Self And Place: A Critique Of The ‘Boundaryless Career

Stream 1: Identity: Constructed, Consumed and Politicised

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Abstract

Following Grey (1994), this paper argues that ‘career’ is part of the project of managing the self; but if organisational boundaries are becoming more permeable in terms of career – the notion of the ‘boundaryless career’ – what are the implications for employees sense of self? Drawing on evidence from a group of middle managers who had experienced a wide variety in terms of geographical and job mobility, the paper indicates that career is not up to the task of providing a source of meaning and that the boundaries provided by a sense of place are assuming an increasing significance.

Key words: boundaries, careers, identity, place, work-life balance.
Introduction

There is a compelling narrative about contemporary capitalism that runs along the following lines. Globalised competitive environments require increased organisational flexibility (Voderba 1998). In terms of the labour contract, such flexibility takes a functional and flexible form as firms strive to achieve a just-in-time capability in their workforce. Benefits of such flexibility to organisations may be transparent but costs may be incurred by employees in terms of uncertainty and instability in the labour contract (Atkinson 1985). Moreover if labour is required to move from employer to employer, then this implies a concomitant increase in geographical mobility.

Much of this narrative is open to question. The nature and extent of ‘globalization’ – particularly of labour – are seriously questioned and recent developments in Europe indicate how the political desire of some to restrict migration is alive and well. Moreover such a narrative, with its claim to be describing a novel development, excludes a sense of history. Early capitalism depended on itinerant labour for a wide range of skills as artisans moved from place-to-place in search of work. Indeed in some trades, notably construction and branches of entertainment (Haunschild 2001), this has continued throughout capitalist development. More recently, one strand of the critique has argued that such developments for labour should be seen in a much more positive light - the rhetoric of the ‘Boundaryless Career’ (Arthur and Rousseau 1996) and its bedfellows the ‘Protean Career’ (Hall 1996) and the ‘spiral career’ (Brousseau et al 1996) - are examples of this. Much of this critique is content to enumerate the costs and benefits, particularly to the growing numbers of professional ‘knowledge workers’. Such knowledge workers are seen to be particular beneficiaries in terms of higher pay, more varied work and the chance to develop a network of contacts (Capelli 1999). These benefits are considered to outweigh the uncertainty and costs of uprooting spouse and family.

In this paper I intend to examine the concept of the boundaryless career but to do so from a very different theoretical position. Thus while the Protean Career takes ‘self-fulfilment’ as the unifying theme for the succession of jobs involved in a career, I wish to locate the notion of the boundaryless career within the contemporary debate about identity (Bauman 2001a; Beck and Beck-Gernshen 2001; Sennett 1998; Lash and Urry 1994; Giddens 1990, 1991). My interest here is the extent to which a sense of ‘place’ is important to the constitution of a sense of self. So I shall concentrate on the geographical implications of the boundaryless career, as agents pursuing such a career are required to relocate in search of work. However the term ‘boundaryless career’ will itself be subject to scrutiny.

The paper is organised as follows. The next section examines the concept of the boundaryless career. Section 3 then takes the aspect of geographical mobility and evaluates the various positions as to the significance of a sense of place in ‘identity work’. Section four explains the methods used to generate the empirical evidence. Section five describes some of the narratives employed by respondents to describe their careers and the part played in these narratives by a sense of place. The final section comprises a concluding discussion.
Unpacking the Boundaryless Career

DeFillipi and Arthur give a succinct definition of the boundaryless career as a: “sequence of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings” (1994: 307). Arthur and Rousseau (1996), in developing the concept, propose that the principal features of such careers are: job mobility across multiple employers, personal responsibility for directing one’s own career development, and the development of social networks to shape and sustain that career. The key competencies become ‘knowing what’, ‘knowing where’, ‘knowing whom’ and ‘knowing how’. (Jones and DeFillippi 1996). As noted above, such a concept dovetails with a variant of the globalisation thesis. The boundaryless career has been important in leading to a revision of some of the conventional thinking about careers because it stresses how such careers are unlikely to be linear, unidirectional and upwardly hierarchic in character (Lichtenstein and Mendenhall 2002). But both words in the term are open to question.

First let us consider the notion of ‘boundarylessness’. Here doubts can be raised at both an empirical and a conceptual level. The evidence for the boundaryless career has yet to emerge. As Gunz and his associates state: “the trouble with the boundaryless hypothesis is that it is still just that: a hypothesis” (2000: 48). But even if it could be demonstrated that organisational boundaries are dissolving, it does not follow that all boundaries are disappearing. There remain for example other sorts of boundaries – those furnished by professional bodies, university alumni etc. Gunz et al note that boundaries, rather than disappearing, are becoming more complex and multifaceted. In fact they claim that boundaries of some sort are inevitable – they are essential if social actors are to make sense of the world and their place in it. Sense making requires the social actor to impose frameworks on the world; what is inside the frame needs to be distinguished form what is outside. As they state in relation to Weick’s work: “Weick (1996) draws on the concept of strong and weak situations and argues that, when a situation weakens, people redraw boundaries to create a different strong situation. For those who live in a world in which organizational boundaries become permeable and no longer provide a strong definition for the self – as for example an IBMer – other ways are needed” (2000: 50). But just what might these other boundaries be?

There is an important caveat to state concerning boundaries in particular and structure in general. Social actors need to draw upon structures and the boundaries they exhibit to provide meaning to facilitate action. If one set of boundaries disappears then another set needs to be located. But it is important to guard against the danger of reifying ‘structure’. ‘Structure’ is nothing more than repeated patterns of action; it has no existence apart from these actions. Structure and its boundaries require constant enactment. To put it in a nutshell, it is the routinized nature of previous practice that gives meaning to current practice; indeed it is routine which provides the bearings which enable current practice to be accomplished. In so far as action involves interaction with others, then this meaning has to be intersubjectively understood by the actors concerned.

There is a parallel danger of treating the individual agent as some independently preformed essence. Such formulations see the ‘career owner’ as going through certain
‘life stages’, perhaps working toward ‘self-actualisation’ (Maslow 1954). It is also necessary to guard against the argument of evolutionary psychology that, in a return to organic, clan forms, careers in organisations somehow signal a return to a natural hunter-gatherer condition for which humans are hardwired (Nicholson 2000).

To conclude: the notion of ‘boundarylessness’ needs to be treated with care. Boundaries of some form are likely to remain for the purpose of constructing meaning even if they are not organisational in form. Yet any boundaries must be viewed as ephemeral, merely the consequence of routinized past practice. At the same time, social actors do not require any given set of ‘bounded structures’ to fulfil some essential career drive.

Second there is the concept of ‘career’. Whilst it may be the case that workers are crossing organisational boundaries at an ever-increasing rate, it does not follow that this amounts to a ‘career’ even of the non-linear, non-hierarchic sort described in the literature on the boundaryless career. Grey (1994) has given a powerful demonstration of the ways in which ‘career’ becomes part of the ‘contemporary project of self-management’, part of the constitution of the ‘self’, no matter what the challenges and hazards agents face in pursuing their careers. But it remains an empirical matter as to whether and to what extent ‘career’ is an organising or regulative principle, a potent source of meaning in people’s lives.

Yet, even amongst those writers who are comfortable with the term, there is one aspect of the boundaryless career literature that has received scant attention. What is the effect of increasing geographical mobility as job seekers move from place to place? It is of note that Silicon Valley is often portrayed as the paradigmatic case of the boundaryless career. The high incidence of job switching within Silicon Valley between firms and between firms and universities is seen as critical in aiding cross-fertilisation and diffusion (Saxenian 1996). However Silicon Valley is a clearly bounded locale and job movement within this locale does not require a corresponding change in place. When changing locale does become the focus in the boundaryless career literature, then the issue of job mobility is conceptualised only as a ‘cost’ - the friction involved in moving and uprooting spouse and children (Gunz et al 2000:45). In the next section I concentrate on the role of place but do so within the context of ‘identity work’.

The Significance of Place to the Constitution of a sense of self

‘Place’ can be defined as a spatially and temporally bound location suffused with meaning (Giddens 1984). Giddens interest in place stems from his development of structuration theory (Giddens 1976, 1979, 1984). If we take his three modalities of structuration – resources, interpretive schema and norms – then it is easy to trace the connection to place. Place carries a sense of meaning (interpretive schema); it is the result of the deployment of resources and the exercise of power as boundaries are often policed by gatekeepers; place is also imbued with norms (what it is right and proper to do in a given place). Moreover, in The Constitution of Society (1984), Giddens explicitly draws on the tools and techniques of time geography in constructing his theory of structuration.
Giddens argues that place has become transformed in late modernity through the process of time/space distanciation. This latter concept refers to the way in which social practices have become ‘stretched’ over larger (and smaller) spans of space and time so that both become disembodied forms of social activity. In practice this means that social interaction is increasingly removed from the confines of space and time – Internet dating would be an example of this. Hence place becomes less important to social actors.

This notion of time-space distanciation connects Giddens’s earlier work on structuration to his more recent work on identity and subjectivity (Giddens 1991,1992). In late modernity – which is how Giddens describes the contemporary era – interaction with others is often transient - individuals increasingly follow their own subjective life-calendars as they move through time and space rather than being bound to specific communities. Individuals become confronted with more ‘knowledge’; yet at the same time the relative status of that knowledge is underscored leading to reflection upon and uncertainty about its ontological status. Moreover the ontological status of the self is part of this reflection – indeed reflection becomes reflexion. Thus Giddens defines self-identity as ‘the self as reflexively understood in terms of his or her biography’ (Giddens 1991:244) and this self-identity “has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual” (Giddens 1991:37). Such reflexion is a practical, conscious mechanism whereby action is continuously self-monitored and the outcome is a coherent sense of self.

For Giddens the emphasis on routine is important. Routine is considered essential to sustaining a sense of self. Geographical mobility breaks routine; hence diminution of a sense of place may work to undermine a sense of self. Thus, while the adherents of the boundaryless career claim that it is not ‘employment security’ but ‘employability security’ that matters, maybe what is more important than either is a sense of ontological security.

Sennett is another commentator who stresses the importance of routine. His argument is that the job flexibility characteristic of contemporary capitalism is ‘corrosive of character’. (Sennett 1998). As he states: “Routine can demean but it can also protect; routine can decompose labour but also compose a life” (1998:43).

There is much agreement that contemporary existence leads to individualisation and this is a process of becoming individual rather than being individual (Beck and Beck Gershen 2001). Moreover most commentators agree that reflexivity is crucial to this process. As Bauman succinctly puts it: human identity is no longer a given; it is a task (Bauman 2001b). However there is a sharp disagreement amongst commentators about the precise relationship between place and a sense of self. While Giddens and Sennett defend routine and habit as important constituents of a sense of self, others take a different line.

For example Lash and Urry (1994) note that in some senses place has become more rather than less important. Indeed the technology that has spawned the Internet was generated in the very specific locale of Silicon Valley. Again at the same time that finance capital has become global in reach, specific locations (Wall Street, The City of London) have become more important. (Lash and Urry 1994). Thus the global and the local both become significant. However Lash and Urry’s critique of Giddens goes
much deeper than this. Whilst they agree that monitoring of the self takes place this is not just conscious but also unconscious. In the unconscious, heterogeneity is more a characteristic than the homogeneity emphasised by Giddens. Moreover social actors enjoy the way in which space and time become problematic; indeed the growth in popularity of travel is a case in point. Lash and Urry deny that the human condition is marked by a quest for ontological security, that it is the human condition to seek a consistent and unambiguous narrative of the self. Rather they celebrate the fragmentation of meaning and the opportunities for creativity opened up when relocating in space and time. More recently, Lash has been critical of the linearity assumed in the idea of a biographical narrative. (Lash 2001). Contemporary capitalism does not provide the space and time to compose a linear, reflexive biography but at best a bricolage of biographies. This does not mean the subject has disappeared; but such constant flux makes it difficult to talk of ‘subject positions’ (Lash 2001).

If for some the loosening of the grip of ‘place’ is to be celebrated, for others the continued existence of a sense of ‘place’ can be a trap. Bauman, in his deconstruction of ‘community’ (Bauman 2001a) points out how such a term always carries a warm aura (in much the same way as ‘home’ does [XXXXXXXXXXXX 1996]). If within communities the private comes to colonise the public, then vigilance becomes replaced by surveillance. The security offered by a community means individuals might have to sacrifice the freedom to be different. Perhaps Raban’s notion of ‘soft city (Raban 1974) might be a way to reconcile these differences? Some cities can provide a distinct sense of place yet in their cosmopolitanism allow their dwellers freedom to fashion their own identities; at the same time the city is plastic enough to mould a fixed form around these identities.

Are Giddens and Sennett correct to argue that a sense of place is important to constituting a sense of self? Or is their pessimism misplaced and that movement through space and time can liberate us and provide a resource with which to refashion our sense of selves as Lash and Urry have argued?

In this paper I have rejected any essentialist position. I am therefore not concerned to try and establish if individual actors ‘need’ a sense of place. Yet if the boundaryless career does lead to greater movement in space and time, then it is pertinent to ask to what extent a sense of ‘place’ is part and parcel of contemporary identity work. To what degree does it provide meaning in the development of a life narrative? This is a question that needs an empirical answer. In the next section I turn to describe the method used to generate the empirics.

**Method**

The data for this paper was generated as part of a larger study that seeks to examine how career narratives are constructed. The major focus of this study is in how lives are ‘framed’ in terms of a narrative. To what extent do individuals frame their lives in terms of concentrating on day-to-day routine and to what extent do they use the frame of a lifetime? What makes individuals switch from one to the other? Are these switches associated with a ‘failure’ in the narrative which leads to a ‘crisis’ developing for the individual concerned?
For this paper I have taken a subset of sixteen of the sample and concentrated on middle managers who are all in the age range 30 to 39. All respondents were currently studying for a Masters in Business Administration (MBA). The choice of such a group was deliberate for three reasons. First, they are likely to be engaged in a degree of reflection in their careers which undertaking a post-graduate management course in mid-career is likely to encourage. Second, the MBA is presented as an ‘international passport’ – it is perhaps the most globalised of all qualifications (Sturdy and Gabriel 2000). Third, this group occupies a relatively powerful economic position which should enable them to exercise above-average control over the management of their career.

This group of sixteen was then subdivided along two dimensions according to how many firms they had worked for and how many times they had relocated. (Where a respondent had been seconded to another location this counted as one relocation; i.e. the relocation back was not counted.) In order to allow for differing times respondents had been in the labour market and to enable comparison, the number of job moves/ relocations was expressed as a fraction of ten years in employment. This gives a simple matrix as shown in Figure 1.

Taking the sample as a whole the average number of firms worked for is 2.75 for each ten years of employment. The average number of relocations is 2.379 for every ten years of employment. Put another way that means the average respondent moved firms once every 3.64 years and relocated every 4.22 years. Half the sample is female. Of the 16 respondents, 11 are British, 1 Australian/ British, 1 British/ Mauritian, 1 American, 1 Dutch and 1 Egyptian.

In each case the individual was interviewed face-to-face. The interview was highly unstructured. The individual was simply asked to talk about their lives in general, what were the significant turning points. Whenever they came to a point at which they described a change in organisation or location, they would be asked to reflect on what this meant. Each interview took on average about 1.5 hours; each interview was recorded and then transcribed. The method follows that proposed by McAdams (1993).

I am treating each narrative as a ‘text’ – that is I am not using the narrative to ‘interpret’ how each individual was affected by place; rather I am looking to see what are the common themes in each narrative. How were boundaries ‘set’; what part did a sense of place play in setting such boundaries?

Although sixteen interviews were conducted, I have concentrated on the narratives of the four respondents who were the extreme cases in each of the four quadrants. I have chosen this approach to bring out any contrast in the narratives with respect to organisational boundaries and the boundaries of a given locale.
Career Narratives and the Significance of Place

I will start this section by examining some of the general issues that emerged from the interview about the ways in which the narratives around careers and identities were constructed. A common feature was the way in which careers were seen as a reflexive project. Respondents described themselves frequently as acting upon themselves almost as if the individual agent was separate from the ‘career’ that was being constructed. Valerie gave a good example of this. When asked to reflect on how she would want her career to be judged at its termination, she replied:

”I want to think that I did the best I could with what I had available to me”.

A second common theme was how the project of the career was related to the broader ‘life project’. Was the career seen to be the most significant element in making sense of who the agent felt themselves to be or was it ephemeral? For some respondents the obligations to others acted as a constraint on career and the ability to relocate. Fourteen of the sixteen would find it extremely difficult or impossible to relocate, as it would undermine their social relationships. Yet for these respondents the relationship between ‘work’ and ‘life’ was very much more complex and very much mediated by the influence of ‘place’.

In terms of Figure 1, Linda was the most extreme case of a career that had seen fewest changes in both firm and location (1.25, 0). (This meant she had had only one employer in eight years of employment and had never relocated). She had always lived within 2km of her place of birth and described the locality in precise detail naming very specific localities of London. Her sense of self was tied up with family, godchildren, and the one organisation she had worked for and from which she derived her major friendship group – all of this was in a radius of a few kilometres. As she stated:-

“I do like, you know, belonging to a place and I like feeling part of something”.

Her attitude to travel was self-consciously that of a tourist.

I love travelling but to me what travelling involves is holidays. I don’t want to be immersed; I like looking, visiting places”.

At the same time she regarded herself as rather passive in terms of career. Speaking in terms of her career she said:

“I am quite happy to go with the flow. I don’t feel I have to be at a certain place at a certain time. Life is more important to me than work and it always has been and it always will be”.

Paradoxically, of all the respondents her description of her career was the most linear in terms of shape and she was the most able to articulate a sense of ‘progression’. The one location and the one organisation provided a clear ‘channel’ and set of milestones, markers in terms of which her career could be measured.
By contrast Derek provided the most extreme example of many firms, many locations (4.3, 7.1). Derek is British/Mauritian and spent his childhood years shuttling between the two places. This relocation had continued voluntarily; he chose to go to the USA for higher education and then took jobs in London, Mauritius, London and Zurich and then back to London. He was much more able to reflect on his sense of self than Linda. Whereas Linda said: -

“Who am I? I don’t really know who I am. I just get on with it”

Derek by contrast thought a lot about his sense of self and it caused unease.

“I am not sure if I am English or Mauritian, neither or both. Every time I went somewhere I felt I was from somewhere else.”

He also felt that his life/career project was in some sense teleological, that it was important, or as he put it: -

“I find what I am destined to do”

No other respondent expressed so strongly this view that a career is about identifying some essential characteristic just waiting to be realised. Derek admitted he had still to find it.

There is something there for me which I want to do. I can’t quite put my finger on it”

In spite of this failure to find his unique characteristic, Derek was determined to end his pattern of relocating and he wanted to settle in London.

“London is beginning to feel more my home. It was difficult before to get to know English people. I felt excluded or rather I felt different. But now I feel more English. London is my thing while Mauritius is family. I have done my fair bit of moving around. That has been my tendency up until now to go off and make my own way but I am not so keen on that anymore. I have done enough of that”.

Valerie was the most extreme example of many firms, few locations (5.72, 0). She had moved to London to take her first degree and had stayed there ever since. She admitted to taking up and persevering with a career she did not like in order to please her parents and the move to London was about establishing a degree of independence. In spite of being married she, above all other respondents, defined her life and career in individual terms.

“Whatever happens I am on my own. We really are put on this earth on our own and we go out on our own and we are responsible for everything we do while we are here”

At the same time she would be very reluctant to relocate and if she did so it would only be for an outstanding job. Moreover she would only exchange one big city for another. Her discourse evoked a clear sense of the importance of place to her life but,
at the same time, she used the noise and bustle of the city to avoid reflection about herself.

“With London you can lose yourself, there is so much for the eye to take in, you can forget about who you are. I felt like it is my security blanket. I feel it really does protect me”.

The fourth extreme case was Tom who represented the most emphatic case of few firms, many locations (1.1, 3.3). As an out gay man, place was very important to him.

“I would only ever live in a big gay city. London is the place I know best and I want to stay here as my long-term partner is based here.”

He described London in the following terms.

“There is more variety for me to be what I want to be. A feeling that anything is possible”.

For Tom, career and life decisions were very much intertwined. He had taken two ‘career breaks’ to travel and pursue a Masters Course but always with the intention of returning to the same employer. He had also been seconded to New York but with the intention of coming back to London. He enjoyed travel but described it as: -

“providing a break from routine”.

Concluding discussion

In the previous section I have provided a range of quotations to give a feel for the richness and variety of narratives respondents use to describe their ‘careers’. But I do not wish to use these narratives to draw inferences about these individuals in the particular. I am more interested to consider these narratives as exemplars, almost as ‘ideal types’ of lives that have been influenced by the experience of either moving employers and/or moving locales. How do these narratives compare and contrast in terms of the significance of place and the effects on career? But one point can be made; the range and variety of narratives produced counsel against giving support for any apocalyptic theories about the’ destiny of the self’ in general or ‘career’ in particular. Nevertheless a number of conclusions can be drawn.

First, all these respondents saw their lives in terms of a project, something one works on with the resources to hand. One is working on oneself, almost as if the self were a separate sculpture. But at the same time, each narrative rejected any notion of linearity or even of progression. When confronted with the question: ‘What do you want to feel you have achieved when you are lying on your death bed?’ all the narratives became vague: ‘to do the best with what I had available to me; “to have made a difference”. All but the two public sector respondents talked of wanting to start their own business – entrepreneurship is by far the most popular elective on the MBA; yet all the narratives were vague as to when this would be and what form the business might take. Another common refrain was the sense of powerless that these respondents felt in their lives in spite of their relatively strong economic position; all the narratives were peppered with instances of how their careers had been
thwarted by others and this was the main reason given for wanting to start their own business. There is then, even amongst this alleged elite workforce, an ambivalence about ‘career’ and its significance in their lives as a whole.

Second, and what was common to all the narratives in this study and exemplified by the four extreme cases, was how place was significant in the discourse of career. Those who had relocated the most described place in very general terms; those who had relocated the least describe place in a much more detailed way. Yet even those who had relocated frequently wanted to see an end to it – they wished to become attached to a particular place. But at the same time travel is enjoyed. All of the sixteen respondents had travelled extensively as all had the income to make this possible. But all saw travel as a temporary opportunity to break routine – in a sense it was routine which provided the ‘safe haven’ that permitted travel “as a tourist” as Linda put it. This was not evidence of a desire to ‘problematize space and time’ or to celebrate ‘fragmentation of meaning’ – more an affirmation of the saying that ‘She who knows her own home travels well’.

Third, many of the narratives described the attraction of big-city life, the diversity, the feeling that one could lose oneself in the anonymity but at the same time, the city offered huge potential to establish who you wished to be. Curiously the narratives of those who had relocated the least (Linda, Valerie) were those who were the least self-reflexive. Linda confessed to finding it almost impossible; Valerie to relishing that the hustle and bustle of the city meant she did not have to.

A fourth feature is that any attempt to try and simply counterpoise ‘career’ and ‘life’ or ‘work’ and ‘home life’ breaks down. In developing their narratives these polarities became interwoven by respondents - often by using place as an integrating theme. This was most marked in Linda’s narrative as she described her life revolving around her family, who all lived locally, and her friendship group from her work nearby. Life and work were woven into a seamless whole - but it was a sense of place that made this possible. There are implications here for the literature on work/life balance which attempts to draw a firm boundary between the two realms (Clark 2000).

This paper has demonstrated the importance of place to working identity. Bearing in mind the caveat noted above about grand, apocalyptic theories, there is much support here for Giddens’s (and Sennett’s) position that the routines and habits, which a sense of place confers, are important to maintaining a sense of self. Late modernity may be resulting in time/space distanciation; but social actors resist these tendencies preferring to maintain a sense of place. At the same time many of these respondents preferred the diversity of city life with its opportunities for individuals to develop a sense of place and so rejecting the suffocating notion of ‘community’ (Bauman 2001a).

Nevertheless Lash is correct to argue that career has lost its linearity; only Linda, with her strong sense of place and work in just one organisation, felt able to convincingly portray her career in this way but even she described herself as “going with the flow” – she did not regard herself as architect of her linear career.

As with all qualitative research these findings can only be tentative. They may be based on long and detailed interviews but they cover only sixteen respondents, all of
whom were undertaking an MBA. The research is inevitably bound by time and place. All these respondents worked in or near to London although they came from a range of national backgrounds. The interviews captured only the conscious presentation of self and career; as such the narratives will inevitably be tainted by an attempt to homogenise and integrate the sense of self.

In the end though, the notion of the boundaryless career remains a questionable one. Employers may be seeking organisational flexibility in labour contracts with its concomitant increase in labour turnover. Employees realise they have to be enterprising in their construction of a narrative of self; yet ‘career’ does not seem up to the task, or at least not career as leading to a consciously desired, end state. If the self is a project, it is one without objectives, without much sense of forward or spiral movement. Organisational boundaries no longer provide such a source of sense making as once they did; work/life boundaries no longer carry the same resonance. But other boundaries have taken their place. Significant amongst these is place as a source of meaning as workers seek to secure their sense of self.
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Figure 1
Classification of Respondents

Nos. of firms worked for
for each ten years of employment
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