketing, Higher Education	Lecturer, Tutor, Coach, Student	2 years	F	41	£46 - 55k	married 1 son (10)	BA, PR post grad diploma, MBA, soon to be PhD	f/t equivalent
Niall (focus group)	Real Estate	Owner of residential property company, Tutor	15 years	M	65	didn't want to answer but no need to work financially	married 2 independent children	BSc Dip Arb FRICS MCIArb	p/t
Andrew (focus group)	Real Estate and Higher Education	Tutor, Consultant	15 years	M	71	didn't want to answer, no need to work financially, keeps trying to retire	married, 2 children (independent) 5 grandchildren	FRICS FHKIS MEd (Post compulsory education) MSc Conservation of Historic environments	p/t
Karen (focus group)	Real Estate and Retail	Administrator, Company Director	7 years	F	47	£70 - 80k gross	married 2 children (17 & 14)	BA (Hons) PGDip Surv, Dip DEA, MRICS, AFHEA	just p/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M/F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Charles (focus group)	Real Estate	Consulting, Tutor, Lecturer	1 year	M	57	£40 - 45k net of tax	married no children	FRICS and Fellow Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, MSc Construction Management, Diploma in Arbitration Law	f/t
Lara	Physiotherapy	Physiotherapist for three different organisations and privately, Pilates Teacher, Adoption Counsellor, Trainer, Manager	2 years	F	46	£60 - 65k gross	married 2 children (5 & 9)	BSc Physiotherapy, various courses in Pilates	p/t
Esme	Higher Education	Employability Tutor, Visiting Fellow, Panel member, hourly paid Teacher	1 ½ years	F	62	£100k	married 2 children 2 grandchildren	BA, MA, PGCE, SFHEA	p/t
Verity	Compulsory Education	Teacher, Trainer	1 year	F	42	£140k	married 2 children (12 & 10)	BA, PGCE, Dip NCT	p/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M /F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Sam	Higher Education	Associate Lecturer, Employability Tutor, Researcher	3 months	M	28	£28k	single	BA, MA, PhD	p/t equating to f/t incl. research
Gavin	Civil Engineering	Director of safety video training company, Lecturer	26 years	M	54	£10k - £100k	single	BSc, MBA PGCE CEng, MIMeCe	f/t but variable
Julia	Hospitality	Lecturer, casual hospitality worker, p/t student	5 years	F	33	£35k	co-habiting	BA PGCE post graduate diploma in management, diploma in management, 1 more year then MBA	f/t if p/t study included
Anthony	Psychotherapy	Visiting Fellow, Psychotherapist in private practice, Counsellor, Courses Director, Consultant	10 years	M	56	£60k	married grown-up family	MSc	f/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M /F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Felicity	Marketing and Higher Education	Lecturer in three institutions, PTA member, School Governor, Sunday School organiser	did approx 2 years	F	47	£100k	married 2 children (secondary school)	HND, MA, PGCE, Institute of Marketing Diploma, AFHEA	p/t
Ron	Sport and Fitness	Sports Advisor, Operations Director of Training Academy, Self Employed Coach, Assistant Head Coach, Team Manager, Senior Assistant Team Manager, Performance Assistant, National Junior Training Programme Co-ordinator, Community Coach	approx. 3 years	M	25	£55k	living with partner (joint mortgage)	BA Sports Management	f/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M /F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Joan	Real Estate	CEO, Director, Consultant	4 years	F	69	£30 - 50k	divorced 2 children (independent) grandchildren	HNC, FRICS, FIRPM	p/t contractually but not in reality
Alison	Customer Relationship Management	Consultant/Business Analyst, Consultant, Director online employment bureau	3 years	F	51	£200k	married 3 children (1 dependent, 2 independent)	City and Guilds teacher training, no degree, NVQs and Assessor NVQs	f/t
Caroline	Law	Consultant, Director, Lecturer	approx 3 years	F	58	£70k but not taking some pension income at present so could be more	husband 3 children (independent)	BA (Hons), PG Dip Law, PG Dip Legal Practice, Fellow Institute of Management and Development	f/t
Henry	Healthcare	Director and General Manager, Lecturer	5 months	M	68	£55 to 60k but not taking some pensions	wife 2 children (independent)	MBA	f/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M /F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Patrick	Construction	Lecturer, Director of two companies	16 years	M	47	£60 to 65k	married 2 children (1 dependent & 1 independent)	BA (Hons) Sports management, HNC construction management	f/t
Raymond	Arts	Playwright, Freelance arts practitioner, Administrator	14 years	M	30	£15k	single, no dependents	BA (Hons), MA any vocational 'playwright things'	f/t
Sandy	HRM	Director, Lecturer, Arbitrator	17 years	M	67	£100k+	married 2 children 2 grandchildren	BA, MA, FCIPD, FHEA	f/t
Emily	Finance	Style consultant, Massage Therapist, Wellness Coach, Finance Officer	1 year	F	38	£40 to 50k	living with partner 3 children (10, 8 & 2)	Beauty Therapy diploma NVQ, sports massage therapy diploma, AAT part qualified, won't take it any further	p/t just
Sebastian	Business Management	Commercial Director, Visiting Fellow, Partner, Director	13 years	M	50	£100k	married 2 children (school age, dependent)	HND, FSA etc financial broking exams	f/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M /F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Elena	Photography	Lecturer, Photographer, Managing Director	20 years	F	42	£25k plus partner's earnings (not willing to disclose)	cohabiting no children	BA MA PGCE	f/t
Keith	Compulsory Education	Music teacher in schools, private tuition	20 years	M	54	£40k ish	married 1 child (independent at uni)	did government funded access course	f/t during term time
Derek	Project Management	Landscape Gardener, DJ, Project Manager	3 years	M	51	£50 - 60k	single	MBA (inc. DMS, CMS) 1 A level, CQ Social Work	f/t
Ronan	Entertainment	Guitar repairer, Guitarist, Lecturer, teacher, Writer for trade magazines and of books	50 years	M	56	£75 - 100k	married 5 children (independent)	PhD, MSc, BSc, apprenticeship	f/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M/F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Juliet	Childcare	Drama teacher, Playgroup leader (post interview now added working as a retail sales assistant)	13 years	F	51	£13k ish	single 1 child (dependent)	NNEB, BTec in Leisure and Recreation Management, RSA Exercise to Music	almost f/t during term time
Duncan	Real Estate	Managing Director, Lecturer	3 years	M	65	£100k +	married children (independent)	FRICS, FCI Arb, BSc, Diploma in Arbitration	f/t
Justin	Higher Education	Lecturer, Trainer, Director	4 years	M	58	£100k	married children (independent)	BSc (Hons) MBA MRICS PFHEA	f/t
Amy	Real Estate	Judge, Adjudicator, Freelance training services, Professional organisation examiner	30 years	F	64	£150k	single child (independent)	LLB, FRICS, Dip Arb	f/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M/F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Rick	Real Estate and Higher Education	External Examiner, Consultant, Trustee, Professor, Chairman, Non-executive Director, Visiting Professor/ Director, Partner	22 years	M	68	£150k	married, 2nd time, 3 children (independent)	BSc Est. Man, FRICS, MISM (Malaysia), FHKIS (lapsed)	f/t
Desmond	Media	Councillor, Video producer and media trainer, Freelance camera operator/video editor, Freelance producer/director	12 years	M	34	£40k	co-habiting, no children	BA (Hons)	f/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M /F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Lydia	Occupational therapy	Occupational Therapist, National Charity Worker, Director of Voluntary Organisation, School Governor, Parent and Carer for Elderly Mother	4 years	F	54	£60k	married, 1 child (17, dependent) & dependent 83-year-old mother	Occupational Therapy masters modules in four areas but then got pregnant	nearly f/t
Miriam	IT	Lecturer, runs own business as Trainer/ Developer	18 years	F	60	£40k	divorced 3 children (2 university & 1 independent)	BA (Hons) CCNA, PGCE	f/t
Nate	Sports management	Lecturer, Verifier	2 years	M	46	£60 to £70k	married 2 children (school age, dependent)	BA (Hons) MSc Cert. Ed.	f/t
Tristan	Arts	Artist, External Examiner, Lecturer	17 years	M	63	£40k+	married, 2nd time, 1 child (independent)	BA, MA	f/t

Pseudonym	Core Industry	Job Titles	Time Working in this Way	M /F	Age	Approx. Gross Income *	Marital Status/Family	Education and Professional Qualifications	FT/PT Hours
Monty	Tourism	Tour guide, Campus Manager	22 years	M	55	£55k	married 2 children (independent)	BA, MA, Tech IOSH, NEBOSH, Diploma in Estate Management	f/t
Madison	Sport and Fitness	Fitness Instructor, Lecturer	25 years	F	53	£75k	lives with partner 2 children (independent)	YMCA Ex. To Music, various fitness related qualifications, Cert. Ed.	
Stanley	Sport and Fitness	Fitness Instructor, Personal Trainer, Masseur	10 years	M	46	£100k	lives with partner, no children	A levels, dropped out of uni after one year (Physics and Astrophysics) BTec Diploma in Fitness, level 3 and level 4 various qualifications	p/t

* Approx. Gross Family Income from all Sources

Appendix V: Initial Codes

Name	Sources	References
acquisition of work	5	6
adaptable	9	9
administration	15	24
advance planning	18	21
assertive	6	7
autonomy	11	18
balancing	31	84
belonging	18	33
benefits	8	11
boredom	19	33
boundaries	18	29
bureaucracy	3	3
busy	12	18
can't say no	9	15
career progression	15	28
challenges	23	50
cheap	2	2
child or dependent care	12	24
choice	28	52
commitment	23	37
communication	2	2
confidence	15	34
conflict	4	4
control and power	36	99
convenience	12	18
creativity	8	12
culture	9	12
deadline driven	4	5
dissatisfaction with existing job	13	18

Name	Sources	References
downshifting	5	8
duplication	1	1
emotional intelligence	6	9
empowerment	1	2
enjoyment	24	54
experience	12	21
exploitation	4	5
flexibility	36	115
foot in the door	7	9
free work	10	18
freedom	17	21
fulfilled	8	14
giving something back	9	11
hard working	7	9
helping others	9	10
identity	35	79
interesting	17	29
interpersonal skills	16	17
isolation	7	8
learning	18	35
lucky	15	22
make a difference	7	12
metaphor	14	21
missed opportunities	3	3
money	27	64
need to feel needed	3	3
networking	33	86
not for the money	21	25

Name	Sources	References
opportunistic	22	39
organisational assumptions	8	10
passion	12	18
perception	3	3
professional	6	7
psychological contract	14	24
recognition	9	14
redundancy	12	15
relationships	23	38
reliable	6	9
resilience	13	16
responsibility	5	9
satisfaction	7	9
security	35	126
self-motivated	4	4
social	26	37
space	2	4
specialist	9	11

Name	Sources	References
stability	11	15
status	33	58
stressful	15	23
structure	11	12
supplementing	2	2
supportive	20	26
synergy	22	40
technology	18	22
time management	16	20
too much work	20	31
training and development	25	52
transition	23	41
trust	2	2
unemployable	4	4
variety	28	55
voluntary	5	8
well organised	17	24
work-life balance	32	118

Appendix VI: A Typology of Portfolio Workers

Title	Descriptor
Involuntaries	Workers whose positions were made redundant, who moved geographically, or were simply unable to find a full-time traditional position and have combined a number of part-time or temporary roles as an alternative and to try to build coherence (Brown 2015) and employability (Gerber et al 2012; Inkson 2007; Rothwell & Rothwell 2014). Many *Involuntaries* may move to *Insatiables* or *Investors*, or another category after a period of time.
In-transitions	Workers who are in the process of moving, or have already moved, from standard, full-time, permanent employment contracts for a variety of reasons including redundancy, caring responsibilities, illness, etc., to move to reduced hours or to a more flexible work pattern. The *In-transitions* highlighted the benefit of being able to gradually introduce changes on an incremental rather than a wholesale basis, sometimes working in their existing full-time role in addition to a new part-time role, carrying out 'identity play' (Ibarra & Petriglieri 2010) to build up work and adapt before leaving their full-time position. The *In-transitions* were mainly either moving from one career to another, or towards retirement.
Insatiables	These are workers who are continually searching for new challenges (Barley & Kunda 2004; Mainiero & Gibson 2017) and variety (Clinton et al 2006; Cohen & Mallon 1999; Hindle 2008) in their work. They might have become bored, unfulfilled or dissatisfied with their existing role. They might also have come across an opportunity that they want to explore but would be unable to do so in an existing full-time role. Alternatively, they might have moved to portfolio work initially as *Involuntaries* or *In-transitions* and found themselves liking the opportunity to be more experimental and flexible in their work roles.

Title	Descriptor
Inundateds	These are workers who were unable to continue with one full-time role due to having too many other non-work activities (Wilkinson & Redman 2013) that conflicted with it. These mainly included child or elderly care (Bailyn 2006), but also a desire for a better work-life balance. Many of this type of worker could probably have tried to negotiate part-time work in their existing full-time position but, for a variety of reasons, the *Inundateds* chose to find their own way.
Indestructibles	These are workers who underwent some sort of 'life shock' and were unable, or unwilling, to return to full-time work afterwards. They are distinguished from the *Involuntaries* as they could have returned to work in one full-time job but their 'life shock' had changed their attitude to work. Some of the 'life shocks' mentioned by participants included a brain tumour, a nervous breakdown, a kidney transplant, a severe stutter, a late diagnosis of dyslexia and divorce. This category is supported by a similar finding from Cohen's research (2014: 71) whereby she suggests that 'death and illness had caused [the participants] to re-evaluate their life choice and priorities, in some instances triggering new career directions'.
Investors	These are workers that want to undertake more training or development, to gain new skills and experiences (Gratton & Scott 2016; Inkson 2015), to improve their employability either by way of attending a specific part-time course or by taking on new roles that will enable them to gain the required work experience. Investors are often able to make their temporary role into a more permanent role.
Impassioned	These workers are driven primarily by a passion for a particular type of work, or perhaps hobby (Inkson 2007), which cannot be pursued full-time for financial or other reasons. Portfolio work enables them to support their passion with other less exciting work. Passions cited by participants included politics, British team coaching, music, children's sports coaching, charity fund raising and playwriting.

Appendix VII: Pseudonyms and Types

Pseudonym	Categorised as	Self identifies as
Alison	inundated, in-transition	
Amy	in-transition	insatiable
Andrew - focus group	involuntary, in-transition	involuntary, in-transition
Anthony	involuntary, in-transition, insatiable	'the portfolio option: impassioned, involuntary, insatiable'
Caroline	impassioned, in-transition	'50% insatiable, 50% impassioned'
Charles - focus group	involuntary	involuntary
Derek	involuntary, impassioned, investor	'Initially involuntary, now with a bit of investors and impassioned thrown in'
Desmond	impassioned	impassioned
Duncan	in-transition	impassioned
Elena	insatiable, impassioned	impassioned, insatiable
Emily	inundated	inundated
Esme	inundated, in-transition	in-transition, inundated
Felicity	investor, inundated	inundated, investor
Gavin	insatiable	'mainly insatiable'
Henry	in-transition	in-transition
Joan	in-transition	insatiable
Julia	involuntary, impassioned	involuntary
Juliet	inundated, impassioned	impassioned, inundated
Justin	impassioned, investor	impassioned, investor
Karen - focus group	involuntary, inundated	inundated, indestructible
Keith	impassioned	investor, impassioned
Lara	inundated, impassioned	impassioned, inundated
Lauren	investor, insatiable	insatiable, investor
Lydia	inundated, in-transition	inundated, insatiable
Madison	inundated, impassioned	inundated
Miriam	in-transition	
Monty	impassioned	impassioned
Nate	in-transition	'started as in-transition, now insatiable'

Pseudonym	Categorised as	Self identifies as
Niall - focus group	involuntary	involuntary
Patrick	insatiable	insatiable
Raymond	impassioned, indestructible	'half way between impassioned and indestructible'
Rick	in-transition	in-transition, <mark style="background:red">insatiable</mark>
Ron	insatiable, impassioned	insatiable, impassioned
Ronan	impassioned	
Sam	involuntary, investor	involuntary then investor
Sandy	involuntary, <mark style="background:green">in-transition</mark>	involuntary transitioning to <mark style="background:red">insatiable</mark>
Sebastian	insatiable	insatiable
Stanley	indestructible	indestructible, <mark style="background:yellow">in-transition</mark>
Tristan	impassioned	<mark style="background:red">insatiable</mark>, impassioned
Verity	inundated	<mark style="background:yellow">indestructible</mark>, inundated

Highlighted are the differences between my initial coding (not shared with participants) and their own opinion of which category they fell within based on the typology forwarded to them with a covering email at the end of the field work and analysis. What emerges quite clearly is that there is considerable overlap between the categories I allocated and self-identified categories with 21 of the 37 that responded being identical and a further 13 having one, or more descriptors in common (differences highlighted in yellow). Only three were completely different. It is significant, in my view, that many of those I had coded as in-transition were incorrect. This is because I had assumed that, due to their age, they were in-transition to retirement. In total, I had coded seven as 'in-transition' (highlighted in green) that did not self identify as this. All of them were close to, at or past retirement age, and five of them had identified themselves as insatiable (highlighted in red). The three that do not have a self-identified category are those that did not respond to either the email or the follow up email.

Appendix VIII: Example of Email Sent to Participants Concerning Typology

From: Jan
Sent: 28 April 2017 15:47
To:
Subject: Investigating the Lived Experience of Portfolio Workers

Hi

Hope all is well with you.

You may recall that you kindly took part in an interview in connection with the above last year.

Part of my research focuses on the reasons for portfolio working rather than on a standard, permanent, full-time employment contract (as 75% of us in the UK do). I have developed an outline typology, based on my research, that I hope encompasses the main reasons for working in this way and wonder whether you could take a moment to confirm which of these categories you would place yourself in. It might be just one, a combination, or a combination with one being of greater importance than the others.

Alternatively, if you cannot place yourself within any of the categories, please say so. I should not need to bother you again and thank you again for your participation in my research.

Best wishes.

 Attachment: A Typology of Portfolio Workers (see Appendix VI)

Appendix IX: Data Table of Commonly Used Metaphors

Metaphor	Source	Extract
'juggling'	Caroline	I think and it, anybody who works with a young family is used to juggling (laughs) um – but certainly um studying part-time – working full-time and a young family those sort of triple factors did mean that I was used to spinning plates
'juggling'	Derek	so I'm continually juggling – you know, although the job I've got is full-time, I've negotiated with my manager that, you know, although I get annual leave and sometimes I'm using that to do other things or other jobs, that also, like tomorrow, I'm off on a training day but that training day – is about quantitative data – and how best to use it, when you come to write reports, analysis, stuff like that which I want for me but - they've agreed that I can use their time to do that as long as I feed it back to them – so it's kind of trying to, you know, you're always trying to balance stuff and make it work
'juggling'	Raymond	I think they're just easy, they just, they understand quite easily. I mean [an organisation] – were – I'm not, I still haven't quite – figured out if they're going to be OK with the whole thing, I'm self-assessment with my tax cos that hasn't come up yet um – but everyone else they, they understand the freelancers life and they understand um – that your – time – is – is flexible um – and that they're really understanding about - - er juggling lots of different things um I generally work on about five or six things at any given moment and I quite like juggling those things and seeing what things move at various paces – um – in, just like in so many other industries you're, you're – constantly waiting for an email from someone

Metaphor	Source	Extract
'juggling'	Patrick	I think each organisation and each part in the clients – and the teaching were pretty, I mean I juggled it but – pretty un, unaware of – the work and the lifestyle that I had – if I'm honest… I just think that they had, did not have an idea, or did not investigate, even certainly when I was teaching - um – yeah [individual], who, who was my line manager had an understanding of what I did in the background but the [organisation] as you know, I was just someone to go into the classroom, they had no – idea of what I really did behind the scenes
'juggling'	Lydia	*When asked what her 'ideal job' would look like responded* um - - something maybe that – would - - - - give me another challenge – um and perhaps cut down on some, a little bit of the um juggling between the roles that I do - - although I enjoy that and there may be some sense in not having quite so much – some of the time
'juggling'	Anthony	so I always juggled and I liked, I like juggling there's, it saves me from being too bored, and um – - but this really has gone to the extreme I think so – and ever since it's been probably a bit too much
'juggling'	Diary entry 25/10/16	Of course the day of the conference clashes with Millie's guitar exam but I have managed to slip this to a week later. Constant juggling and rearranging things does get tiring
'juggling'	Diary entry 11/11/15	Another problem I find with portfolio working is that having recently discovered dry rot in my house, my job is the one that is impacted by such matters due to its flexibility. I'm also finding myself so busy juggling emails from all clients/employers that it is very difficult to get any 'real work' done.
'juggling' 'swings and roundabouts'	Julia	erm - - I think – because of tiredness - and pressures from all jobs – in m, could become less effective because of exhaustion effectively – um but it also motivates you because you're doing so many jobs, you have a lot of variety so therefore you're more motivated to do all of those jobs – so it's swings and roundabouts

Metaphor	Source	Extract
'swings and roundabouts'	Joan	I mean this – I call it two days a week so one day is a week is in the office but this – it might be – half a day and then half a day there, or half a day and then, you know, if I'm writing a report or something half a day there and then finish it off on the other days but it, it, er, I can be flexible in myself whatever works best for me *and are you sure it's just two days a week?* er - - - this time of the year yes, the Autumn no... at the end of the day, swings and roundabouts it - probably is, it may be marginally more but – not seriously
'swings and roundabouts'	Stanley	training is tax deductible even if its coach's payback so, you know, there are certain swings and roundabouts
'swings and roundabouts'	Diary entry 16/3/16	The other thing is I googled myself as a quick way of updating my [institution] profile and found this. *... [professional organisation] Annual Seminar 2016 - book your place now; We have a new Chief Examiner - Jan Wilcox; [name] is our new IRPM co-trainer with CEO [name]* I didn't think I was bothered about status much but this did give me a bit of a boost. Even if some people think I'm rubbish, I am the Chief Examiner of the [professional organisation]! The swings and roundabouts of portfolio working.

Metaphor	Source	Extract
'swings and roundabouts'	Diary entry 16/6/16	On Saturday night/Sunday morning I went down with a mystery illness basically I couldn't walk without falling over and feeling really sick. They think it is either a virus or a mini stroke but are being ultra-cautious due to my history. They kept me in all day Sunday and I had a CT scan. I managed to negotiate my way out of staying overnight with my argument about the cost of a hospital bed and how close I live etc so came home that evening and spent most of Monday sleeping just being awoken by phone calls. I guess if I were employed it would have been nice to have been paid for being sick but swings and roundabouts at least I didn't have to call anyone and let them know as only working from home at the moment other than a brief visit to [institution] on Fridays to do a course and remind them that I exist.
'safe pair of hands'	Gavin	once in, there is, it's the same in the commercial training world, if, once you're seen as a safe pair of hands – then you will be the – very often the first port of call.
'safe pair of hands'	Sandy	what I am though is a safe pair of hands – I won't let them down, I'll always get good feedback they do get a safe pair of hands, I never let them down, I never, I've never been sick, I've never not turned up, nothing's ever happened. I have been ill once at work – just once I don't, it's been remarked upon cos I'm never ill I wouldn't let the, I wouldn't not turn up, you know I do think there's something about - - it's the safe pair of hands thing, you know, I don't bring up, I don't bring anything novel or new or interesting but – I just get things, you know I do generally manage to get things done – time, cost
'safe pair of hands'	Diary entry 23/2/16	Email from [individual] at [organisation] who stated that 'your reputation of being a very safe and trusted pair of hands is now wide spread' an interesting choice of metaphor echoed by many of my participants.

Metaphor	Source	Extract
'swan or duck'	Lara	I think people perceive me as somebody who is very confident, busy and in control of everything whereas I think I'm probably more likely on the surface, you know I'm one of those ducks… I don't think I ever look as graceful as a swan so a duck may be more appropriate, a better analogy, but my legs are always paddling to try and stay afloat.
'invisible'	Lauren	I just remember this horrible day, it was pelting with rain and I must have had sort of about 150 print outs in my bag and I just felt so sort of umm, you know, I felt like a little old lady with all this sort of baggage and nobody to help and I, I just thought it's such a silly thing not having anywhere to put your bag it really just, it really got me down that day cos I thought I'm so, you know, invisible that I can't even have somewhere to put my coat
'invisible'	Series of diary entries 22/1/16 to 26/2/16	Went into the post room today to check if I had a contract yet for the additional work I'm doing at [organisation] and still no post tray – promised but not delivered – disproportionately irritated, particularly as I had to go through piles of post to find the one (piece of marketing material) that was for me. Such a waste of time. So working with no contract and no post tray – and only intermittent light in 'my' office but at least I have heating! Diary Entry 22/1/16 Still no progress on the promised post tray. How can it be so difficult? Received the email below from one of the administrators today: *Hello,* *There is a letter for you in my office.* *Thanks,* So I now have to remember to go and pick it up if she happens to be in at the same time as I am. Hopelessly inefficient just because I can't have a name label on an empty slot. Diary Entry 26/1/16

Metaphor	Source	Extract
		So today I went to get some paper from the post room and at last I have a post tray with my name on it – invisible no more – and it had a letter in it. A quite ridiculously exciting experience. Diary Entry 26/2/16
'invisible'	Diary Entry 30/7/15	Full day of exam marking today. A lady I met at a wedding looked me up on the [organisation] website and says I do not come up under academic staff. I don't come up anywhere other than under a search under my own name. Another sign of the invisibility of part-time staff?
'invisible'	Diary Entry 13/9/15	Emailed [colleague] to ask about use of an office and had an email straight back (on a Sunday afternoon). One of the things I really like about working for him is that he is very responsive which is necessary when working in a strange part-time invisible series of jobs. Managed to get into my timetable at last so can now plan as I know which days I am teaching.
'invisible'	Diary Entry 30/11/17	Invisible again! Googled myself (as the quickest way to LinkedIn) and noticed that I have been wiped off [institution's] website. I assume, because I was staff and student, when I asked them to take me off as staff they took me off completely. Have emailed the Web and Publicity Officer to ask to go back on but it will no doubt take a number of chasing emails just to try to remain visible. Systems are simply not set up for portfolio workers.
'invisible'	Caroline	because I'm just a humble foot soldier here – you know, a nobody really
'invisible'	Henry	oh I'm a - little minion down at the bottom somewhere - I'm sure nobody would notice if I were run over by a bus tomorrow
'a foot in the door'	Nate	I know somebody – who – used to, in my dim and distant past, at [institution] – um he, he was our SV there, and I bumped into him at SV training and I said oh er he said oh I'm doing this full time now so he's, he's, he's a an SV for multiple – awarding bodies and ultimately – that sounds quite attractive so, at the moment, it's [organisation] – but – I'm keeping an eye out – a lot - for [another organisation] and [another organisation] um so this is a, a foot in the door really

Metaphor	Source	Extract
'a foot in the door' 'opened a lot of doors'	Raymond	I did freelance – so with that company it was called [name] um I'm not part of it anymore – um – but we did link ups with lots of theatres and that was a great way of getting my – foot in the door of places we were going to be working with about six organisations – I had very little contact with any of them and it was a real – as well as being artistically – interesting and er going to be a show which I felt – children would've really learnt something, got something out of, - it would have opened a lot of doors
'opens doors' 'push doors'	Monty	it always comes down to keeping interests going in different directions and therefore keeping interest going over all and – it opens doors – you know, it's one of those things that you learn in life, you have to push doors sometimes
'when one door closes you can simply open another one'	Diary entry 7/1/16	Just before I went away, [individual] emailed saying she understood I was withdrawing from my contract for the [subject] module, I went straight back saying that this was not what I had understood from [line manager] and he confirmed this. She then wrote to say she had commissioned someone else as had thought I wasn't doing it. This was really annoying as I had wasted time preparing two presentations. However, this spurred me on to email [individual] in response to one of his on [company], offering to take a longer contract to give me some security and to reduce my tendency to take on too much work in case some of it suddenly comes to an end. This is a really positive aspect of portfolio working, when one door closes, you can simply open another one.

Metaphor	Source	Extract
'one door closes, another one opens'	Diary entry 7/11/17	Another interesting portfolio work thing is that a month before I step down as CE, I have been approached by both [individual] and [individual] to see if I would be interested in being a consultant APC trainer! They both contacted me within a day of each other. They are in direct competition so I'm not sure I could do both so have asked them both to put something to me after Christmas, and I'll see what looks best. It would get me the face-to-face I'm missing, and I would be totally within my comfort zone, plus it would be complementary to my main day job. Certainly seems to be true that when one door closes another one opens!
'people have always knocked on my door'	Ronan	I realised from an early day, early days of being a student I never, ever thought that I was good at anything – I think you'll find that's a common theme as well with people that do what I do – um so therefore – you, you, you don't have the pressure of having to succeed – I've never done a job interview – I've never been interviewed for a band – people have always knocked on my door so far
'knocking at your door'	Joan	when the [professional organisation] come knocking at your door and say – could you help with the [rewrite of professional code], oh yes, all, all you need to do is co-ordinate it – it turns out it'll, you know the project's nine months, just co-ordinate it, it... finally took 18 months (laughs)
'knocking at your door'	Charles	I'll be honest with you it's probably um graduating into a permanent shift. It'd have to be something pretty good for someone to come knocking at my door now for me to stop doing it because I enjoy the variety and and the fact I've got control over when, and or to a large extent, when and how I do er do the job.
'comes in through the door'	Gavin	I've always been do you know what we'll just take what comes in through the door and see what happens and that's not a – it's not an environment that many people would find comfortable

Metaphor	Source	Extract
'out the door'	Lauren	and here one of the big advantages for, with this type of working is a couple of weeks ago we had a big problem here and we, we teach a lot of staff on these courses and I think that's very problematic umm and I had one particular member of staff whose name I won't mention who umm everything I seemed to do in class she'd run off and complain to [line manager] about and it was really getting on my nerves, like, I just felt like I couldn't do anything within that class without being scrutinised and umm so much so that er [line manager's] boss's boss, or [area manager], not that he is [line manager's] boss now came to talk to me umm about something which she'd said which I thought was completely unreasonable and at that point I, I was pretty much ready to get my coat and I was out the door and if one person had have said something that I didn't agree with on that day I would have gone and I wouldn't have come back so I think having er that freedom to think, you know, stuff you, is quite liberating

Appendix X: Data Table – Key Themes Extracts

Although, ideally, the data would be separated into each key theme, as the themes tend to be interdependent, many of the extracts covered

multiple themes; therefore the data is presented per participant with key themes from each extract highlighted.

Source	Key themes	Extract
Alison	Security	people still think that you're looking for security and stability – so even at [organisation] they come back to me but always approaching me to go and work for them, but they're always offering me a fixed month, a fixed term contract, - and I said to them, fixed term contract, you pay me less and I still have no security – so quite honestly I'm not going to do it. You pay me what my going rate is or you don't have me and that's quite interesting because I know their business so, so well and in fact my value is probably higher than any other contractor because I know their business but because I've worked for them they think I should come back at a lower rate, and you know so, it, it's quite interesting
	Security	We did have a situation this year when I'd gone down to three days a week and his contract got terminated early; that was a bit stressful just before the election and everybody put jobs and – on hold um so that was a bit stressful, and that was another reason why we thought you know what we do need another, you know, revenue stream – as a back-up for, for when those times happen

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility Control	it, it varies so at the moment it's five days a week um [organisation] was three days [another organisation] started off at five days and reduced down to three days as the project sort of got going. I was able to step back, I may do the same at um [professional institution] yet, in the coming months I might just say you don't need me five days a week, I'll do three days a week
	Flexibility Control	well obviously it gives me flexibility – when I was working for the um in the permanent role, I was travelling a lot, and I didn't want to do that – um – I don't mind travelling, but I don't, you know, I did it for 12 ½ years, and if I got a contract which was 6 to 12 months doing a bit of travelling it wouldn't bother me, but I, I don't want to do it permanently – um – so I can pick and choose – really I can pick and choose
	Flexibility Control Power	um I think being your own boss – um and being able to make your own choices about where you want to work – um – is an advantage

Source	Key themes	Extract
Amy	Balance	this is supposed to be three days - well it is three days - and that is supposed to be three days but there are no office hours involved in this it's all working from home and how you work your three days is - up to you. I mean notionally I'm supposed to do – I think it's Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, but I do whatever days I like *So that's six days?* my seventh day of the week – is um – training um advising – um doing [organisation] – any of those other things that people ask me to do *OK so you work seven days a week?* I probably do seven or eight – like most people who work for themselves
	Balance Security	oh I don't know, I'm um – I've always worked - - um – since the early 80s cos I've got a daughter, and I'm a single parent, I've always worked every evening – all weekends – um – to make sure – that I had enough work and enough money I suppose – um…You know, I can't think what it must be like to retire

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility Control	*So you, do you ever take a day when you do no work at all?* um – sometimes, not very often but sometimes I do *Christmas Day?* yeah Christmas Day's a good one, some Sundays, some Sundays because I quite like gardening – some Sundays I think actually the sun is shining – I'm not going to work today I'm going to go and visit every garden centre within a 50 mile radius and I'll do that instead
	Variety	because I like the variety – I'm an animal that doesn't like to be tied down to rigid rules *Which kind of sounds like a bit of an odd thing to say when you're working in a kind of government institution doesn't it?* I know (laughs) yes, I'm not the normal for here I'm afraid
	Variety Security	I like it cos it's variable – um – I suppose I have quite a low boredom threshold – so I like the opportunity to – work in different places so I like working from home – I like travelling round the country to see other people and doing other things – er but I quite like the stability of – knowing – that I've got something every week – I suppose. I don't have that anxious bit

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Variety	- um - - I think the variety's more stimulating – um – the ability – to work in different locations is – more interesting – different working patterns for different people is interesting – um – with the training side I get to meet all sorts of – people – um and generally with training I do pro, problem solving – so – people usually call me in to say look we really don't know how to do this, can you help us do it, and I like that bit of the property world that I'm in – um – and it meshes well together – you know, um they're all connected with property – um to some degree they're all connected with, with er people's expectations of - how you should live in property – um and the professionalism of people who have to deal with those people
	Variety	the variety – um – because I – although I will do – any work – to the best of my ability all of the time – I get bored quite quickly – although I don't show it – I'll just do it but then sometimes I think ooff – another one of those
	Security	this is less secure obviously, but the other two I think are OK – yeah this one's very secure – um and I presume, provided they keep getting the funding from the government, which they're bound to, that one's quite secure as well - at least un, until I want to give it up... I mean it is a bit – I suppose it's a bit difficult having to do one to ones with different people – and, and pleasing different people, and there's always that anxiety that maybe you're not quite pleasing somebody enough but there we go
	Flexibility	they give me the flexibility – they give me a laptop – they give me all, you know, things like that um – and – er – the [organisation] has today given me a new laptop – so that I can work remotely

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility	I think you have to be very flexible – um - - you have to be able to yeah, it's that flexibility of understanding – that one person's needs might be greater one week than somebody else's – and being able to address that – and deal with it – to everybody's satisfaction without – dropping – the other things you're doing
Anthony	Security	[yeah] no it is, it does feel like that, it's security, that, and, and, obviously I was looking for of that along, along with identity and belonging to somewhere – um - - - but there's no, you know, whereas these jobs are short term, I can, I can say, apart from the private practice bit, I can say, in the short term, no to any of these other jobs
Caroline	Balance Flexibility	but – um – so I would say um – some weeks I am doing – probably – um – 40, 40 hours but other weeks I might only be doing 30 so it, it does vary – um – so I manage all my appointments on the one diary so things like Wednesday afternoons and Thu, and Thursday afternoons and evenings are blocked out in my diary - um I tend to ask um these other clients if they want me to come in for anything, Mondays and Fridays are the days I offer them - um – and er – I build my sort of, I do my prep for my lessons usually on Sundays – er with a bit of last minute adjustment maybe Monday morning, er Wednesday morning or Thursday morning – um – and - - um then I do my other work on, on Monday, Tuesday and Fridays for these other clients – *so the only day you don't work is Saturday?* I try to make sure I have Saturday off but – it's not really off, it's just attending to other domestics (laugh)

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility	I was expecting a little bit more induction training to be honest, I wasn't expecting to – be interviewed on a Thursday and said to turn up on Monday here you are your pupils (laughs) er so I was a bit naïve on that in that respect
	Flexibility	- um – I think you need to be – obviously flexible – I think you need to um - - have good communication skills – I think you have to be good at time management – uh you also have to realise that if work isn't materialising, don't flog a dead horse – and um – you know move on to the next thing
	Variety	the variety I think and the opportunity to do new things, meet new people – cos I am finding it – as I say, quite – entertaining observing the way the education process – is managed
	Control Power	I'm really enjoying being my own boss cos one thing I, I don't have is people to manage or budgets to manage and savings to find – I so, er – and I don't have to deal with the public – (laughs) and I don't have to deal with politicians any more
	Security	I think it would have been too risky a strategy – um because I think I would have needed to have done it in partnership with somebody else – because – literally being a one man band – does mean – to say that you're not, you know, you've got to make sure that you, you can attend, everybody wants everything done urgently – and um – when you're juggling more than one, one, one job – you have to manage that expectation quite – and you have to almost pretend that you can do it instantly even if you can't

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security	I think lawyers are quite cautious and risk averse so um – it, I think it does depend on life circumstances because things like – not having any sort of, hardly any mortgage makes a big difference because – the – self-employment, and portfolio working does give you um – a um – a less regular income – peaks, you know, the income is up and down - well you get no employment rights of course (laughs) cos you are self-employed – and er I don't really think you get any employment rights with other part-time lecturer with [institution] you know you're on a zero hours contract um so I don't feel s, er – if it was my sole source of income, I would not feel financially secure
Charles (focus group)	Control Power Flexibility Variety	I'll be honest with you, it's probably um graduating into a permanent shift. It'd have to be something pretty good for someone to come knocking at my door now for me to stop doing it because I enjoy the variety and, and the fact I've got control over when, and or to a large extent, when and how I do er do the job. For example stuff I do for the [organisation] um you know I can't, heh, I can't it's on, if it's a nice sunny afternoon on a Sunday I'll go out and do it because you're not reliant on making arrangements with other other people, but certainly this work for [another organisation] and some of the other things I do I, I can choose when I do it and its er and how I do it

Source	Key themes	Extract
Derek	Security	was there for six years, worked my way up from – in 1990 – from social worker to um – senior practitioner, which is like deputy team manager – and then I saw a team manager post advertised in [County] – six months temporary – I applied and got it. People said I was crazy, you know, no security, and I said well you've got to take a chance – so – I, I kept being rolled forward on temporary contracts – then a lot of permanent posts – went through several restructures, worked for a really bright and insightful manager and – he got a different role, and I went off and worked for him
	Security	um there've been times when I've, when I was employed – when I was worried about security – um – you know, because like when a restructure was coming out, what if I didn't get reappointed, what would it mean – and I suppose that's one advantage of being a bit more mature, I'm 51 now, is that – I am um – you know, having been through so many restructures in the public sector, I know what it's like
	Security	- um – on – the scale of 1 to 10, 10 being very secure, 1 not at all, I'd say probably about – 7

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control Balance Flexibility	*and how does that compare with how you felt when you were in full time work?* well when I was in full time - yeah when I was in – standard full time work um – I suppose 20 years ago I was probably – up at er 8, 9, but increasingly, over the years, I would say that's reduced down, you know, you keep going through restructure every – two, three years it's exhaust, it is pretty tiring and exhausting – and, you know, I've changed my role what I've done and whatever but um – you know, there does, it, it gets a bit much after a while and this way I feel that I have a bit more control which means I'm able – to steady things a bit more, Jan, and although it's hard to get the balance right it does mean if I did need to go and get more work or whatever – you know, I'm in a position where I can do that, and it's, it's quite nice, it's quite liberating, in some respects, to think well actually if I don't want to do this anymore – you know, whatever I mean I'm – I was kind of thinking as well when I, my brother lives in New Zealand there, now – he works at university – and um I thought well, you know, if there's a time when I haven't got, well what will I do if I haven't got any work, and I thought well actually if I haven't got any work for a month or so I could go and see my brother in New Zealand and that'd be great, but I haven't, that opportunity hasn't arisen but – probably increasingly, if I keep being successful, I'll have to make sure I engineer those pockets of time to say – act, act, and I do know some consultants who like every year – for two months they will not work because they're going to do other things – and hopefully that's the situation I'll get to where – you know, right, OK I'm going to have two months out – and then I can be saying to someone look, I'm going to take these two months out – you know, let's, let's finish things up if you want to employ me after

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control Flexibility	it's not just the financial element, that's the only main expense I've got now. That's the only thing the mortgage – and I suppose I've got some money, I couldn't pay it all of yet, but I've got some money saved – no I'm, I'm driven by doing a good job – and – I want to keep active and – you know, as I say, I live on my own that's likely to continue to be the case, and as long as I'm fit and able, even when I don't need to I'd want to continue to do some work even if ultimately it might become that it's just, you know, a bit of part-time voluntary work or stuff. I think you do need to be doing things to keep the brain active so I see myself – if I'm fit and able probably working – mortgage will be paid off by the time I'm 60 but, bit of luck, probably until I'm 70 at least perhaps something like that if I, if I choose to – and um, you know, as I say it is nice even now thinking well actually I can give them notice and I can say actually I'm going to be stopping in the summer and have a couple of months off or whatever - you've got a bit more control – it feels a bit more like I've got a bit more control rather than the organisation just having all the control, me having none and being completely at their, you know, beck and call and I also think it's a bit of a different feeling – in terms of doing the work because – like today I stayed a bit later today - which I don't need to do cos I'm just on a contract, you know, but I want to do a good job but equally I know that I could go in a bit later one morning, that's fine with them, you know, and again – whereas when, before the feeling I've had when I've been doing work is that I've had to do it – I've had to stay a bit late cos it's got to be done cos there's going to be a load more work tomorrow, the pressure is slightly different now – um and it's more – you know, me wanting to do a good job, but I know that, you know, I can leave work every day on time if I want to

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility Control Variety Challenge	*If a traditional job had come up, what would you miss about this way of working now?* I think having the – flexibility to um – to um to be able to – to some degree control um what I'm doing and um – yeah and, and the thought of, I don't think now, I'll ever go back to – um working again permanently for one organisation – it's just not something that interests me. As well as the ongoing disruption that there is in the health and social care sector, I just wouldn't wanna do it, you know, it'd just be a waste really. I think it, you know, – I feel I've got a bit more control as I mentioned earlier, and it's just a better – situation for me to be in whereby I can um, you know, I can actually um – you know, have a selection of jobs and, and do a variety of things, that's much more – challenging and entertaining – than just working in one job, in one role, for the rest of my – employment, you know, career
Desmond	Security	um – I learned really early on in life that er in the private sector – er – e, especially in er, you know, in the private sector you – you don't have a job for life (sighs) – businesses come and go – and my father was made redundant – um but my, my um yeah – my mum and dad split up, but my father was made redundant – and I remember, as a, as a very young child being impressed upon that this was an absolute disaster – and that, you know, his world collapsed, and it was, it was emotionally traumatic – terrible for the family – and I, I honestly really don't, I don't fear that – if, if [organisation] tomorrow said to me sorry Desmond, you know, the you've, you've seen yourself, you've not been very busy lately, - we have to let you go in a couple of months, that does not scare me at all

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control	probably actually psychologically the control element is a, is a really important factor with someone that was – uprooted at the age of four-and-a-half – or four – to er, a, a new village, new home, new – new Dad – there is that element of needing control of my life – comes back to the property thing. Even though, you know, I rent my house from a bank um it's my house, and I decide what colour it is, not the landlord, and it, and, and it's my fiefdom
Duncan	Control	I'm, I'm happier, I'm happier because I'm totally in control of what I do – in all aspects whereas where I was Managing Partner a lot of business um – I'm happier to have left that , should have done it years ago because there was a great deal of jealousy about - when I bought into the business and my clientele and that's really what – the reason I left is because – um - - I was funding the business and um – you know, whilst there was a bonus arrangement, which, out of which I did very well, there was a, there was a great deal of resentment
	Security	I regard it as more secure than what I had before so – *because?* well I've got sort of three irons in the fire as opposed to one

Source	Key themes	Extract
Elena	Balance	it is more than full time and when um - - it's, it's um – it's a bit of a – it's a weird thing and a personal thing – where um – obviously it, doing something creative and being creative – um it, it's something that also makes you feel good and um – then it leaks into your weekends, and there's always research or trying to find something out or – ideas I may have or people that you might be talking for projects and – so, it's part of my life, or it's part of our lives with my partner because he is also photographer, and we're doing this work together so – you might find us on a Saturday night him working and (laughs) me working and er – although in the past I was very er – resentful of that – er I thought that wasn't healthy – now I, I – I'm accepting more that that's part of – who we are and that's how we actually live our lives and also we actually don't have kids so, so um yeah balance er is difficult
	Control Balance	um and er I thought that um – this job is taking far too much time – too, too much to actually control and to balance er so I decided to um keep only three days so I was four days a week, now three days a week, and it works a lot better for me um – and then I took the decision to start working as a photographer more um
	Security	and the other thing is that – um – with portfolio work (laughs) um – er that's something that I have thought recently – is that – lately with the financial crisis – and with, we're not out of this financial crisis or there might be another one coming or whatever – um – I think it's good to actually have – various sort of like income um sources – it works for me – um so far and er – so, so I'm not regretting anything that I've done – um – I, I see it more as a sort like balancing or re-balancing

Source	Key themes	Extract
Emily	Balance	I think when you're running your own business you've always got it ticking on in your head – so you can't leave it at home can you? yeah definitely you're laying in bed just about to fall asleep and you're oh I must ring so and so tomorrow yeah so that's, that's something you don't get when you work for somebody else do you?
	Flexibility	um – and – they – said to me that they do offer um flexible – positions which works out absolutely perfectly – with the family and everything – um – so – kind of, and it works both ways. If they haven't got any clients booked in, and they don't need me to come in, I, I don't come in, I don't get paid – and equally if I've got something on and I can't go in and just ring up I just let them know that I can't work without having to book holiday – so that has been really, really good
	Flexibility	flexibility - specially when you've got children at school if one of them is ill or something – you can just go can't you? Whereas if you're more, a job like this you feel a little bit more inclined to
	Variety	um probably the different interests – and the different walks of life you meet and – some of it's quite fun whereas office jobs – can be fun but not traditionally (laughs)

Source	Key themes	Extract
Esme	Variety Challenge	there are aspects of it I like, I think different roles bring different things so differently, the work you do is different, the environment in which you do it is different, um, are different so they add interest, they allow you to compare and contrast different things, to reflect on things, you know the challenge of, you know, I thought, not a lot, but I thought about [institution] being in the higher education market, and the viability of that and the, the drain on their student support services because they tend to get students with lower grades who need all the, you know, library support, personal tutorial support, financial support, and it contrasts with your [organisation] experience, and um the on campus experience of students here and of course the huge number of international students here at the university, so it gives you thought provoking things about the nature of what you're doing, and it gives you different angles, different perspectives um the challenge is more the sort of the, the pragmatics of the, the contract of employment stuff, you know the, the managing the two, two different employers, the two different environments, and getting it clear the, what you can help with and what you can't help with
	Security	I think that the challenge then for – my granddaughter and for those coming up that both my husband, should you talk to him, and me, that if you are in a position with mortgage, two children, this is a precarious existence. Where is your next work coming from?

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security	maintaining your own employability, you've got to keep your connections going, got to keep yourself up-to-date, you've got to look for leads, when you're in one job, you've got to be looking for leads for your next piece of work, so this contract is to 2017 - um, which is great, so, well I suppose I could be made redundant before then but potentially it's 2017 but then you also have to say to yourself well actually I'm not so sure there is such thing as a permanent job any more, even if you are on the payroll you've still got to be thinking about how am I doing, what will I be looking like in the market place

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control Flexibility	I'm really struggling with 9 to 5 *In what way?* um cos I have to sit at my desk or be here physically from 9 to 5. I've all my, my career… when I arrived and when I went was entirely down to me and my discretion providing I got my job done. I made the business case for why there might be a day when I needed to work at home… and I think they saw it – the business case – but in reality they're very reluctant because it sort of sets a precedent whereas OK there's other people in the [department], why can't they have a day working from home? It's just very different culturally because it's always been a service provision… some days I think this would be so better if I could spread this out on the kitchen table at home and then, you know, take the dog for a walk and um clarify my thoughts and then come back and I'd do it better… I suppose the only downside for me is this 9 to 5… I think I'd do a better job – if I just sat at the kitchen table, I'd still be on my emails – what is it about me physically sitting in this room that is so important? And I think it is because they are a [department] team and they've always had people in 9 to 5 roles, they've never had anybody doing anything differently… they haven't had an expectation then that people would work from home
Felicity	Security	well initially the [institution] was definitely my main job, but that was basically cos of the length I mean the, the security in it was no different in a way to the others because they were all zero hours contracts, but I would have considered that main job because I'd been doing it for a long period of time, and I had kind of continuity on it, but the [organisation], could've become and overtaken the [institution] one, but I sort of didn't let it. This was probably the smallest one because it was just one piece of teaching

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Variety	mm - - var, I mean variety I guess the fact that you didn't get bored because there was - - - you only taught for a short period of time in each place and then the courses changed so - - you know yeah not keep revisiting the same material and stuff all the time
Gavin	Balance	some of them have offered me a – I don't think they would now I'm a, not of an age to be offered a job but – they've offered me a fulltime job and said would you come and work – and I've turned it down because – erm well I just prefer the lifestyle really, the lifestyle I had probably financially there's nothing in it - -
	Power Control Security	it gives you well power, control over your own life, but I have always, you know, my last proper inverted commas full-time job – I was, yeah I was employed as a consultant er trainer until er management consultant after I left the last college I worked in, but that was in 1989, when I left the college (cough) did two years consultancy with somebody else and then branched out on my own, so since about 1991 it's always been about – what can I bring - in, what can I do and that's, you know, I think I probably – a little bit unusual in the fact that I'm very – er – tolerant of those sort of risks – I don't have a family to support so that makes it – easier, but you could also argue that the two are inter-linked in the sense that um I've always been do you know what we'll just take what comes in through the door and see what happens and that's not a – it's not an environment that many people would find comfortable - - I can live with it and – overall I have to say I suppose it's been successful erm – you know, I've still got a roof over my head (laugh) um so it's, it, it works – and I, I used to particularly enjoy, in fact I was talking about this on the MBA course last night when we were talking about um – relationships with er with your work peers, used to do a lot of work in the car industry, particularly places like Dagenham, and there's a whole load of sh, shouting and swearing and pressure on me and everybody else, but I always could sort of stand back and say do you know what, if I don't fancy this, I

Source	Key themes	Extract
		won't be here tomorrow, and I, I'm pretty, I was pretty, you know, coupled with that I was pretty reliable, very reliable I'd say, perhaps even over-reliable in some instances, however, (cough) in the back of my mind was if this really does become too much for me, I can walk away from it, and that's a, that is a nice feeling to have – and that's what, it does empowers you – I think it empowers you in a good way really if, if you take it, if you – if you are a responsible person for your own outcomes and you – er allow that to empower you, you think right, now I'm going to go and develop something else

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security Power Control	there's a double-edged sword, feeling secure in [organisation] is not something that I want to – er engage with particularly because – this doesn't go too far does it (laughter) it's not, I feel, feel very exploited here, very manipulative, a lot of it's about power and control, and - the bottom line is the money is, doesn't reward you for that, in my judgement, you need to – eh, I want to be more in a position where I pick and choose what, where I am, I sort of do pick and choose, but I want to feel a, I want, I, I'm going to have to turn, to teach myself, it's one of my weaknesses is I'm gonna have to start saying no to a few more people at the [organisation] because otherwise – I just feel that I'm being exploited and I don't want to, I don't want, I don't want to feel that way and if you can just go in, do one or two – modules that you like – that's the ideal um the problem is at, at places like this like this, once you start say, well if you do start saying no it kind of – it's, it can snowball into a whole load of no and I, you know, I, it's very difficult to manage that um the so that's one of the reasons why I was trying, I'm trying to my aspirational picture shows this sort of overlap – cos I don't, I don't, I'm not, not out to try and um exploit or manipulate the [organisation] too, well too much, you know, I'm not, not trying to do, I did, I, I just want to be able to earn something remotely close to the amount, the monies that I used to earn and doing a job similar to what I used to do with the college, in partnership with the college, I'm not sure that that's achievable because - of the reasons I've just mentioned

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility Power Control	I spend a lot of time trying to look after me as well that's, that's the reason for the extended breaks - that's the reason why I don't do enough of it, but I do intend, I do try and keep fit occasionally (laughs) erm, and – so it is quite a self-centred world if you like in, in that sense, because, and you, but you do have to have a bit of that um and I do have to say sometimes, you know, just not doing anything today or, these, this fortnight, or this week even - - (sigh) yeah *Do you intend to return to a traditional style of working ever?* I can't, problem is, for me – a) – could I cope with this idea of, you know, and I think I had three weeks holiday in the summer, unless I, I don't know that I could I, I'd get, I, I don't know I'd tolerate it – and second of all I suspect any – moderately intuitive employer will look at me and think this guy's unemployable (laughs) for that very reason that we can't, you know, necessarily put him in the framework that, that we want, that said – they can still employ me as a, as a sort of daily rate consultant, hourly paid, whatever it may be – um I'm amenable to that, and I've obviously got – the sort of track record that I'm reliable enough to do that

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility	I think mine is that I can probably fit into different environments, I'm flexible enough to fit into different environments – and 90% of the time, get on with the people that I'm working with, adapt what I, adaptability that's what, flexibility, adaptability I would say. But you need to combine that with some sort of resilience – because if you're – if you're going to stress about, if you, if, if I were – to now be pacing up and down the corridors worrying [manager], and other managers here about, what am I going to be doing next um, next semester that's probably a recipe for them saying do you know what I'm not having that, um it's not in my nature to do that, and er I wouldn't, I just wouldn't well I wouldn't worry about it you know
	Security	- - my - - - the impression of my personal security – I think partly since I've worked at the [institution] – has declined, and I don't know why really, it's declined, but now I think, I feel it's on the way up again now, I don't know why it's that I, it's difficult to explain why – erm - - *Was it linked to the amount of work you're being offered?* um – I'm being offered plenty of work here but that's - um it could be you know it used to – I don't want to sound too big headed, but I used to literally have to sort of say to [organisation] sorry I can't come and do this for a month because I'm working at [company] or I'm working at [other organisation] whatever it may be, and it was literally trying to keep everybody happy er for, for, for a long period of time, but it then quite often I'd, they'd say that nothing would happen for six months – um and I would be, I wouldn't be doing absolutely nothing but um - I would be er quiet for 6, maybe 6 months um, and I think to the outside world it just seemed that Gavin never does anything um, but of course, it's not, that wasn't true, um

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security	if you've got, you know, because they will, they, there will always be, and it's been my experience at 25 years now – that however secure you think you are, and however much part of the framework you are – there will always be a change coming and – the easiest thing to do is to stop the relationship with the, with the contractor, it's sa, it's exactly the same with the [institution] – because I am a part-timer – if they, if there are needs to change obviously, as I'm sure you know, there's the part timers that are the first ones to sort of, we can say goodbye to them very easily, it's done and that's um, there's no um, there's no real cost, or damage done, to the [organisation], as they would see it. Um, so you are – things are rather precarious, sorry what was the question? (laughter)
Henry	Balance Flexibility	that's so eight days a week (laughs) I, I set it up so that I work Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and I have Thursdays available for teaching and then Friday gives me a long weekend – um but also the flexibility that if I'm needed here on a Friday, as I am tomorrow, I would come in
Joan	Flexibility	I mean this – I call it two days a week so one day a week is in the office but this – it might be – half a day and then half a day there, or half a day and then, you know, if I'm writing a report or something half a day there and then finish it off on the other days, but it, it, er, I can be flexible in myself whatever works best for me
	Challenge	it was a real yes it's been a real, real – challenge, but one of the things that – I think I'm quite good at – and it's sort of come out – in the negotiations, particularly with the [organisation] is – thinking of alternative ways of doing things so we've put in the code X, [organisation] wants Y, - well actually if we did it this way – would that satisfy you, [organisation] – and most of the time they've said yes so it's trying to think of solutions – and I've quite enjoyed that – doing things like that

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Challenge	introduced me, you know, to things I might not have done – um so – (coughs) excuse me – I don't believe I would ever – have done authorship for the [professional organisation] for example and although – when that first started I was in absolute fright mode (laughs)
Julia	Balance	um – yeah it was financial and as – as well as trying to keep all of the employers happy as well, it was a nightmare so they'll all have demands on you, and you can't meet your obligations so you feel bad…um – so for the teaching career, when I was working in hospitality as a manager, I was only on £15,000 a year working 90 hours a week with all my holidays rejected so going into teaching, um, I could still teach what I was passionate about but not having to work the long hours and – pretty much double the pay, or more than double the pay, so there was the financial reward, but it was more about being able to teach what I was passionate about with having, without having the lack of work-life balance
	Balance	I went there, from hospitality to get my work-life balance, and it was still loosely connected so I knew a lot about the hotel brands that I was selling to consumers – booking the hotel rooms so it was a nice work-life balance, and there were many perks to that job as well um but it just wasn't

like what sort of perks?

er so – we were given free hotel breaks, most weekends, we had to go and visit restaurants, hotels, have show round, wined and dined – erm – paid to go to football matches, concerts so there's lots of benefits to working from them and it's a family business as well – so – er there was less pressure in regard to a major organisation |

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance Flexibility	erm – I think the [organisation] – because I was quite friendly with our manager at the time there so he gave me additional shifts that weren't offered to other staff to help financially erm – and guv me, gave me any support, training I needed to kind of – and more responsibility with the new organisation. So he was more flexible with me and gave me, tended to prioritise and give me more shifts when I needed them financially
	Control	so at the [organisation] – the chef was given a promotion, and the manager I was friendly with left – um and so the person who was given promotion was in charge of the shifts, and we didn't get on so all my shifts were stopped – er, and most of the staff, who had been there a long period of time, all of their shifts stopped as well um, very controlling and from loving the job I then end up having massive anxieties about working there so I reduced the hours and eventually stopped going a) because I wasn't being given any and b) I couldn't cope with going there – no - of course, when you are given long shifts as well, you might not get any breaks or food, or water etc so it's quite a struggle to - meet your basic needs as well
	Control Flexibility	my contract actually says that I'm not allowed to work anywhere else *does it?* yeah *even though it's only a part-time contract?* yep

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security	and I couldn't er secure a rental property or a mortgage not having a contract er so for the first time, in my 30s, my mum had to be guarantor on a property – having rented privately since I was 18, so I needed the contract for that stability, so once I got the contract as well I also managed to secure a mortgage –
	Security	I have a very strong work ethic – erm – and I do have a tendency to put work first - - - which isn't the best way to be but I see, I perceive work as a risk, every job I've ever had it's all been quite a threatening job, there's been a lot of risk, not a lot of stability in the jobs that I've had – erm so if I put in a 100%, I feel that I'm reducing the risk, but I've also had quite threatening managers in the past as well so it feels like I'm constantly having to prove yourself
	Variety	at one point, before I, just after I started teaching, I was also working part-time at my previous job – I'd left to go to the teaching so I had six jobs at one point *and how was that?* erm it was nice to have the variation – and the additional income was nice, but, it just meant time constraints and running around all over the place – and careful planning – management of your time
Juliet	Balance	at the moment – I th, I think it's fine it, it suits me because I do have a little gap in the day – um – because I have got other things that I need to do, you know, um – my mum's on her own so I, I, I like that – a little bit of time, you know, during the week when I can just take her out for coffee and things cos – my evenings are totally booked because I leave this job and then I take my own daughter to her (laughs) dance school four nights a week – so we're not home most evenings till 9, 10 at night

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance	it works for me absolute, absolutely fine – er I'd say it's very successful because it's fitted in with what, you know, mainly with my daughter because, as a single parent, I had, I love the fact that I have all the holidays off – I mean that's, that's a real winner for me, and I should have said that actually with, with the first job, that's, that's another beauty of – that and the second one is that I don't work the holidays – which isn't so much relevant now I guess because she's older, but certainly when she was, you know, quite young – that made, that had a huge impact for me because otherwise I'd have had to get childcare – to go and look after other people's children (laughs)
	Balance	because I, I just think you spend so much of your, I, I've got, you know, completely coming off the, off the directed question, but I've got, I've got friends who are in jobs that they really don't enjoy. They're stressed – they're always thinking about work and, and OK, they, they've got good wages for it but actually I just think what's the point? You know, does that out balance - your work time really?

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility Control	I don't think I would, I mean, if – it's, it's hard to say because if, if something, you know, I suppose came up it's, it's about the finances now because I have got – I suppose I have got the option where I don't need to be off every school holiday because obviously, you know, my daughter's much older now - - but I, I think I would find that quite hard – anyway, going, going into something where you have to sort of – you know, book ahead four weeks, that's not saying I don't want to work hard it's, it's hard because it probably sounds then like I'm saying oh well I want to work term time, I want that six weeks summer holiday (laughs) it's not even about the holidays, I like – I'm not very – traditional I suppose, I'm never, apart from the nursery where I was at before I had my daughter, cos I worked overseas for a long time so that was seasonal, so that was six months working and then I'd be home for sort of three months at a time so I've always kind of done things out of the norm if you like, that's when I was doing entertainment work with, with children and families
	Flexibility	occasionally, I mean if someone's off sick I might stay for an extra couple of hours or something like that – not often because I haven't got that much flexibility because of the other job – but occasionally I, you know, if they say oh can you just stay a, another couple of hours today and I, and I haven't got any other plans then I can do
	Flexibility	on both of them and certainly with the [organisation] as well, I've always had a lot of freedom there – when my daughter was younger – I never missed a sports day or an assembly or anything so there's always been that flexibility which has been really good – and, I if I ever needed a day off for any reason – if I just organised to swap with somebody – or for them to cover for me because we're all part-time staff at the nursery, um then that's never a problem either

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility	– um – I just, I love, I love the way that the place runs – um – I just enjoy my work, to be honest, I, I really enjoy what I do there. I like the people that I work with – um - - and, and the fact that I have got that flexibility
	Variety Flexibility	variety – yep social – it's very sociable and that's kind of – that's what I do really – um term time only – so I guess that comes under flexibility as well
	Security	I've felt very secure, ever since I've done both really – I, I've never had a, a cause not to – *and where does that security come from?* - - - It's just knowing that my hours, my hours are regular and that my pay is regular – um and also that, you know, the security that – well I mean I guess no one (laughs) can say their job's totally safe – but I've never felt under threat with any of the jobs that, you know, they'd suddenly be taken from me
	Variety	I suppose the only – the only reason – I – would – think it's best to have one job – it's just cos you've only got one place of work, you've got one duty – but I like the variety (laughs) so that's kind of a personal thing, and I love the fact that I, you know, go one place in the morning, and it's totally different in the afternoon for me so my day's very, very, although it's with young people all the time it's still very, very different capacities

Source	Key themes	Extract
Justin	Flexibility Control	that's usually – yeah, sort of – any time between 8 and 6, you know not 8 till 6, any time between 8 and 6 and that's probably Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays – yeah – but that does shift around the rest can be any time – um – so sometimes um – I'll – be answering queries from international students – at 7am on the VLE – um quite a lot sort of between 6 and probably half past 8 – yeah
	Security	I wouldn't put myself – or my family in a risky position so when I actually decided to go down this multiple – (laughs) two faced, three faced route – it was always with the, the proviso that I'd got one substantive, part-time post because I get a pension as well
	Balance	I mean as you probably know, it goes in peaks and troughs – so sometimes I'll, I'll have a fallow period of two or three weeks
	Flexibility Balance	yeah and quite often at weekends – yeah – so, for example, over the bank holiday weekend I was – answering queries, and it's not intrusive, you know, because [his wife] has probably gone to the shops, or she's just looking after our brand-new granddaughter and that kind of thing so it's just half an hour while making a cup of tea

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexible Control	it's good because, within my own sort of – work shape if you like – it's all very flexible – um here – although it's kind of, you know, there's a, a sort of inflexibility about sort of, you know, rocking up three days a week, um – the actual physical times where I need to be pinned down to do something are almost, in the teaching and learning, are almost purely isolated to doing webinars at a particular time – um the things that irritate me are meetings which I get dropped in – which, you know, for me er are either, you know, um – not meetings that really ought to have been called – or um meetings where – you know, they could be over in – 25 minutes instead of the 3 hours and 25 minutes, more importantly, for an online institution, there is no need for people to be in the building – um – my three colleagues and I have a, a monthly Skype meeting – um using the free version of Skype, all four of us can see each other, all four of us can talk to each other – so you get voice and body language and, there is no reason why that can't, can't happen here
	Variety Control	um - - - that's really, I think it's the variety – the, I think if you, if you, one of the real – one of the e, the things that stands out most about doing this type of work – is that even though you're probably doing a full-time job when you add all the bits together – it kind of doesn't feel like that – there's a variety about it – and there's um - - there's almost an absence of shackles – so not being – tied to – you know a particular institution and the culture that they, they espouse – um – here's getting pretty close to being a nuisance
	Flexibility	so if um some mornings I, I, I take my laptop and make myself – a um me and my wife a cup of tea – and I'll start work at 7 o'clock when I'm still in bed – I just read my emails, drink a cup of tea, digestive biscuit – dog pawing at me cos she wants to go out – um and it's, it's the ability to do that which is er which is nice

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility Balance	yeah – if the, if, if they, they said – you know, which I originally said to them they might want to think about – which was try me as a pilot for never being here which I did at the, the [organisation], and I did at the [other organisation] I only rocked up for a meeting once a month or so in York for two days a month and at the [organisation] – was completely when I felt like it or for a monthly meeting with the manager – um – if they actually said, you know, said just do that – that, that would make it a lot more profitable, you know, they, they would probably get seven hours a day – of, of work – um whereas they're probably only getting three, four productive work that I work far better at home – maybe because my broadband connections better than here and it's quieter – so you haven't got – and I can actually sort of sit and do the things I need to do
	Flexibility	*so you'll never go back to a standard 9 to 5?* no, no, no, no, no *why not?* - um – I'm too old for that I think – um – I think you – probably too set in my ways is a better phrase. I think once you've worked – with a certain degree of autonomy – and flexibility – um – it's, it's – any other way of working that moves you back is a little bit of an intrusion – um – I mean for me, more of an intrusion in the way I actually think – and am able to think rather than the way I behave

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance	what she [his wife] does resent – um – is someone organising my time, so she hates webinars – so if I do a webinar from home she sees that as an intrusion on her time and mine because if I'm doing normal admin, or whatever it is, you know, answering – posts on the VLE um – she can come in and interrupt and say would you like a cup of tea or – um – fancy coming down just to do this – er that kind of thing, but when it's, you know, if a webinar starts at 11 o'clock that usually causes an outbreak of glumness
Keith	Balance	um - - when I was working evenings – I felt that was a bit too much, but it was a case of we needed the, the extra money – um – so I've kind of eased off a bit – so I tend to do – after school – up to about tea time, and that feels about right for me, so it feels busy but not – too much - it doesn't feel like, otherwise it feels like I'm working all the time
	Flexibility Control	I suppose it, I suppose it, I have got the – flexibility of to, to a certain extent controlling how – much or little I do work – um - - - also if – if I found myself in a situation where I wasn't getting on – in a school – [organisation] would – as much as possible – try and get me work elsewhere – although it's not something that I've found, but I know that they would – if there is a possibility yeah um - - - so it's working reasonably – locally – um you can end up travelling quite long distance but um over a period of time what I've found is that you, you can gradually get the schools – that are sort of local, reasonably local

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance Flexibility	um – I suppose really having that time - (laughs) I can't complain really, having that time, holidays if I need to get some work done at home is, is a big advantage – and also I found that when, when the children were home that was a, a big advantage because we didn't have to pay for childcare
	Security Flexibility	it be, um - can be as little or as much as you can take on basically because they can employ people that will only do – you know, an hour or something – so people just um, just part-time and so, as little or as much work as you want to take on to suit your own – circumstances *so is it a zero hours contract?* It's um – it's not quite because um – the contracts are – ten hours, sorry ten week contracts a term so beginning of each term – you know the previous term actually what you're going to be doing – and then, even if parents don't want to pay – once they've signed up for it you're guaranteed work for that term – it feels a little bit like zero hours but it's termly contracts so – there's no – guarantee that I would have – any work after – a term but I've been doing it since 1996 so it's kind of – you know
	Security	yeah – um - - probably not but then these days – the I, the idea of – that kind of stability – possibly no longer applies in the same way – so I mean it's not something that I really think about that much – um I don't really worry about – whether – contracts are not re, renewed because I would find – I would then – find another way to teach – to – it would probably involve more private work

Source	Key themes	Extract
Lara	Flexibility	I would miss the – having to mainly answer to myself and having to be, having to be at a certain place at a certain time every single day
	Balance\n\nFlexibility	erm so when I do that I have to fit everything else into my other two days or also work in the evenings to make up for that
	Balance\n\nVariety\n\nChallenge\n\nFlexibility	eh you know it's all I think balancing it, it all has its own challenges so but I like, you know, the variety's good and, to some extent, the flexibility although I think probably the flexibility is in a way less than you anticipate it being
	Variety	I think probably it's much easier just to have one job and one employer (laughs) and yet I don't – I've kind of been there and done that. I think I thrive on variety and you know I probably am one of these people that if, if I've not got anything to be stressed about, I'm stressed because I've not got something to be stressed about
	Security	it's a permanent part-time contract position, so I do that erm to give me a bit of security really – so and also some of the benefits that come with it as well the [organisation] job I, it, it's my security you know with it I get private health insurance and you know a pension which I never really paid into before… that's my kind of bread and butter

Source	Key themes	Extract
Lauren	Flexibility Power Control	Whereas because I'm studying, because I have another focus when I'm outside of work, for example, yesterday when the issues were breaking about the dissertations I just emailed back and said, you know, I'll pick this up tomorrow, I've got other priorities today and that's how I felt in my head and so that's what I communicated on paper. I don't think I could have got away with that if I was, (laughs) in a full-time job, to say that I've got other priorities bye, bye so I do, do feel much braver than I've ever felt because, it's partly because I don't have the emotional attachment, and partly because I'm reasonably confident that I could pick something up elsewhere so things don't, I don't feel as stressed generally um and I think a lot of my previous stress in other jobs has been because I've been emotionally attached to the organisation whereas because I don't have that anywhere now
	Flexibility Control Balance	there's lots of reasons why I started working in this way, but one of the reasons why it does work umm OK is because [husband] constantly works at home and certainly when I was doing the part-time work in the [organisation] we definitely did have those two days and there was more that we could do, but since I've been teaching, the marking and everything else tends to overlap on that time we did have as being free, but if, for example, I need to do something in the week you know like pop into town and, you know, move some money over or do this that and the other it's much easier to do it than it would have been because I would have been reliant on going on a Saturday

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance Variety	I think you do end up taking on more than you can really manage to be honest because umm and I know this with a couple of other umm people who work across a couple of different organisations, it doesn't seem to be that unusual in academia, but people say that they always end up taking on way too much but that they would always have too much than too little in terms of the money umm and also in terms of the continuity because you're much more likely to keep the relationship going with whichever organisation it is you're working for if you're doing a lot for them, if you're only doing like a couple of hours then, you know, your identity's even more spurious than it would be if you were at least doing a whole module umm so yeah there is a real danger of taking on too much, and certainly between January and March I was consistently ill I mean I was consistently, had a cold or sinusitis, or I just felt very run down umm and you know since the weather's improved I haven't felt quite so run down umm, but I think there is a danger of taking on too much whether that's, you know, that's sort of what I do anyway because I've always had jobs that've always been very full on so I think you either like working at pace or you don't I mean some people sort of prefer a kind of more of a plod whereas I do actually get bored very quickly so it is quite nice to have that, you know, not so much, I don't like the chaos so much, but it's nice to have umm lots of different things to dip in and out of

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Variety Control	Certainly I think once you're in this sort of way of working and also your parameters massively change you know if somebody would've said to me when I was working full time, will you do a bit of this or a bit of that I would have been like no I've got enough to do, I'm very rigid in my thinking, I'm just gonna do my day job and blah de blah and I'm thinking about you know my next promotion or whatever, but now your, your parameters are completely changed so you're open to much, lots more things and in that way the work is more interesting. I definitely feel more sort of free and I feel much more laid back umm, and when people ask me what I do I just say I teach, and I teach at different places and I don't really sort of go into any detail
	Security	because it's here I've got a permanent contract umm – but – weirdly I suppose I feel more umm more comfortable and at home in my [sports organisation] jobs because I've had a longer relationship with those people so I've been doing [sport coaching] now about six-and-a-half years so I know those people inside out, and whereas here I feel if something went wrong I'd be left out high and dry, if something went wrong at [sports organisation] and a child got injured or something like that I do feel very supported umm because I think both, well all, all three of the jobs really are actually quite high risk compared to what I used to do which was, you know, churn out press releases and newsletters and stuff like that which at the time I thought was quite high risk but compared to here it's the tip of the iceberg. So you do have to think about that because I think the more precarious you are, the less of an identity you have, the more open to risk you are

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security	Oh I think it is successful, I think umm I'm much less worried nowadays about how I'm going to pay the bills cos I always think that there's money coming in from somewhere, my, my biggest quote of the other day (laughs) was umm you can always get low paid teaching, it is never a problem, it's amazing how many people have asked me if I'll do a bit of this and a bit of that since I've been working in this way, I mean [institution] asked me a couple of weeks ago if I'd do a bit of work for them, I don't really want to at this point in time, to be honest with you umm because I, because I've got enough on with what I'm doing
Lydia	Security	um I feel less sec, less insecure um than I thought I would so my mor, I guess putting it the other way more secure – um than I imagined, when I first thought about this – um and I feel more positive um er about – being able to create a portfolio that works really for my circumstances. I'm more excited actually about that
	Security Balance	I think I would like to be able to um – carve out some um – time to develop sort of interests, my interests outside of working role a little more um - - the only thing that I'm mindful of is obviously – in, as part of the natural aging process, being um self-employed if you like, or working in a short-term way – you, you are slightly vulnerable – um – potentially to um periods of unemployment through sickness and that, that may make a difference, that might be the only thing that, that might draw me back in to um – full-time work but I don't see that at the moment
	Balance Flexibility	I think the only difference I would do is just try and build in a little bit more time where I don't have anything scheduled in on a non, what is a non-work day (laughs) cos I seem to be very good at, at um – not giving myself that – space that would be quite nice

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance Flexibility	yes usually time we agree a sort of time band and roughly how much um – work that might mean in any one week so that's the sort of negotiation and obviously the um the, the rate and grade that I'm paid at and, what that involves, is all negotiated so it's very um very flexible and very helpful really
	Balance Flexibility	I applied for – um – that job in a full-time capacity – um was offered it as a um a permanent post in a full-time capacity but – just at the point of taking it up circumstances changed a little bit with my mother – um and realistically I realised that taking a full-time role, which would have been based in London, was not going to be – um achievable really and also balance my personal commitments – so I withdrew from that, but they asked me then if I would consider working part-time – um and do that on a contract basis which I – felt I would like to do because it was a contrast really so having come out of working in the [public sector organisation] for a long time
	Flexibility Balance	I think probably that, the fact that it is um – so flexible to be allow you to balance and it, it works both ways I mean both, I think both organisations benefit from my ability to be able to maybe um move working days to suit the need for whatever might be happening within their organisation on a particular day and to be able to attend to that um I, I'm flexible and that allows them to be flexible with me as well
	Flexibility Challenge	definitely flexibility um different challenges I think um I've seen different – elements of working within the public sector and now outside of the public sector that I hadn't experienced before and that's been very useful – very interesting – um - - and being able to um – develop a different er skill set and that I'm, I'm doing one of the roles something that I had no experience of previously at all – um and that has been good to do

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Variety Challenge	I think the variety, the challenge – um the variety of people that I've met – um associated with various roles because obviously – generally um – you have a, a smaller group of, of individuals that, when you're working in one – formal organisation in one place potentially you may come into contact with people but your core group will be a smaller group and I think I would um I very much enjoyed meeting a variety of different people in these other roles
	Variety Challenge	I think the, the sort of profession that I'm in allows a degree of – challenge and variety um and that's one of the things that's kept me working in that particular profession for such a long time because there are a variety of different opportunities for occupational therapists – um different roles, different um across the sort of health and social care spec sort of um – agenda really that you can work in so – that has, that's something that attracted me to the profession in the first place. I've always liked to do different things in terms of keep challenging myself within that – and that is a pre, a profession um gave, has given me that opportunity up to this point, and I suppose this is an extension of that – so although I didn't necessarily see me um feeling brave enough maybe um a long time ago when I think, as I said before, that probably circumstances were such, were such that it has come at a time in my life where I've got um more confidence – in – taking the step to do this than I would have done ten years ago
Madison	Control	this is my main – um it's a funny one because yes, yes it takes up all my time, and that's the one where I earn my living - but that's a job, that's a job these – yeah they're a job, they're a job but – I, I'm very – er I'm more emotionally involved in them – than I am in that – because I have total control over all these, and I see a direct impact of how – that affects the people who come

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security	the only – I never have done – un, I don't know whether it's creeping age (laughs) um – and my class, you know, people come, I don't struggle for participants or anything like that – but I do – as I've got friends who are picking up illnesses and stuff like that, that's when, for me, that becomes insecure if I wasn't actually physically healthy – it, it would be the physical – issues that would stop, that makes it insecure
Miriam	Flexibility	you need to be able to – um be very - - ah - - flexible, resourceful – um you need to be able to think quickly, you need to be able to adjust quickly, in other words, get a different head on – depending on who you're talking to – and to be able to focus in on – all the scenario that revolves around that particular client
Monty	Control	I have um – I have a very nice second job – um – which I wouldn't want to lose just because I really like doing it and it, you know, it's not that many hours, it's not - it's not enormous, and I think that's when it works, if you have a second job that's under control – you can make the first one work. I think if you're trying to juggle two and they're similar hours, god forbid or – you couldn't do it
	Security	I used to think well, it used to be that – you had a fair amount of security – but then we had a phase of, well if you've got a job – er by the end of August then you've got a job for the next year – now we look at it on the basis of we could have a massive funding shortfall mid-year cos of the way the funding world has changed, who knows? You know, um – we think in terms of – what we're doing I mean there's certainly, several years now – where I can help to make a difference to things implying that we know we're doing it

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security	because the skills and experience I have from this job make me very employable which is why I wasn't worried when I was being made redundant because I knew that there were health and safety roles out there I could go and do
	Balance	well a good week is gonna be forty something probably around 44, 45, a bad week could be 90, who knows - um – there aren't many of those, but there are, there are plenty of weeks where I've done six days – seven days - you know, times when I've done – fifteen, sixteen days and then had a – day off
	Variety	It always comes down to variety, it always comes down to keeping interests going in different directions and therefore keeping interest going over all and – it opens doors – you know, it's one of those things that you learn in life, you have to push doors sometimes
Nate	Control Flexibility	flexibility I think, flexibility and – self-determination – so I, I would choose what I want to do – so – why are you applying for more management roles – think – so had a look at the finances and well yeah we can, I can, I, what do I do with that money, I just fritter it away and do nothing with it really um we can bank some away for the kids obviously um – so – that was the decision then so it was when I think – the stress symptoms were creeping in, and I think that's an important thing but also um it was self-determination, it was control again it was my choice and, if you look at lots of definitions of stress the perception of control and things like that so – it was my decision and then also it was my decision to go from 0.6 to a 0.9 because – that would make it more financially – er acceptable and um and also it's course leadership, and that's what I've done since I was a graduate so... well again it's, it's becoming more self-determined isn't it? it, it's becoming a little bit more in control

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance	so – re-evaluated the work-life balance, I've got two young girls – er six and nine – and – my other half is, she did 20 years at [organisation], got voluntary release and has retrained as a primary teacher – so we, we're currently re-evaluating things really – and I thought well – you know, there's food on the table – um and with er, with the management role of a curriculum lead or faculty lead or whatever – in charge of a group of courses and including appraisals and things like that, the job never ends
	Balance	so I chose it and also it fits in with – um my, I asked for – Friday afternoons – and um they, they OK'd that – and in terms of home life that means I can pick up the girls from school and deposit them at their various drama workshops and things on a Friday, and I gain a lot from that process so I think that's quite important so, you know, rather than chucking them off on the childminder again for the fifth day in a row
	Balance	yeah reining back it's not, retiring, scaling back – um having more – me time –
	Balance	but in terms of psychology I chose to – leave [institution] and go to a fractional lower post now a lot of people said hang about that's a pay cut I said yep I'm totally aware of that – um but I'd rather have less money and be happier and it was a real realisation um – the job, because it was, it wasn't a very nice environment – it was quite stressful and there were some signs of stress creeping in

Source	Key themes	Extract
Niall (focus group)	Control Flexibility	Yeah, well I mean for me I had a very straightforward in fact a very good job up until um when was it? The early 90s when the first recession hit um I was made redundant then [Karen entered the room] with a huge redundancy pay off which allowed me to buy my first set of properties um then I've been in and out of employment for the next probably 7 or 8 years then I decided I'd enough of this I'll go self-employed um I'd met enough people that I could run my own consultancy quite happily which I did for about 10 years to the last bank crisis when all the professional work that I did dried up um there was no such thing as a rent review then um and at that point I decided that having um been buying a set of properties up to that period that the income from that was enough um I started working with the [educational institution] in about 2000 um the volume of work with the [educational institution] has gradually increased over that period to the point where um I would think from about 2000 I was unemployable. I've got so used to working for myself by myself with the times I wanted to that to be regimented by any employer would just did not register – couldn't do it um, and really I've been sort of working on that basis ever since and now that I officially reached pension age yesterday
	Control	cos they want to impose certain rules and you need to be contactable all the time and have one of those fancy phones and – no thank you (laughs)

Source	Key themes	Extract
Patrick	Control Power	I am fortunate because – er, er maybe – another point is that I never feel – that I can be as put on in this job – as other teachers – OK so when people say to me you must – sometimes I say – I'm sorry but I won't – whereas if that is your only job – then – there is a – I don't if it's been coined yet – self-bullying goes on in some big organisations – you know, they won't bully you physically – and I think – people that are in one – role – are victims of that no, a lot – I – can, I can resist the stress from that because I can actually say no – I'm sorry, that doesn't suit me – which is a very fortunate, that's why I say I'm fortunate... – and when, and, and I think subconsciously they know that – cos I will say look – you know you're lucky to have me (laughs)... yeah – I do consider that – I give my time – to the [institution] – rather than the [institution] employ me – because I work portfolio ... that portfolio relationship – truly makes me – I honestly say, think that I actually give my time to the [institution] – I could give my time in any, any number of areas – and when I say they're lucky to have me that's because I – I choose to give my time to this [institution] – now a lot, a lot of employees probably wouldn't say that

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security Flexibility Variety Challenge	I have worked 9 to 5 – um – I think – as a, as a way of working – it provides a great deal of variety – if you're a – of a persuasion that likes – variety and enjoys – a different – the opportunity to do things differently, I think it's a great way of life – but there is sacrifices to make for that - um – yeah so – you know the, the freedom and the, and the – variety it can give – certainly you know one of the, one of the aspects that attracts me to it – I'm not great at thinking I've got to go to [institution] and teach every day for the rest of my life, it fills me with dread (laughs) but if you're, if you are someone that likes the comfort and the security and – then – it wouldn't suit – exactly – that's why you know your question to me about [my wife], what does she think – you know she knows what I like – she knows that – you know I like the variety and the – and the challenge and the and that kind of thing – she doesn't like me bored
	Security Flexibility	if you, if security is having a job and having your money paid into your bank at the same time every month, if your priority is – is – budgetary finance – managing your household budget to a monthly – then – yeah – but if you consider security about having eggs in more than one basket – so that if one did dry up you then – in terms of that kind of security then obviously – portfolio working, you know, cos I could have quite easily expanded in any area of that portfolio, had one gone dry um so yeah there's two different yeah that probably hasn't helped (laughs)
	Challenge Security	um – I think everyone – I think everyone's different – and I know, you know – maybe they don't see, see what I see as a challenge as a, as a big fear – um that yeah, you know, we might not have any money next month – so that, that might be off putting that might be why other people don't do it, you know, they, they like the security of – of one job – um – I think once you've had a taste of this it's very difficult to go back

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance	but – loyalty to the, I work in a really nice team at the [institution] – loyalty to that team – has kept me – there. I know the, how unsettled it would be if one of the teachers left and how it would affect me – so – I've kept going – to a point where I now – have to think of my own self – and the potential that I have for my family ahead of – upsetting them
	Balance	- - yeah I s'pose – a, a disadvantage is – it is not, maybe not just the holidays it's weekends as well – um – it's – you're never away from it - but - - - I don't, I don't see, that is a downside to it but – not big enough to outweigh the benefits of it (laughs)
	Balance	it's all-encompassing – just to the - you have to be prepared for it to take over your life, and at times you don't want that, you want a 9 to 5 job when you're in the thick of it sometimes when you are portfolio working at times you do crave a 9 to 5 job
	Challenge Variety	*What would you miss?* - - the challenge - - - *is that all?* yeah the, the variety - I've said that before um – it, the challenge – I'd miss the uncertainty - - I think it keeps you on your toes

Source	Key themes	Extract
Raymond	Control Flexibility	um - - - independence – is a pretty straightforward one - - -, it's a thrill to turn down work – I don't think people who aren't freelancers don't necessarily understand that so much. I turn down so much work I didn't like – um – which is actually a really a nice way to see – what you're good at what will, what you, what will make you happy in life – um – and it's not just a no I don't fancy it, but actually if you have a gut reaction to it, it can really reinforce the good things that are going on in your career – um - - keeping your own work schedule isn't really that big a deal for me because I work so often – um - - in some ways it's kind of a hindrance cos you get so many friends who kind of go oh well you're just sat at home playing Xbox all day – well that's not true – yes I can, if I feel like taking a break I can – um – so that's helpful – essentially I think maybe this ties back into this flexi thing where I know how to get the best out of myself – and – certain managers in any other walks of life wouldn't know how to do that because they feel they have to be controlling and get things done in a certain way, and I thrive when I'm let to do things on my own – and that may, that may well be why I like being a freelancer – um – I know when to take a break and I know when I need to switch a task because my, I'm getting mentally tired, and I know that if I do – a fraction of a task – and then come back to it later it will get done, I don't need to do things in a certain way
	Balance	I work more than five days a week (laughing)… um – that is a huge thing with freelancing – you don't stop, you've got an afternoon off then you generally don't give yourself an afternoon off – you have to find people to force you to (laughs)

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance	um – anxiety – it's work anxiety – because you're in a position where – you don't have a boss that pushes you to work – nor do you have a boss that tells you – well done or – you can ease off today or whatever you know – um – so you've got your self hard-wired into a sense of, I can always do more – and especially in the age that we're in now where – so much is based on emails, and your emails are constantly available by phone you – you could be, 11 o'clock at night you get an email and you think well I could reply to this now in 2 minutes or I could leave it till work hours – on a Monday – just send the email cos you'll just be thinking about it then and then that's the slippery slope into – never really stopping work
Rick	Control	they, I mean one of the – one of my main um um collaborators at the [institution] is just going through a nervous breakdown for instance (laughs) er and that, I think that's caused by the stresses and strains of university life at the moment um I don't let it get to me because – again I'm, I'm generally in control of the situation – I, I am detached and – I am older and uglier and, and so I would never – get to a stage when, and I'm not that type (laughs) but um – one of the advantages is that you don't have a boss. I mean, at the university I know I haven't got a boss because no one will ever – um tell me what I, what I can't do, they're encouraging me to do what I want basically – so none of these I've got a boss and that's, that's the key – so I am – I'm very much in charge of my time – which I think is a gift and I think what makes most people unhappy – when they're not in charge of their own time – and er and my own finances - - so – I mean that's the big, big difference

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control

Power | well I can choose – er the – the work I want to do – and everything I do I enjoy – so if I found that I didn't enjoy something – then I, I'm in a position where I could – release it so I mean that's – that's a pretty - big thing as well |
| | Variety

Control

Power | I'd miss the variety and – my self-definition really – and also being able to – do what I want, when I want it |
| | Balance | you know, I have to work in the evenings as well for um – for, you know, the overseas stuff as well. A lot of the overseas stuff I do, I can do on the internet which is, is useful – but I would say – well I certainly work say from – 8.30 till 5.30 every day – and I probably work – 2 or 3 hours at the weekend I should think, perhaps 4 hours at the weekend and some evenings... a couple, a couple of evenings worth a week I should think... I go to Hong Kong every eight weeks – and when I go to Hong Kong – I'm there for – say two weeks – and I probably go to – er Tanzania – three times a year – I go to Indonesia – perhaps three times a year – Malaysia a couple of times a year |
| | Balance | and I actually know the hours and um the, the [institution] apart from my sort of every eight weeks going to – overseas I just do a day a week down in [town] just one day a week... I think I'm a 2/5ths so –

but of course I um, I do a lot more – than that |

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance	but I think you still feel guilty all the time, I mean I, that's my one, the one thing, sometimes I feel guilty – because I have three children – two grandchildren, an ex-wife that I'm very, still very fond of – er and I know that they – they would want more of my time but obviously my main – my main – point of my, my current partner who – who's very supportive and so I, I try and, to spend as much time as I can – my spare time with that but there's, there's no doubt about it that that is the one – I don't know if we've mentioned it up to now but one disadvantage is you do feel guilty when you can't give more of your time to these people
	Security	I'm, I'm secure. I know my contracts – actually for the [institution] – and the [organisation] – say that – age is not a limit so, if I wanted to, I could go on forever
	Variety	so – er it's yeah the variety is – just couldn't compare
Ron	Security Flexibility	I think if, by 2017, the [organisation] doesn't renew, renew the funding and they say look we, we haven't got a job for you, um I know that I've still got income sources from other areas, um, which is, which is, nice for me but at the same time I still think – um - - - af, after that 2017 period, 2017 period, I personally think, don't think now that they will keep my funding going so that's why I'm, that's why I asked about part-time so I could start building up areas of this

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance	*so how many hours a week are you working then roughly?* I haven't looked, I've never worked it out, I never wanted to work it out um – phew *and where does all this lot fit in?* (pointing at sketch) that, that fits in around it as well - so these certain voluntary kind of hours um - I try and slot in – around it. Um I've never actually really worked out the hours I, I think I'd be frightened by what I actually do in a week, I think um - - so yeah and, and a lot of the time actually - - what I've tried to do is with my paid jobs is make them self-sufficient
	Variety	variety um - - er - - I guess it yes – you have a, you have stability in terms of um your own job and you work 9 till 5 but – I'm always someone that wants to better myself, come up with new ideas, um some people, they want to have their evenings free where they can chill and stuff like that, you know, I, I guess it's down to different er --- different – people and stages in their lives, I my, in terms of me at the moment I've got, I have a mortgage but I don't have kids; I have a girlfriend I have a partner but um – some, some other people if they've got kids in the evening and it, to be fair, it might change er, with me if, as soon as I have kids and – and stuff like that I, I might want to cut down on – other things but - I think I'll always stay with that um with that kind of doing lots of different pieces of work – um - but yeah I guess, I guess the big difference is – you, you're not gonna to be in the um - same, you're not doing the same thing each day in terms of 9 till 5 in that office teaching or, or whatever, I have a better variety of, of doing things

Source	Key themes	Extract
Ronan	Flexibility	my customers have to, have to be flexible um – and as I say you know, when they come to me for lessons or whatever – but it's great for them because then it means that they can do the same with me – so quite often, you know, if they need to change a lesson I'll, I'll be able to find a gap so if you look at my diary – there's gaps it's like with sort of fitting you in today I could plan a gap for you but I may have had to phone you and say I'm sorry I can't do that now that's frustrating isn't it – to, you know, to the, to make it work so yeah fluid dynamics would be jokingly the my, my, my approach not quite technically correct… it's essential I can't, can't function with anybody that can't
Sam	Security	I mean like in the case of the [institution] thing I mean I'm aware of the fact that um that it is a contract that's not necessarily going to be renewed even though I've had kind of optimistic signals um so yeah I mean I'm conscious of it, but I certainly wouldn't say that I'm nervous or worried or anything like this partly because um I'm kind of pleasantly surprised at how much teaching is out there actually um yeah the need for these sorts of jobs has, has exploded seemingly in the last few years ah especially in higher education so yeah I mean like (laughter) on the one hand yes I'm conscious of it and on the other um I, I feel like something would come along to replace one of these um sooner or later you know
	Security	if one of these jobs vanishes um then the other one, in theory, will carry on I, it doesn't seem likely to me that they both vanish at the same time um and of course, the, the [institution] job is essentially guaranteed for two years um and then it's subject to renewal but um – so that's yeah that, that would be a big thing um – I mean I feel like for one thing it's, it's sort of um a little more stable having a foot in er in more than one institution um rather than yeah being completely invested in one or the other

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility	Yeah um I mean well one thing was um originally um it looked like there was going to be a clash between these two jobs and um fortunately I got a slight rearrangement at [institution] and a slight rearrangement of the timetable at [other institution] so they could, they could both be fitted in but otherwise they would have clashed and overlapped yeah and I was relieved about that actually because initially I thought it might be a real problem but yeah that was very good
	Variety	but um I like it a lot so far and partly because there's some variety – I mean um you know I'm not kind of in an office, 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, um I do you know some office work and then I also go and do some teaching um and then I also attend lectures, which, it's part of my contract that I attend the lectures and I'm paid for that which is good so I you know, they're stimulating um and then the rest of the time I'm doing research which is something completely different again so I suppose you could say my week's divided between three or four very different sorts of activity and um and I really, I really like that, I really thrive on that actually um it's, there's no monotony to that, to me, so far (laughs)
Sandy	Security Control	oh I love it much more. Financially it's a bit more um - uncertain - - *but you prefer it?* yeah much – oh goodness yeah - um – my wife always said that I found it really difficult to work for someone and now I don't – I know what she means

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control	no – no I didn't, I didn't, looking back, I didn't really like having that, having a standard job - yeah um - - well I suppose it was I always felt – sort of constrained you know cos however near the top of the greasy pole you get, - um – there are still huge constraints – relative to what I do now
	Security Control	I am sensitive now to the fact that some people get great value and comfort – from knowing the future and I, I don't – I can see that, it just doesn't work for me but I, I do – you know there's, there's a tendency to sort of say aah it's routine but some people some, some people we – like to know they like to have a plan and a forecast, and a, and a, you know, that's how businesses work and some people like that, shareholders like that, I know that, but it doesn't work for me
	Balance	well I think it's right, my wife and children – think that I'm – ridiculously overworked – I just don't see it like that - - - I am kind of around it's just that I do – think and – give a lot of time to - - these things really

Source	Key themes	Extract
Sebastian	Control	Yeah I mean I just finished er, I did a um eight months which was pretty much full time – at [organisation], and I absolutely hated it – from – from the third week on – *what did you hate about it?* er the constraint, not being able to get on and do stuff – yeah, yeah not being actually not being in charge – terrible thing to say isn't it? although funnily enough I'm not in charge at [organisation] and I'm not in charge at [institution] but I – can make things happen – without – um - er it's, what is it? it's about – um - - - that sounds such a, a, a definite doesn't it, control, or being in charge. I think – actually I think it's more about – um - - - being able to – have a conversation with somebody about the best way to proceed on something – and – er poli, the policy can change or – um – it makes it sound like I always want my own way, I don't, it's, it's not that – um but I do have – a – er – a, a confidence and – to, to trust the experiences that I've had in my work-life to be able to say look actually – you're paying me – because you want this experience – and if I'm kind of giving it to you, then I really think you should – listen a bit – can't think, that sounds terrible doesn't it?

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Balance	I mean that's kind of – I suppose it's always been a little bit of a vehicle to this well obviously, you know, the, I kind of live by the sword and die by the sword – um sometimes taking full-time jobs, if it's appropriate, sometimes not but that's always been kind of ticking along in, in the background – *so when you have a full-time job – you're just overworked are you or?* I'm – not so much with [company] um because it doesn't, OK it doesn't feel like it's over work cos I really enjoy it – um – but it's yeah it can be, it can be tricky that's kind of the weekends and evenings
	Balance Flexibility	I love that side of it and that, that's my, [organisation] is my kind of perfect business. I mean whether we get it to work or not I don't know – but – um notionally, I'm, I'm getting paid for two days a week for [organisation] – but I put in – every hour I need to – outside of my other bits of – work
	Balance	yeah well – um networking events – you know, evenings, I, I don't, I don't often work on Saturday and Sunday I, I'm very strict about that cos of family – um but I do work a lot Monday to Friday – and I try very hard not to work at weekends
	Balance	it hadn't the, the fact that the, the work-life balance bit hadn't really occurred to me other than the fact that I'm quite rigid about the Monday to Friday bit – um I'm quite surprised at myself about that actually – cos I don't, I don't often – I mean it's only very rarely I'll say to [wife] oh come on let's go and do x today – not because I don't like doing stuff with her but actually it's just the balance of my life, that's how it works

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security Balance	so we moved – from [town] to [village] – and – there were certain elements of my – sort of work-life I had to kind of start again so it was all back to – um – doing that thing that I think most portfolio workers have to do to which is network your, your backside off – and – I – started doing little bits for the [institution] – then but really, really small pieces quite insignificant - stuff – um – but I, then I also – got asked for three days a week – to run a business support agency based up in [town] – which was called the [company] – and – so that was fantastic, so that was a, that was kind of my, my base income – was covered really by doing the work with the [company] um but it also gave me two days a week to carry on – doing consultancy work – for other companies.
	Variety Control Security	personally – I love it – um because it keeps me stimulated and interested, and if I don't like something I can walk away from it – um, you know, I think I've definitely reached an age where I don't want to spend eight hours a day doing something I don't enjoy – um whereas actually when I was younger I wasn't that tolerant, I was very lucky because I was always in great jobs that I really, really enjoyed and the ones I haven't, I have walked away from um – so – from that point of view it's great, I think from actually – you know, always having to keep your eye on the next job – I find that a bit draining – I don't, don't particularly enjoy all that part of it – you know, knowing that actually in three months' time – you know, will this one still be going
	Challenge Security	I suppose it's mixed, it's a double-edged sword isn't it? cos I like the, I like the challenge of doing something new and learning about something new which I think is actually the thing that drives me – I like learning stuff and – um – but there's always that kind of financial security element – to it – which does overshadow stuff, I think

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security	I've got a pot of accessible funds – which every now and again you kind of have to dip into – um – but I don't like dipping into it, I like to earn it… but I have to dip into savings when you know we're going through sort of bleak times, if you like or lean times workwise

it doesn't bother you from the point of view of not having a job to go to?

er no cos I just get out on my bike – or, or do one of the other jobs harder and more of it |
| | Challenge | for me it is all about mental stimulation – you know the idea of – drudging through my day – fills me with horror – the er education, learning something new – every business you go to there's, there's something different to learn – I like meeting new people – er I love – um you know the – I love, I hate, I don't like the expression disruptive technology – cos it sounds like something that management consultants say all the time, but I, the symptoms of it I really do like, you know, when we, you do something that's different – and – not, you know, not different as in wow look at me but there's, there's a new way of doing something – I love that |
| Stanley | Control | you know there's an element that you have to work, and you have certain bills so you have to do a certain amount of work (laughs) whether you like it or not

– um – at the same time though, you know, if someone wants me to do something else, I have a choice whether I do that or not so – relatively speaking I have control |

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control	it's – kind of it's nice being your own boss – and even though I'm employed at [organisation] – in a way, the way I go in and out, I'm kind of left to get on with it generally – so there's no one looking over your shoulder or going ooh why aren't you doing – the cleaning or why aren't you doing – so, you know, there's no one tells me what I have to do for classes, I just have to turn up at a particular time and – well, not literally do what I want but within (laughs) so yeah – having the space - of not working 37 ½ hours a week or whatever – people do or - *so what do you, what do you do in your space?* - it varies, you know, this year, not so much because I was struggling a bit with my health, a bit more than I have in previous years so some of it was resting – so just chilling that's the word, listening to music, whatever
	Variety Balance	*what would you miss most about no longer doing your collection of jobs?* mmm – partly the variety – and partly, I suppose, - you know, the time to myself
	Variety	it's OK, it's varied – which I quite like – you know, so though I do quite a lot of Pilates, for example, - you know, over a course of the week – including, you know, I do however many classes, nine classes in – er – three different locations – and then I do a couple of one-to-ones – so – you know, it stops me getting bored (laughs) and it's different people (laughs)

Source	Key themes	Extract
Tristan	Control	er – it's incredibly – enriching - - it's incredibly good for self-development because you're, you're, you're – constantly - - me, you know, I, on, on a week to week basis, you, you, you – you're set different problems every week because you're out there in different places so it's really enriching, really er stimulating way of working – and in a sense you, you, put your, you, you feel, I suppose you feel less – as if you're – less tenuous because you've got options – you know, your horizons, for where you could look to change things is broader than if you were in one job – I think you do feel more in control so it satisfies that element of you so in other words you, you're, you're more of a, a team of one and it's, you know, you've, your fall, your fallback position is where you make that decision so it's down to you – but fate plays such a huge role – isn't it? It's, it's, it, this, this offers you – um cos it, it's not so much luck, it offers you – many more er sort of opportunities and then if you're intelligent about them you have some say in the direction you go off – you know - I, I personally think mm – I don't know er - - I think I'm leading like a really rich life and it's incredibly – rewarding and, and mm – developing me as a person
	Balance	to – er studio, keep the studio going and I will keep my own practice going - and also sort of thinking time – you know, a life (laughs) I wanted a more balanced life
	Security	cos I think if you – if you were looking um for security possibly in old age (laughs) and you were infirm, had you – you know, like suppose if I'd, if I'd have been a different person and joined the police force I'd be retiring at 55 on a really nice pension so that is the only advantage is this um if you get to the right job and stay there – your – um – latter years may feel more secure financially – but whether mentally they'd be more secure, I doubt it

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility	it means you're more, you're more flexible – doesn't it? it means your career you, you've widened your, as I say, you've widened the horizon career wise so you can be much more flexible I wou, personally I think it – it suits me, but I think, you know, more people should try it (laughs)
Verity	Security	um I do feel quite secure in both of them actually even though this one is self-employed because I know that there is a market for this, and there always will be, so it may mean I'm working more or less hours if I choose to stay doing it – but there will be work there for me um, in terms of teaching I feel very secure in that, and I know that if I wanted to work more hours, or go full time or whatever I could do that, it might not be in the school that I'd like, you know, not the school I'm teaching at, at the moment, but I could get a job doing that elsewhere
	Balance	yes, it definitely wasn't to make lots of money although it was a way of earning that fitted in very very well with family at that time because it was evenings and weekends – so with very little children that weren't really doing a lot at evenings and weekends it was perfect.
	Variety	it's nice to have two different groups to teach as well – adults – and – teenagers are quite different – ball games. They're different skills you need, and it's quite nice to be able to use all of those

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility	it's a very different job so it is, I am self-employed as an antenatal teacher so I can choose – I'm, I have a lot more flexibility, they're not my employer – I contract myself to them… I feel I can say no if um – courses are offered. So courses are booked by some, by a, another person, I don't book my own courses – so if they'll say – we really need a teacher for next weekend I don't feel obliged to do that – if I wanted the money I could do it, but I don't feel like I have to do it
	Flexibility	um – and quite flexible I suppose especially with the home side of things, things can change at a moment's notice um, and I guess that is a disadvantage of working such a few hours at work is that if children are ill – and they are ill the same day you've missed quite a big chunk of your work so I did have one period in January I think it was this year, where I had three Fridays off because each of the girls was ill and then I was (laughter) and that was half of my working time that I couldn't go in so that was a, that was not great but it only did just happen one time in that academic year so *and how did you feel about that?* awful particularly when the girls were ill cos I was fit enough to work and I felt dreadful about it. The school were very nice, my line manager was very nice, but I did feel dreadful
Lived Experience Diary	Control	19/5/17 As for the [professional organisation], I guess I just need to work out my hourly rate and how much of it I can afford to do. Sometimes portfolio work is just not very enjoyable and I hanker for a full-time job, but then again I wouldn't be able to just pop out for a run whenever I wanted to which is worth an enormous amount to me.

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control Balance	5/10/16 This morning I worked in my dressing gown for an hour as exam marking is quite tedious and splitting it up into chunks of five scripts at a time works. I love having that control over my day, so I marked from 8 to 9, then had a shower, then did some emails. Now I'm going to mark another five scripts then go and do a supermarket shop then come back and do another five before, hopefully, doing the spreadsheet of results and starting on the examiner's report. If I had a 'proper' job I would have had to have got washed and dressed, commuted to wherever it might be and worked solidly which does not suit my way of working that I'm now used to. I like the balance, however, of having a bit of routine, or something different to do like the trip to London yesterday. It would be difficult if I had a whole week with no structure but that hasn't happened. Tomorrow I have to visit the flat with an electrician to get the extractor fixed. I had two webinars this week and another two next week so am managing to apply a structure even without going in to work.

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control	11/10/17 Was reading an article in the Telegraph magazine (7/10/17) this morning with a profile of Carine Roitfeld, former editor of Vogue Paris now global fashion editor of Harper's Bazaar and CR Fashion Book published biannually. The section of the article that really spoke to me was: 'If the bosses of publishing houses Hearst or Conde Nast called her tomorrow to offer her a top job, would she take it? 'No,' she says, flatly. Why? 'Freedom. There are so many new opportunities when you are free. I want to always do something new and fresh and exciting.'… 'I try to push new doors because I don't want to be bored or tired.' This is exactly how I feel. I want to retain the relative freedom of being able to go for a run when I want to, have a bath in the middle of the day when I'm cold, take most of a day off tomorrow to spend with my younger daughter on a non-pupil day and take my Mum to a hospital appointment. If I worked full time in a traditional role I would feel that the organisation 'owned me' and I would have to ask for permission, or tell someone, or take a day off for tomorrow, whereas it is all within my control and I will catch up by working early in the morning and late at night. The perception of freedom far outweighs the downsides of limited pension provision, sick pay, etc., etc. in my view.

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Control	12/1/18 Great portfolio working day today. Managed to do a bit of every job in a structured way and sort out the builders and fit in a swim as well. Trying to analyse what made it great, and I think it was a combination of the control I have over my day and the variety. Nobody could make me do any of those things today. In fact, I could have taken a day off with no adverse impact, but I was much happier achieving things and crossing jobs off my list. I have been reading Rubin's The Happiness Project, and she points out (2015: 166) that 'One important way that people evaluate their circumstances is to compare themselves with the people around them and with their own experiences.' I think this is why I had such a good day as I'm not stuck commuting on a train, or in a temporary office somewhere teaching students who have no desire to be taught, or sitting in a meeting wasting time, or stuck on a motorway. I feel very very lucky sometimes.
	Balance	21/3/16 Fabulous portfolio day today. I've stopped teaching now so suddenly have four days to plan and organise whatever I want to do, so decided to start the day with a swim. Whilst swimming (in a nice fairly empty pool) I planned my day and week. Started on one [institution] course when I got back, then did some PhD transcription, now for some finances then start on my [another institution] marking. A good combination of different jobs and some exercise. So why is it such a good day? Just having the time to think and plan rather than firefighting I think. How can I achieve this balance always? By taking less? Trouble is, [institution] is very poorly paid for what I do, but it gives me the social interaction I lack in other roles. Not sure whether there is a solution. Maybe some permanency in one role to allow me to reduce the time in others?

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility	9/10/15 Following a research interview this morning, I found it difficult to settle down to marking research proposals so went for a swim. It was lovely to actually benefit from portfolio working in this way – really lifted my mood – I know I can work tomorrow afternoon as all the family are out so have that much vaunted flexibility and it felt really good to use it. Must do it more often.
	Flexibility Control	26/2/16 Another recent problem I experienced with portfolio working is that [institution] wrote to me offering me a contract on a [subject] module either as a tutor or a marker. At least that is the way I read it when rushing. I said I couldn't do the compulsory 10 webinars as they couldn't tell me what the dates were and I wouldn't miss teaching for them. They accepted that and offered me the contract as a module leader. When I later went back through my emails I realised the email related to two subjects [module code] and [module code]; I didn't realise they were two separate subjects so now have even more work than I wanted. So much for control and flexibility.
	Flexibility Variety	29/4/16 Am now buried in marking – two lots for [institution], one lot for [professional organisation]. Each individual job is really rather boring so why do I do it? I guess it all comes down to the flexibility of choosing which boring job to do. Also, today I attended a 2 hour PhD writing course and it was really nice to get out of my home office, come to work, get properly dressed and spend a couple of hours marking before the course – as no distractions, washing, dishwasher, tidying etc. Got six [professional organisation] scripts done and the course has made me think about resurrecting the writing I did so long ago. It will also provide me with another opportunity to present my work. I think it is the variety I crave – even though each individual job is boring, if it can be broken up with other things then it's OK.

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Flexibility	15/9/16 Great portfolio day yesterday. Completed the exam paper – I had been waiting for [name] for ages – he made me late for my deadline but he is the CEO so tricky to nag. As I'm working less hours I can now appreciate the flexibility of my kind of work although I do find it difficult not having a structure, in fact I was half an hour late for a webinar yesterday because I completely forgot! Today I have another webinar which I'll have to leave early to pick up Millie – had a meeting before it, and in the spare 5 mins between I was able to hang out the washing! A real benefit to working at home.
	Challenge	11/10/16 Have settled nicely into my hour on each job routine at the moment, although I am overwhelmed with messages from the VLE on my [institution] job. I can't bear to work out how little I am earning for that. I will mention it as I think they need to know how badly they are paying for the forum monitoring. However, a job came through working for the [professional organisation] which is right up my street and another string to my bow so I have applied for it to add to all my other stuff. It's not as if I need any more work, but I enjoy the 'thrill of the chase'. It gives me a great feeling of self-worth, that I no longer get from promotion or pay, and I like the challenge of doing something new and doing it well.
	Security	15/9/15 [Name] emailed to see if I would be interested in extending my contract to 0.5 hours following [individual's] email to him. I didn't want to email my reasons for not doing so but bumped into him on the way to my meeting. Although flattered to be asked to do more work, there seems to be no understanding that if I take on more, I will have to give up other work and [institution] are only giving me 10 month contracts as standard with no security at all. They also offer no fee concession I can benefit from. He seemed to understand.

Source	Key themes	Extract
	Security	7/1/16 Just before I went away, [individual] emailed saying she understood I was withdrawing from my contract for the [subject] module. I went straight back saying that this was not what I had understood from [line manager], and he confirmed this. She then wrote to say she had commissioned someone else as had thought I wasn't doing it. This was really annoying as I had wasted time preparing two presentations. However, this spurred me on to email [individual] in response to one of his on [company], offering to take a longer contract to give me some security and to reduce my tendency to take on too much work in case some of it suddenly comes to an end. This is a really positive aspect of portfolio working, when one door closes, you can simply open another one.

Appendix XI: Definitions of Portfolio Work and Supporting Empirical Evidence

Author	Reference	Definition	Discussion	Empirical evidence
Handy	1995b: 175	First described the concept as 'a collection of different bits and pieces of work for different clients'.	The inclusion of the word 'clients' suggests self-employment.	Many participants worked for different employers on a part-time basis rather than clients.
Grigg	1997: 48	'where we have an income from a number of sources, perhaps a number of jobs, or a job and a business, or any combination of activities'.	Includes the word 'income' whereas some jobs may be unpaid.	Several participants included voluntary work, or study, within their portfolios.
Cohen & Mallon Cohen, Duberley & Mallon	1999: 329 2004: 408	'Portfolio work is understood as packages of work arrangements for the plying and selling of an individual's skills in a variety of contexts.'	Highlights different work arrangements but use of the word plying and selling implies paid work.	

Author	Reference	Definition	Discussion	Empirical evidence
Gold & Fraser	2002: 581	'portfolio working, that is, self-employment and the charging of fees for services or outputs.'	This definition suggests that portfolio working exclusively involves self-employment and involves paid work only.	Many participants included self-employment within their portfolio but some were employed only on multiple part-time contracts.
Platman	2004: 574	'portfolio workers, also known as freelancers'	Freelancers were provisionally defined by Kitching & Smallbone (2008: 5) as 'a skilled professional who is neither an employer nor an employee, supplying labour on a temporary basis, under a commercial contract for services for a fee to a range of business clients'. This does not cover those portfolio workers that include part-time employment within their portfolios.' This definition was expanded on in their later work (2012) but still limits it to self-employed only.	Many portfolio workers in the sample were not self-employed at all and many were not freelancers but traditionally employed albeit on a part-time basis.

Author	Reference	Definition	Discussion	Empirical evidence
Duberley, Mallon & Cohen	2006: 282	'selling a variety of one's skills and abilities to a number of employers on a range of employment and contractual arrangements.'	Still focuses on paid work with the word 'selling' but includes the fact that this can be on a range of employment and contractual arrangements.	Participants worked on a wide range of employment bases including short-term contracts, standard employment contracts, freelance, contractual, self-employed, and informal.
Clinton et al	2006: 183	'A self-employed individual or freelance worker who is employed by a number of different organizations or clients on short-term contracts either in series or in parallel.'	This definition was agreed with participants but it only mentions self-employed and freelance workers excluding those that are fractionally employed.	Many participants worked for different employers on standard part-time employment contracts.

Author	Reference	Definition	Discussion	Empirical evidence
Fenwick	2006: 66	'A "portfolio career" is increasingly coming to be recognized as a non-traditional form of work emerging in changing economic conditions that analysts characterize as organizational restructuring, flexible employment, and emphases on entrepreneurism and knowledge services'.	This definition focuses on the factors leading to portfolio careers and their requirements rather than the type of individual undertaking the work.	Several participants did not display the entrepreneurism or knowledge services suggested but had compiled a combination to suit their required working hours and interests.
Trunk	2006	'A portfolio career is not the same thing as holding down three bad jobs and wishing you could figure out what to do with yourself. Rather, it is a scheme you pursue purposefully and positively, as a way to achieve financial or personal goals or a mixture of both.'	Here the strategic nature of the portfolio has been included for the first time as has an appreciation of both financial and personal goals.	The majority of participants had a theme for the work combinations they were pursuing although few were purely financial.

Author	Reference	Definition	Discussion	Empirical evidence
Inkson	2007: 9	'the individual, rather than pursuing a single, full-time job, balances a portfolio of different and changing opportunities'	Introduces the idea of balancing changing opportunities.	Several participants highlighted the 'excitement' and the 'potential' of opportunities that arise because of working in this way and one also highlighted the aspiration to 'pick and choose' opportunities.
Hopson	2009: 5	'The simple definition of a portfolio worker is someone who has two or more jobs with different employers.'	Assumes all workers have employers whereas many portfolio workers include self-employment within their portfolio.	Many participants were self-employed in addition to working for employers.

Author	Reference	Definition	Discussion	Empirical evidence
Lipińska-Grobelny	2014	Although initially defined as 'an individual who is in the possession of high professional qualifications, and whose needs cannot be satisfied by the reality of the market economy.' She then goes on to state that 'In this research portfolio working was reduced to being involved in many kinds of paid employment simultaneously (multiwork), and an employee who works for more than one employer is referred to as a portfolio worker (a multiworker)'	Moves away from Handy's definition of including 'free' work and also ignores the issue of balance. Assumes more than 'employer' therefore omitting self-employment? As the research took place in Poland there may be more of an economic necessity for 'multiwork' than in the UK.	Reflects the situation of many participants having multiple employers. The inability to satisfy needs might include the inability to allow the time for necessary free work.
Ibarra	2015	'a combination of self-directed activities: some for pay, some for good causes; some to exploit one's competencies; some to learn new ones'	Embraces the self-directed nature of the portfolio and the various drivers for undertaking them.	Participants provided evidence of all these reasons for portfolio working.

Author	Reference	Definition	Discussion	Empirical evidence
Wood & Michaelides	2016: 113	'self-employed individuals who do assignments, either in series or in parallel, for a number of different organizations or clients, on a (typically short term) commercial rather than employment contract basis.'	A sample 'of what are variously called portfolio workers, freelance workers or independent contractors' (ibid) was used. This is an interesting conflation as it does not accord with most of the definitions previously outlined. There is, arguably, a difference between freelance workers and independent contractors who might only work on one assignment or project at a time and portfolio workers who, as suggested in most of the definitions outlined above, tend to work on several jobs simultaneously. Wood and Michaelides' (2016: 119) interpretation of the definition of portfolio workers is that, when selecting portfolio working	Several participants were not self-employed, or were part-time self-employed only. Some participants were on standard employment contracts albeit part time. Many participants were not working on specific assignments but on a continuous basis. Some participants also had employees.

Author	Reference	Definition	Discussion	Empirical evidence
			participants for their study, they stated that they 'had to be self-employed, have multiple clients and not have employees.'	
Mandl & Biletta	2018: 14	'small-scale contracting by freelancers, self-employed or micro enterprises, conducting work for a large number of clients.'	This definition excludes any workers that might be employed part-time. The report then goes on to suggest that portfolio work is dominated 'by male, middle-to-older aged workers' and that 'phases of very high work intensity might follow phases of no work at all.'	Several participants were employed part-time and a few had employees. There were also a large number of female workers choosing to portfolio work in order to balance caring responsibilities. There were also no examples, other than the *Involuntaries* in the short-term that experienced phases of no work at all due to the ability to maintain at least one stream of work at all times.